

K278 Marine Park

FINAL REPORT



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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of K278 Marine Park conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research (AIR.) This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as being in corrective action under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

The audit focused on access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). It examined curriculum, instruction, professional development, and staffing practices through the multiple lenses of data collection and analysis. Findings in these areas served as a starting point to facilitate conversations among school staff in order to identify areas for improvement and ways to generate plans for improvement. This report includes an overview of the audit process, a description of the key findings identified in collaboration with the school, and recommendations for addressing these issues. It is entirely up to the school to determine how to implement the recommendations. At the conclusion of each recommendation, we have included examples from the field based on the experiences of AIR staff that we believe illustrate the implementation of an aspect of the recommendation.

About K278 Marine Park

K278 Marine Park is located in New York City, in Brooklyn (Community School District 22). The school serves 994 students in Grades 6–8. Four percent of students are ELLs, and 13 percent are identified as SWDs. In 2010–11, Marine Park’s accountability status was “Improvement (Year 1),” due, in part, to the failure to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA for its population of SWDs and ELLs.

Audit Process at K278 Marine Park

The key findings were identified through an audit process. Data were collected using the following guiding themes as the focus of the audit: curriculum, instruction, professional development, and staffing. Following data collection, AIR staff facilitated a co-interpretationSM meeting on June 10, 2011, attended by 16 staff members from K278 Marine Park. Staff members included the principal; administrative staff; special education, ESL, and general education teaching staff; and representation from the network.

Co-interpretation is a collaborative process that helps school teams understand and use the data gathered by the audit team to generate findings. During the meeting, the following data reports were presented and reviewed:

- Special Education Site Visit Report (based on a document review, observations, and interviews), which focuses on the special education program and SWDs.
- English Language Learner Site Visit Report (based on a document review, observations, and interviews), which focuses on instruction of ELLs.
- Special Education Teacher Survey Report, based on compiled responses from surveys completed by 50 teachers, including 41 teachers of SWDs.
- English Language Learner Teacher Survey Report, based on compiled responses from surveys completed by 50 teachers, including 25 teachers of ELLs.

The school team studied the individual data reports and used this information to develop key findings about the school's strengths and challenges related to educating students with disabilities and English language learners. Participants rated the findings based on the following criteria:

- Is the key finding identified as one of the most critical problems faced by the school and addressed by the audit?
- If resolved, would student achievement improve sufficiently to move the school out of corrective action?
- If resolved, will there be a measurable, positive impact?

In the remainder of this report, we describe the key findings that were identified by school staff as their top priorities, and present recommendations for the school to consider incorporating into its Comprehensive Educational Plan.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, participants at co-interpretation determined a set of final key findings. These key findings, which are based on the voting that occurred during the co-interpretation meeting, are detailed in this section.

Critical Key Findings

These key findings were identified by co-interpretation participants and were prioritized by the group for action planning.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1

Teachers express a need for more professional development related to the instruction of ELLs and SWDs.

Critical Key Finding 1 was identified as a top priority by the majority of the co-interpretation participants and is supported by data from all four data reports. Although data indicate that teachers have found most of the professional development that was offered to them helpful, they would like to receive more, specifically focused on strategies for instructing ELLs and SWDs.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2

Teachers are not using data provided by a school specialist to drive their instruction.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by data from the Special Education Teacher Survey Report and the English Language Learner Site Visit report. These reports reveal that teachers are using data to inform their instruction but are more likely to use data from teacher-created assessments than data provided to them by a school specialist.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3

Although there is a behavior plan in the school, the implementation of behavior management techniques in the classroom is inconsistent.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by data from all four data reports. These reports reveal that, although teachers are employing a variety of behavior management techniques in their classrooms, there is no consistent approach for managing and rewarding positive behavior school-wide.

Positive Key Findings

Positive key findings are listed because it is to the school's advantage to approach its action planning from a strengths-based perspective and to leverage what has been working. AIR encourages the school to realistically acknowledge what it is doing well and effectively and to use those strengths as a springboard for approaching recommendations-based action planning.

