

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Slideshow

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Meeting the Social and Behavioral Needs of At-Risk Students

Western Hills University High School, Ohio • February 2009

Topic: Dropout Prevention

Practice: Social/Behavior Programs

### Highlights

- Western Hills University High School offers emotional and social support for students within the school setting.
- Classes such as Yoga and Meditation and the Controlling Myself class teach students to understand and manage their emotions.
- The Women Writing for a Change class is designed to help female students express themselves through writing.

### About the Site

Western Hills University High School  
Cincinnati, OH

### Demographics

72% Black

22% White

3% Other

2% Hispanic

56% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

3% English Language Learners

25% Special Education

Western Hills University High School focuses on preparing students for graduation through a rigorous and relevant academic curriculum and through programs that help students understand and prepare for postsecondary options.

The school implements programs that:

- Offer classes and opportunities for students to develop stronger social and emotional skills
- Organize students into teams with teachers who provide extensive academic support to ensure students are adequately prepared to be successful on the Ohio Graduation Tests
- Provide students a disciplined and personalized learning environment
- Expose students to postsecondary options that include college, the workforce, and other training programs

## Full Transcript

Meeting the Social and Behavioral Needs of At-Risk Students

Western Hills University High School, Cincinnati, OH

Title slide: Steffani Slone is the school psychologist at Western Hills University High School in Cincinnati, OH. She helps to facilitate various social and behavior programs for the students.

Slide 1: Program Selection

Text: Parents, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel may recommend students for the social and behavior programs. Most of the students selected have had issues with disruptive behavior, truancy, or disengagement with school. The purpose of the programs is to help students connect with school and develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Audio: Western Hills University High School offers quite a few programs for students that offer emotional and social supports within the school setting. One of our groups that we offer is called Controlling Myself, a yoga relaxation group, and this group is geared towards at-risk students for anger problems within the school environment. A lot of these students have high suspensions, high referral rates to the office.

### Slide 2: Controlling Myself Class

**Text:** In the Controlling Myself class, students are given strategies to strengthen problem-solving and decision-making skills. The class sizes are very small (10 students or fewer) so the students can have individualized attention.

**Audio:** The students come in, and the first 10 or 15 minutes is geared towards a lesson for the day. We try to teach them a way that they may deal with their anger and their issues within the school environment. We understand that the way they deal with things outside of school will be different, and we try to impress upon them that that is the way it is and in the school environment, and at a job, too—that they need to behave and act a certain way and interact with adults and their peers in an appropriate manner. So, we spend the first 10 or 15 minutes working towards that goal.

### Slide 3: Yoga and Meditation Instruction

**Text:** Western Hills University High School also has a Yoga/Meditation class. The purpose of this class is to help students identify, understand, and self-regulate their emotions. Students perform breathing exercises and learn yoga positions.

**Audio:** We have a yoga instructor that actually comes into the program and teaches the students different yoga moves and also breathing techniques and relaxation for their body, ways that they can control their bodies and be able to control their heart rate and different things when they feel themselves getting angry or upset within the school environment.

### Slide 4: Women Writing for a Change

**Text:** Women Writing for a Change is a class designed to encourage female students to express their emotions through writing. The students explore and discuss the works of notable female writers of various genres. The students are also given the opportunity to share their personal writings.

**Audio:** Another program that is offered at Western Hills University High School is Women Writing for a Change, and this is a program that comes into the school, and it comes twice a year. The program is 12 sessions long. We have an actual woman from the writing center that comes in and works with our young ladies. The program is geared towards around 15 young women, and the referrals come from students that are either homeless or students that may be withdrawn from others or that usually deal with depression issues or family situations internally. And we have this program because we are trying to teach the girls that they do have a voice within them and that they need to express themselves and that writing is a great way for them to express themselves.

### Slide 5: Class Format

**Text:** The writing class provides female students with the opportunity to discuss their personal challenges with other students who may share similar experiences.

**Audio:** The group is an hour long, and we start off with a poem or a short selection reading by an author, and it usually deals with a topic of the day. And we read the poem out loud, and then we talk about the poem, and we say how do we see ourselves within the poem? Do we see any similarities with the students' lives and the writers' lives? Is there different ways that people interpret the poems or short stories? And then we go to free writing, and the free writing lasts around ten or fifteen minutes, and the girls are encouraged—they're given prompts that they can write about, or they are encouraged to write about anything freely that's on their mind, anything that they want to get off their chest kind of thing. And after we finish the writing, then we have a group circle time where we share a piece of our writing. Girls are encouraged to share their entire writings or, if they are not comfortable, at least a sentence or a word from their writing.

### Slide 6: Benefits of Programs

**Text:** The social programs at Western Hills provide critical support for the students' needs outside of school and result in improved interactions within the school. As students interact with other engaged classmates, it promotes school membership and encourages a sense of self-efficacy.

**Audio:** I think the biggest thing about the group is that students see that they are not alone, that there are other people out there that deal with the same things that they may be dealing with, and that there are people in the school that want to try to help them and support them and that will be there for them and just listen to what they have to say. Because what we have found is that the students just want someone to listen. And that just gives them a validation that yes, you are going through this, and there is an end in sight, and you can get through this moment in your life and move on to the next step in your life.