

# DOINGWHATWORKS



Audio

FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

## It Takes a Village to Raise a Socially and Emotionally Competent Child

Pinnacle School No. 35, New York • April 2009

Topic: Reducing Behavior Problems

Practice: Schoolwide Approach

### Highlights

- The principal at Pinnacle School No. 35 discusses the various programs in place at the school that work together to help reduce behavior problems.
- The principal explains that there is not one single program or person that can reduce behavior problems. It takes many staff at all levels using different strategies to make a difference in students' lives.
- An intervention team at the school helps teachers resolve problems in the classroom. Teachers have a team of people they can go to to discuss intervention strategies.

### About the Site

**Pinnacle School No. 35**

**Rochester, NY**

### Demographics

45% Hispanic

42% Black

11% White

1% Asian

1% Native American

92% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

32% English Language Learners

9% Special Education

School 35 implements a coordinated set of programs to reduce behavior problems. Key features include:

- An intervention team,
- Schoolwide social-emotional learning curriculum, and
- Community assistance.

## Full Transcript

Hello, my name is Robert Kuter, and I'm the Principal at Pinnacle School No. 35 in Rochester, New York. In the past, we had many children that had difficulties in behavior in our building. We had a suspension rate of over 100 children a year, and it was getting to the point where it was just out of control. What we did is to put in the social-emotional intelligence training, and we were able to see children move from getting into conflicts and not knowing how to talk about them to children who were able to begin to articulate their feelings.

We have many different programs at Pinnacle School 35 that help us promote the social-emotional learning of our students and to attempt to try to reduce our behavior problems. Not one program is effective in and of itself; it takes a number of different approaches dealing with a number of different issues in order to be successful. One program is a curriculum on social-emotional learning, and all teachers teach this program in lessons from the curriculum a minimum of two times a week.

We have teachers that help each other, that team up, that provide timeouts for other students occasionally if they need them, or to just be a friend to some students in another classroom. I will, for example, have a librarian that will pick up a couple of students from a class that might be having some emotional difficulties. She does this on a regular basis. She becomes a buddy to them, a connection with the school. Or, I'll have a music teacher who might have a child who is having difficulty in a class and say to a fourth grade teacher who is her buddy teacher, "Can he just sit there for 15 minutes or so to calm down, cool down before he comes back to the classroom?"

At School 35 we have an intervention team, and the intervention team is an opportunity for teachers to come and talk to teachers about strategies. For example, a teacher will come to the intervention team and say, "Okay, here's my problem." She's already identified that problem. She's filled out a form that describes what the problem is and how she's tried to deal with the problem. The problem could be an

academic problem or it could be a social and emotional problem. In any event, the team will work with this teacher. Now, this team is made up of other classroom teachers, it's made up of specialists, and it's made up of the assistant principal. And the intervention team will meet with the teacher and discuss the problem and try to get more understanding other than what's written on the form. And they will come up with different strategies that will help that teacher to help address the problem. The teacher then implements the strategy for a period of time. Usually, it's six to eight weeks, at which time they reconvene and the intervention team will ask how the strategies worked, what's happening with the problem, are things getting better.

The intervention team has been very successful in helping children come up with different strategies. We've been able to also give time for these teachers to sit down and talk to a colleague, and I think that process in itself is probably one of the most successful so that the teachers don't feel that they're in isolation or that they're all by themselves dealing with these problems. It takes a village, and the intervention team is truly a place where there are a group of people who are helping to solve a problem with maybe one child. I certainly want folks to know that this is not me; this is everybody in our building. It's the classroom teachers. It's our intervention team. It's our after-school team that works with children. It's our play therapy group. It's the buddy teachers. It's the peers working with each other. There are a number of people involved in making sure that we're dealing with or teaching children to be more socially and emotionally competent, and also it takes a whole group of us to be able to reduce the behavior problems in a building.