The top three positive key findings according to the vote at co-interpretation were as follows:

1. The majority of teachers report that if they identify students with academic needs, support and services will be provided.
2. The majority of teachers report that they collaborate informally and formally.
3. Survey data and observations indicate that teachers use a variety of instructional strategies and accommodations for supporting SWDs, including differentiated instruction.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

The key findings determined through the co-interpretation process with K278 Marine Park led AIR to make three recommendations. For each recommendation, additional information is provided on specific actions that the school may consider during its action-planning process. These recommendations are supported by currently available research and evidence. Resources and references that support these recommendations are provided.

The order does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations. Also, there is no one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings were considered as a group, and these recommendations are offered as those that would likely have the greatest positive impact on student performance.

Recommendation 1: Professional Development

AIR recommends that K278 Marine Park review its current professional development plan and adjust it to ensure appropriate coverage of content relevant to the instruction of SWDs and ELLs.

QUICK LINKS:

Online Sources for More Information

Co-Teaching Modules: Improving Access to the General Education Curriculum for students With Disabilities Through Collaborative Teaching
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/Co-TeachingModule.asp

Enhancing Your Instruction Through Differentiation Professional Development Module
http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/differentiationmodule.asp

Effective Instruction for English Language Learners Question and Answer Transcript
<http://www.ncldevents.org/content/interview/detail/3734/>

RTI for English Language Learners: Appropriate Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Instructional Planning
<http://www.rti4success.org/webinars/video/893>

(Continued)

LINK TO RESEARCH

Research has found that professional development for teachers is most effective and boosts student achievement most when it is embedded in their daily work and sustained, as opposed to one-time workshops (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Steiner, 2004; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Effective professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for collaboration, coaching, and peer observation, which allows them to be actively involved in their own development and to more frequently practice learned skills (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Joyce & Showers, 2002). In addition, professional development is most effective when it is directly connected to teacher practice and focuses on content (National Staff Development Council, 2001; Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). Content areas should align with school improvement needs and goals to target improvement to those areas.

By refining the process by which professional development is offered; ensuring that it is embedded, is sustained, and allows for active teacher participation; and focusing the development on teacher practice and content, schools can improve teacher practice and student achievement (Wei et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links directly to Critical Key Finding 1, in which teachers indicated a need for more professional development, specifically related to strategies for teaching SWDs and ELLs.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps can be used to adjust the professional development plan to increase the focus on instruction for SWDs and ELLs:

- 1. Conduct an in-depth needs assessment among staff regarding professional development needs regarding the instruction of SWDs and ELLs. This action step can be accomplished by:**
 - Conducting a teacher survey asking for specific feedback on previous professional development opportunities related to SWDs and ELLs and asking teachers to prioritize needs for additional professional development
 - Reviewing teacher evaluation data regarding the instruction of SWDs and ELLs to determine areas in which professional development needs are greatest
 - Using staff development meetings to get detailed feedback and suggestions from staff about needed professional development related to SWDs and ELLs

QUICK LINKS: Continued

Accommodations, Techniques, and Aids for Learning

<http://www.ldaamerica.org/about/ld/teachers/understanding/accommodations.asp>

National Center on Response to Intervention

<http://www.rti4success.org/>

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring

<http://www.studentprogress.org/default.asp>

Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students

<http://www.nichcy.org/educatechildren/supports/pages/default.aspx>

Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students With Disabilities

http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/accommodations_manual.asp

2. Refine offerings of professional development on instructing SWDs, including the following areas of focus:

- How to identify diverse student needs in inclusive classrooms
- How to utilize differentiation strategies, such as flexible grouping or co-teaching, to meet students' individual instructional needs
- How to monitor student progress and adjust instruction based on student performance, using strategies such as response to intervention (RTI)
- How to use instructional modifications and accommodations in the classroom

3. Offer professional development on strategies for effectively instructing ELLs, including the following areas of focus:

- Understanding language development
- Assisting in the development of curriculum aligned to both ELA and ESL state standards that clearly articulates literacy competencies and ensures that language objectives are defined at each stage of language acquisition
- Being aware of what ELLs should understand and be able to do in terms of content and language skills at each proficiency level within the ELA curriculum
- Developing strategies and techniques for delivering the curriculum to ELLs in monolingual, bilingual, and general education classrooms

Development of a School-Wide Professional Development Plan

Mrs. Smith, a principal at a large urban middle school, designed and implemented a year-long plan for professional development designed to support diverse learners at her school who were not making adequate progress. Mrs. Smith knew that just targeting specialist teachers would not be enough for students to make gains, so she provided professional development focused on differentiated instruction and reaching individual learners to all teachers at the school.

