

NEWS FLASH!

Sunland Park Elementary Uses CHAMPS to Help Students with Academics & Behavior

The students at Sunland Park Elementary School are working hard to change their school environment to meet the high expectations they set for themselves. They are embracing a new school wide approach for classroom management and positive reinforcement.

New principal Shawn Allen made the decision to implement more proactive strategies this year and bring CHAMPS to Sunland Park in the hopes of inspiring her students and staff to work harder and take better care of each other. "When you talk to children with respect, you get respect," said Karen Procelli, the school behavior specialist and facilitator of CHAMPS.

The CHAMPS program was adopted five years ago by the county as a tool for administrators and teachers to maximize learning while promoting a healthy and safe school environment. The proactive approach is intended to assist teachers with classroom management and create a "Structure for Success". The program focuses on student expectations and behaviors, resulting in higher rates of student achievement and a reduction in the frequency and intensity of misbehavior.

Through CHAMP's (conversation, help, activities, movement, participation and signal), the students are directly taught to meet these expectations by incorporating the module into their classroom activities. The modules address Time Management, Organizational Skills, Strategies to Increase On-Task Time, Increasing Motivation, and Creating a Positive Classroom Environment.

The CHAMPS initiative is one of many programs that have been facilitated by staff developers who are funded by the Project Bridge Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grant. In 2007, Broward County Public Schools was given a grant through the Department of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Department of Health and Human Services to create partnerships for safe, healthy schools and communities.

For the past several years, Sunland Park has been struggling with behavioral issues and working towards increasing their enrollment. Procelli said the school is located in a low socio economic community and it is extremely difficult to get parent participation and support. The administration has implemented many other programs, but they have seen that the students are responding to the CHAMPS philosophy and the visual reminders they have posted throughout the school. Sunland Park Elementary was trained in CHAMP's: A Positive and Proactive Approach to Classroom Management in the 2008-09 school year.

"If they don't know what is expected of them, then they will not know what to do," Procelli said. "Our students need to communicate about their expectations and choices."

Sunland Park kindergarten teacher Karen Hamilton said it has been very helpful in creating a family environment in her classroom. There are reminders on the tables, walls and whiteboards encouraging the students to do what is expected of them and help others.

"They know the signals and how to behave when they are walking in the halls or in the cafeteria and they have even learned to wait until everyone is served so we can all eat together," Hamilton said adding that a daily routine is very important for her students at their young age.

Procelli said that although they are taking "baby steps" towards a better school environment, the number of referrals and suspensions has declined and the students like the program and the positive feedback they are receiving when they make use of it.

"These children are extremely easy to work with...all they need is love and attention," Procelli said.