

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## Positive Reinforcement Strategies to Promote Prosocial Behavior

Martin Luther King Elementary School, New Jersey • April 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Teach Skills

### Highlights

- Principal Diane Wilton talks about treating students with respect and using discipline with fairness and consistency.
- Teachers at Martin Luther King Elementary make rules and expectations more meaningful to students by getting students involved in designing the rules and expectations in each classroom.
- Staff reinforce good behavior with incentives for students such as extra recess time and game time.

### About the Site

**Martin Luther King Elementary School**

**Edison, NJ**

#### **Demographics**

64% Asian

18% White

14% Black

4% Hispanic

16% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

8% Special Education

Martin Luther King Elementary School uses a three-tiered, schoolwide, comprehensive approach that integrates character education, social skills training, and positive reinforcement programs. The unique features of the schoolwide approach include:

- A schoolwide positive support model that provides: provides what? Or should this bullet be deleted?
- Regular reminders of what a positive behavior looks like in different areas of the school.
- Targeted programs for students with chronic behavior problems.
- Positive reinforcement of individual students and whole classrooms.

## Full Transcript

Diane Wilton: My name is Diane Wilton. I'm Principal of Martin Luther King Elementary School in Edison, New Jersey. Our philosophy here at Martin Luther King School is that all children are entitled to be treated with respect. Discipline is done with fairness and understanding and consistency.

We focus on positive behaviors and highlight those students who have exceptional and acceptable and excellent behaviors. We use motivational tools based on the common language. Everyone has ownership in developing rules for the school. The rules and regulations are meaningful and appropriate for the child, and it's also based more on intrinsic rewards.

The rewards for positive rewards may include everything from pep rallies, dancing in the hallways, discovery walks, game time, assemblies, extra recess time. A lot of rewards are developed by teachers and students, so it's positive, enjoyable for students, so they look forward to doing it again.

Positive reinforcement, it's goal-oriented and goal driven. It's meaningful to the students. It's incentive driven, as students and staff are recognized periodically, and it's an appreciation of positive behavior for students. So, their understanding is when they are exhibiting their positive behaviors, they're going to get rewarded for those positive behaviors.

I think that research has really proven that negative consequences or punishment really has very little effect. We find that children keep coming back with the same behaviors. But when they have an incentive to promote positive behaviors, they start assuming that their positive behaviors will reap the rewards.

Many of our parents are beginning to see that when children come to the principal, it should not always be for negative consequence but to support the child and their behavior. Lessons are embedded into our day. In the beginning of the year, we have lessons on positive behavior, lessons on the expectations of how to walk through the hallways, lessons on expectations for lunch and recess behaviors. Focusing on the needs

as far as children and supporting them in their behaviors and trying to turn around some of their negative behaviors to positive behaviors is really what we strive for, instead of just giving them a punishment—a suspension, a lunch recess detention—because we find the behaviors continue that way. So, if the children feel in control with designing their rewards and developing their rewards, it's very successful in classrooms.