She began with a day of school-wide training on differentiated instruction, presented by the school's literacy coach and assistant principal. This was followed with classroom visits and one-on-one sessions with each teacher in the school conducted by the assistant principal, literacy coach, and herself. In the one-on-one sessions, each teacher was asked to develop a plan for differentiating instruction and meeting the individual needs of SWDs and ELLs over the next nine months. Each teacher was observed once a month for the first four months of school and received coaching from an administrator or the literacy coach, including modeling differentiated instructional strategies in the classroom. At each faculty meeting, additional professional development on differentiated instruction was provided to the entire staff, including training on specific strategies to address student needs that teachers had identified and shared during individual coaching sessions.

By January, Mrs. Smith saw an increase in the use of differentiated instruction as she visited classrooms. Coaching sessions were shifted to be every other month for the second half of the school year, and teachers were each asked to commit to visiting and providing feedback to one of their fellow teachers. By the end of the year, teachers agreed that their awareness of and comfort with differentiated instruction had increased, and they reported feeling supported by administrators. Mrs. Smith convened a group of general education, special education, and ESL teachers to help write the professional development plan for the next school year. She also sent those teachers to training over the summer with the understanding that they would serve as models and peer coaches for the following year.

Implementation of Newly Acquired Instructional Skills

Mrs. Brown is a teacher participating in professional development that will help her better meet the learning needs of her ELLs. From the outset, she has learned that she must follow the Common Core State Standards. The standards, as she has come to understand them, define what all students must know and be able to do but not how teachers should teach. The standards must be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum. The aim of the standards is to articulate the fundamentals, but they are not an exhaustive list of what must take place in the classroom. They set grade-level goals but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are below or above grade-level expectations. It is the job of the professionals who work with children to make the standards accessible to all learners.

The curriculum represents the content, or subject matter, that students must master in the course of their education. Teachers must adapt that content by modifying the way in which they teach so that English language learners or students with disabilities can learn it. Teachers may accomplish this by supplementing or adapting the curriculum. Supplementing the curriculum involves providing additional material, which provides background knowledge and supports different learning styles. Supplementary materials could include pictures that illustrate vocabulary words and concepts. Visuals may include charts and graphs, timelines, and maps that supply visual clues that help students who have difficulty processing large amounts of auditory instruction. Readers that are simplified and contain more pictures, photos, captions, and vocabulary word definitions may also provide supplements without diminishing the information students need to learn.

Modified or adapted materials also may help the learner who has problems with complex and/or large amounts of language. They may be used before the lesson or during it to make the content more comprehensible. These may include graphic organizers, teacher-prepared outlines, or study guides. They may also include taped text or rewritten text that reorganizes the material into smaller portions or chunks. Sometimes a spare copy of the text material may be given to students in which they may mark or highlight.

Mrs. Brown understands all this and is ready, as part of her training, to redesign a science unit she has already taught to make it more accessible to her ELLs. She wants to teach them some content from geology about earthquakes and volcanoes but she knows she will have to supplement and modify the material to make it accessible to her ELLs.

She begins by activating prior knowledge and building background. Last year, students learned about the large plates under the ocean and how they move, essential information for this new unit. However, students may not remember this material, and her ELLs may have been speaking much less English when they were learning it, so she clearly is going to have to activate what prior knowledge students have and review it so she can build on what they know. She prepares a PowerPoint presentation, which goes over the concepts of tectonic plates and how the sea floor always spreads and moves, and how there are mountains on the earth and under the sea and how this movement affects them. She gives students the PowerPoint note pages with key vocabulary and diagrams, which students can keep in their science notebooks to refer to again.

