

Repeat Offenders Program

Desert Horizon 2000/01
Pendergast School District, AZ

This program was designed for students with repeating misbehaviors serious enough to advance to Step 4 or 5. There were 26 students returning this fall who had five or more Step 4s and/or Step 5s. The concern was that these students had not embraced the principles of Make Your Day. They were not aware of alternatives or not willing to change their behavior. We recognized the need to raise their level of concern. These students were continuously in trouble, they were missing lessons and their parents were impatient with the program. Several strategies were adopted to divert the misbehavior and teach strategies for avoiding serious misbehavior.

Conference

Parents were contacted when school started and asked to attend a conference with their child. The parent was told that the child was not in trouble, instead we were interested in assisting the child in succeeding at school this year. At the conference, the parent and child were made aware of the numerous times the student had been out of class on Step 4 or 5. Emphasis was placed on the lessons that were missed, and the idea that the continuous misbehavior was not productive or healthy for the child, nor convenient for the parent. The student and parent were made aware that there are alternative schools available if the child is not willing to comply with Make Your Day at Desert Horizon. Student and parent were made aware that we were willing and able to pursue alternative programs in the best interest of the student.

Lunch Bunch Counseling

The student and parent(s) were informed that we had a plan we would be following. One mistake (Step 4 or 5) would be understandable. However, at the second serious offense, the student would spend a week of lunch recess periods in a class with the guidance counselor. The student would complete assignments and discussions on topics such as dealing with feelings and

avoidance of violence. This class would be extended for students in need of extra support. Skills and strategies for making friends and settling differences verbally are emphasized. The guidance counselor arranged her schedule to make herself available for these classes during the lunch recess periods.

Behavior Contracts

If, after the student has received a week of counseling, a third Step 4 or 5 is chosen, a conference is held to put in place a behavior contract. Participants are the student, parent(s), teacher, administrator, and the guidance counselor. The contract is written to meet individualized needs. Make Your Day may be modified.

Alternative Recess

Some students have been observed to function well in the classroom, but have difficulty with the freedom of the playground. The behavior contract may include participation in the alternative recess program. This is a more structured environment supervised by a playground aide. No more than 10-12 students are supervised in quiet leisure activities including board games, reading, drawing, or just visiting. Appropriate behavior can result in the opportunity to invite a friend to attend alternative recess.

Special Passes

Based on need, some students were given a special pass to come to visit with the assistant principal or guidance counselor to avoid conflict. This is to be kept handy and used when things seemed to be getting out of hand. Once they are on Step, it is too late. Several students have made use of these passes to good effect.

Alternative Programs

At the fourth or fifth offense, the contract is considered broken and placement is made at an alternative site. The age and behavioral management needs of the student are primary considerations for placement.

Parent Response

Several parents expressed appreciation that their child was not going to be allowed to continue to misbehave. They all agreed that missing lunch recess to take classes to learn how to get along with people was appropriate. Because the conferences were held before the child had misbehaved in most cases, everyone was calm and able to listen and participate in the discussion.

Student Response

Thus far, ten of the twenty-six repeat offenders have participated in the classes. The majority of students have avoided Step 4 and 5. The assistant principal and the guidance counselor visit informally with these behaviorally at-risk students to check on progress and attitude.