She also shows a video that contains pictures of volcanoes and earthquakes and the damage that can occur as a result of these phenomena. Many of her students will never have been exposed to this information and need this necessary background knowledge to acquire new content successfully. She then provides a simplified version of the material and has students read it in pairs. They mark what they already know and what is new and different to them. This gives her an idea of who in the class may need more support and who already understands the material. Given what she knows from this, she is ready to teach.

She goes online and finds pictures of volcanoes and earthquakes and related concepts so that students can see a visual definition of each term: plateau, earth's mantle, fault lines, lava, magma, and diagrams of the layers of rock that cannot be seen from the earth's surface. She creates a science word wall using these pictures and their labels. Students now have a visual to reference that explains key vocabulary as they read. She makes a note to ask the ESL teacher to preview the concepts using some of the Rigby and Newbridge materials that are more highly illustrated and present this content with simplified vocabulary. All students are keeping personal dictionaries where they write definitions and make diagrams. She makes a study guide in the form of an outline so that as she teaches, the students look at her overheads and fill in information as she presents it.

Then she puts students in small groups. Together they read the information in the text. Her ELLs have a copy of the text in which they can mark and highlight. They are also given graphic organizers with flow charts, which students fill in to create the sequence of events leading to a volcanic eruption or an earthquake. Students complete the graphic organizers and write the sequence of events in sentences in their groups, all the while discussing what they have learned. ELLs are included with monolingual students who have a greater facility for self-expression in English. They put the sentences into paragraphs, which the students post and read orally to the whole group.

Finally, Mrs. Brown gives them a concept definition map about volcanoes, and later she will give them one on earthquakes. Students must define a volcano in one box. In a series of connected boxes, they write what they do and what they are like, one fact per box. When Mrs. Brown has seen the students' completed maps, she will know about her next necessary steps in instruction. Do some of her students need more instruction or reteaching while other students move on? Can the ESL teacher step in and fill the gaps for her with her ELLs?

In such a way, Mrs. Brown has both supplemented and adapted her unit materials to make them more comprehensible for all students, and especially for her ELLs. She has found additional or different ways to use materials to teach all the key vocabulary and concepts but has not left any material out or diminished it in any way.

Recommendation 2: Data Use

AIR recommends that K278 Marine Park take steps to ensure the consistent use of data by all teachers and from multiple sources to inform instruction.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Student assessment data can provide important information for measuring the effectiveness of instruction; teachers can use these data to ensure the success of all students. The IES Practice Guide Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making describes several factors that are important to consider when using data to improve instruction, including establishing a clear vision for school-wide data use, providing supports that foster data-driven culture within the school, and making data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement (Hamilton et al., 2009).

The principal and school leadership are pivotal players in the school-wide effort of using data regularly. The Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL) study of the effects of leadership practices on student achievement showed "the extent to which the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student achievement" to be one of the 21 leadership responsibilities significantly associated with student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, p. 12). Cotton (1988) agrees: "The careful monitoring of student progress is shown in the literature to be one of the major factors differentiating effective schools and teachers from ineffective ones" (p. 1).

In addition to leading the data use initiative by example, school administration is encouraged to cultivate a culture of reflection and continuous improvement to help teachers feel comfortable using data. Young's (2008) case studies identify "four dimensions of trust" that suggest how culture may or may not support teachers using the data system, including other teachers' high standards, other teachers' perceptions of competence, the likelihood of others to participate in an activity in response to peer engagement, and individual concerns and issues being seen as collective ones. To the degree that teachers think in terms of these four dimensions, they will be more likely to utilize a data system.

Finally, "teachers need to learn how to obtain and manage data, ask good questions, accurately analyze data, and apply data results appropriately and ethically" (Lachat & Smith, 2005, p. 336). Through professional development and coaching, the school can support teachers in meeting these goals.

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links directly to Critical Key Finding 2, in which staff expressed concern that not all teachers are regularly using data provided to them by a school specialist.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Data Quality Campaign:
Using Data to Improve
Student Achievement

<http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/>

Teacher Data Toolkit: New
York City Department of
Education

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Teachers/TeacherDevelopment/TeacherDataToolkit/default.htm>

RTI Essential Components:
Data-Based Decision Making

http://www.rti4success.org/categorycontents/data-based_decision_making

NYC Helpline: Collecting
and Using Data to Inform
Planning and Instruction

http://teachersnetwork.org/NTNY/nychelp/Professional_Development/assess.htm

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps can be used to support teachers in more consistent use of data to inform instruction.

- 1. Provide all teachers with ready and user-friendly access to multiple sources of data on student achievement. This action step can be accomplished by:**
 - Ensuring online access to data
 - Providing paper summary sheets of data, if computer access is not available
 - Providing data by subgroups and academic sub-skills, which allows staff to easily use the data for making decisions about instruction for all students

- 2. Provide ongoing professional development and support to all teachers on the use of data to inform instruction, including the following:**
 - How to interpret data from multiple sources, including standardized test data and periodic assessment data.
 - How to disaggregate data by relevant sub-groups and academic sub-skills
 - How to use data to inform decisions about instructional groupings and strategies

- 3. Model effective use of data for instructional purposes. This action step can be accomplished by:**
 - Using data during all administrative and staff meetings focused on student performance and instruction
 - Pairing teachers who are not using data consistently with those who are, for ongoing mentorship and support

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

Mr. James, an assistant principal at West Middle School, was asked by his principal to lead the school's efforts on using data to inform instruction. Mr. James visited with representatives from the district to determine the most efficient and user-friendly data tracking systems that could be put in place at the school. After selecting a system that he believed would work with the technology at his school, Mr. James conducted a school-wide training on using the system to retrieve data.

Mr. James set up meetings with faculty by grade levels to talk to teachers about how to look at the data, disaggregate it by sub-group and skill, and use it to plan instruction. Once the preliminary training was complete, Mr. James created a schedule for meeting with each teacher in the school, once in the fall and once in the spring, to review data for their classrooms and discuss next steps. Mr. James also retrieved school-wide data and presented it at each faculty meeting, showing teachers how to track progress, or lack thereof, by individual student, classroom, grade level, and school. Mr. James then led the teachers in a discussion to help develop next steps for action items based on the data. Mr. James worked with the mathematics and literacy coaches at the school to provide them with more in-depth training on data-based instruction so that the coaches could support teachers.

At the end of the school year, a majority of teachers at the school reported that they reviewed data to plan instruction at least twice a month. Mr. James made a plan for the next school year to include having teachers talk to students about data.

Recommendation 3: Behavior Plan

AIR recommends that K278 Marine Park take steps to develop and implement a school-wide behavior plan that guides the consistent implementation of strategies for managing student behavior across all classrooms and areas of the school. These strategies should include consequences for negative behavior as well as procedures for rewarding positive behavior.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Research on the development of problem behaviors in youth has shown that serious behavior problems at school are associated with current or future problems in other areas, including school failure, delinquent behavior, problem drinking, and drug use. (Ary, Duncan, Duncan, & Hops, 1999; Donovan & Jessor, 1985; Donovan, Jessor, & Costa, 1988; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). Thus, the effectiveness of schools' methods for handling students' behaviors may impact future behavior patterns (Bullis & Walker, 1993; Walker, Homer, Sugai, & Bullis, 1996).

Schools often attempt to manage inappropriate behaviors within individual classrooms, leaving decisions regarding expectations and consequences up to the classroom teacher. The inconsistencies present throughout a school without the underpinning of a school-wide system of behavior management, such as punitive school and classroom environments, unclear rules and expectations, and inconsistent application of consequences, have been shown to contribute to increased levels of student antisocial behavior, truancy, and acts of vandalism against the school (Mayer, 1995; Mayer, Butterworth, Nafpaktitis, & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1983; Mayer, Mitchell, Clementi, & Clement-Robertson, 1993; Olweus, 1992).

Research points to several important features of an effective school-wide behavior management approach. These include (1) increasing positive reinforcement for appropriate social behavior (Embry, 1997; Embry, Flannery, Vazsonyi, Powell, & Atha, 1996; Mayer, 1995; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997), (2) actively teaching appropriate social behavior (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching, 1993; Taylor-Greene et al., 1997), (3) clearly communicating a small number of rules (Mayer, 1995), (4) consistently providing corrective consequences for rule violation (Taylor-Greene et al., 1997; Walker et al., 1995), and (5) ongoing monitoring of data about student behavior (e.g., office referrals for misbehavior) to provide feedback on progress and to pinpoint situations that need revision of expectations (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996).

LINK TO FINDINGS

This recommendation links directly to Critical Key Finding 3, in which survey and interview data indicate inconsistent implementation of behavior management strategies throughout the school.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Association for Positive
Behavior Support

<http://www.apbs.org/>

*Positive Behavioral Supports:
Information for Educators*

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/pbs_fs.aspx

*Ten Principles of Positive
Behavior Support*

<http://www.emstac.org/registered/topics/posbehavior/tenprin.htm>

*Prevention Research and the
IDEA Discipline Provisions:
A Guide for School
Administrators*

<http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/adminbeh.web.pdf>

Technical Assistance Center
on Positive Behavioral
Interventions and Supports

<http://www.pbis.org/>

Technical Assistance
Center on Social Emotional
Intervention for Young
Children (TACSEI)

<http://www.challengingbehavior.org/>

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Establish a school-level action team to develop and maintain responsibility for implementing the plan. This team should include the principal, lead teachers, all ELL and special education specialists, and parents. This action step can be accomplished by:

- Developing a statement of purpose to guide the plan, such as: “We are dedicated to creating and maintaining a safe and supportive academic environment that promotes learning for all students.”
- Writing out a set of guidelines for behavior in the school. Maintain a positive focus in the guidelines so that they can promote feelings of empathy and respect among all students. In addition to regulations for student behavior, the document should include students’ rights and teachers’ responsibilities as well. Many examples of school-wide behavior plans are located online.
- Ensuring that the regulations are clearly communicated to all students, that they are fairly and consistently enforced, and that buy-in among school faculty is established.
- Providing ongoing professional development on behavior management strategies to ensure that everyone understands how to implement a consistent behavior plan appropriately. Identifying staff to monitor fidelity of implementation and offering coaching to staff to support the effective application of behavior management principles.
- Sharing the behavior plan with parents and community to ensure that everyone understands expectations for behavior throughout the school.

2. Implement strategies to promote and reward positive student behaviors, such as:

- Explicitly stating behaviors that are desirable in the classroom, both verbally and, as appropriate, by posting expectations to the walls in all areas of the school
- Openly recognizing positive behaviors when they occur in the classroom
- Providing opportunities for leadership for students consistently displaying positive behaviors, such as serving as hall monitors, leading other students in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, or reading the morning or afternoon announcements over the intercom
- Pairing students who consistently display positive behaviors with peers who do not do so as consistently in group classroom activities to allow for positive modeling
- Rewarding students demonstrating positive behaviors with extra freedom or privileges in the classroom
- Ensuring that expectations, rewards, and the guidelines for giving rewards are consistently applied in all classrooms and non-classroom areas (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, school grounds)
- Maintaining regular communication with parents regarding their children’s positive behaviors

3. Develop a system of consequences for negative behaviors. This action step can be carried out by:

- As appropriate, allowing students to have a voice in determining the appropriate consequences for guidelines violations.
- Whenever possible, tying the consequence directly to the infraction to assist with behavioral change. For example, if a student pushes another student down on the playground, his or her recess privileges are revoked for a set period of time.
- Providing opportunities for students who have committed guidelines infractions to demonstrate positive behavioral changes. For example, the aforementioned student would be allowed to reenter recess for a short period and to demonstrate how to play constructively with his or her peers.
- Ensuring that consequences are consistently applied in all classrooms and non-classroom areas (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, school grounds).
- Communicating regularly with parents regarding their children's negative behaviors and providing them opportunities to support efforts to help the children demonstrate positive behavior changes at home.
- Including a series of more serious consequences for students who commit repeated guidelines infractions, with severe violations resulting in prescribed consequences after the first offense. If it appears to staff that a cascade of consequences is probably not the answer to this child's issues, a referral might be made to the IEP team to discuss the inappropriate and/or disruptive behaviors and begin to receive and apply professional advice regarding interventions. A classroom observation by a professional special educator or counselor may be in order. Recommendations might be forthcoming for a Functional Behavior Assessment or other measures to try to help this child manage his or her behavior in school.

DOING WHAT WORKS: Examples From Real Schools

The staff at Highland Park Middle School is concerned about the lack of a school-wide discipline plan at the school. Teachers rely on their own individual classroom behavior plans, some of which are more successful than others. Behavior in the cafeteria is seemingly out of control on some days. Students return to classrooms after lunch and recess too upset or out of control for afternoon instruction. It should be noted that many of these students have had disrupted educational experiences because of mobility and have never had a chance to really learn what appropriate school behavior should be.

The entire staff believes that the school needs a system for dealing with disruptive students as well as students who act appropriately. Therefore, the school administration has enrolled the school and its team of volunteer committee members who have agreed to work on this issue in a summer training on Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS) sponsored by the State Department of Education. During the training, they learn that a clear set of expectations for all students is needed in every school, along with a set of positive procedures for teaching and reviewing behavior and for encouraging appropriate behavior rather than focusing on, and paying attention to, students who misbehave. They decide they will teach social skills and appropriate behavior strategies explicitly with the same school-wide expectations and set up a system to reward students who adhere to them.

In order to successfully implement any school-wide behavior management plan successfully, there must be buy-in and support from all stakeholder groups, and everyone must be “on board” with the plan as it is devised. Therefore, the school set aside a full day during the week before students returned from the summer vacation to review the plan with staff and elicit any input they might have. Much of the presentation was provided by faculty members so that it did not appear top-down.

First, the faculty reviewed the data, which indicated hundreds of office referrals of individual students and groups of students from virtually every setting in the school. There was a review of what had been tried. The faculty then learned about the primary, secondary, and tertiary groups of students and their behavior profiles. Then the research behind and principles of positive behavior management were outlined. The faculty moved into small groups where they outlined the consequences and rewards that might be applied consistently. Their feedback was elicited as to the management of the program and their ideas incorporated. Future faculty meeting dates were set aside to explore student behavior data, evaluate the program, and decide what was working and what was not working and to modify as necessary. The district facilitator was present for most of the meeting to offer future training as needed by the staff.

The school district requires a report to parents on disciplinary procedures. A brochure was prepared to replace that. It explained the program in simplified language and use of diagrams so that it could be understood by a population that lacked literacy skills in both their primary and secondary languages. It was also explained at Back to School Night with time set aside to respond to questions.

In August, when students returned to school, they found that new expectations were in place for behavior in all classroom settings, in the cafeteria, in the hallways and bathrooms, and during arrival and dismissal times. Students were placed in groups and rotated to stations around the building where behaviors were explicitly taught. Each area around the building was introduced with behavior expectations outlined at each.

The school mascot is the Hawk, so a positive behavior incentive called the Hawk Bill is invented and used by all staff to reward students for appropriate behavior. Students may redeem these rewards at a school store for prizes. Prizes have been donated by local business, and some are purchased from a fund the school has set up. Especially popular are coupons for free items at local fast food restaurants.

Special events are also used to reward positive behavior. The Gobble 'Til You Wobble Party is held the day before Thanksgiving vacation, with movies and popcorn, arts and crafts, and games for students who make it through November without disciplinary infractions. Similarly, as the school year winds down in June, a time when student behavior often begins to deteriorate, the “Party Like a Hawk Star” campaign begins. Students who make it through the last four weeks of school without behavioral issues are invited to the Last Day Lollapalooza, a large event with a teacher DJ and dancing, refreshments donated by a local restaurant, face-painting, and games. Special events that reinforce positive behavior are offered all year long.

As a result, the number of behavior problems diminished dramatically. The school kept track of behavior infractions—where they occur, at what time, and what kind. They keep track of the reduction in office referrals, once in the hundreds, to almost none. Academic engagement time increased, and academic performance improved. Administrators had increased time for instructional support, and suspensions have decreased from more than 50 to less than 10 in one year. Parents were relieved that their students were happier and felt better about coming to school each day, and attendance improved.

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