

THE BEST GAME IN TOWN... AND ERUSD IS PLAYING IT!



What is it and what is it called? It's a classroom Behavior Management Method or Strategy called **The Good Behavior Game**.

Who is "playing" it? North Ranchito Elementary first and second graders (6 classrooms) are in a one-year grant funded pilot program.

When did it the District begin using it? The practice was implemented two weeks ago.

How does it work? Good question! Let's start at the beginning...

Baldwin, Kansas 1967 - a young first year teacher put together an unusual practice for her fourth grade classroom to gain and maintain control over various negative classroom behaviors. Two years later, the Good Behavior Game was formally created by that teacher, Muriel Saunders, along with a University of Kansas graduate student, and an Applied-Behavior analyst. It is now considered world-wide to be one of the most powerful prevention strategies that teachers can use to improve lifetime outcomes for children. The Paxis Institute in Arizona, promoting peace, productivity, health, and happiness, further developed the method as the PAX Good Behavior Game. Numerous scientific studies have found that this game strategy can reduce disruptions, aggression, ADHD symptoms, and even future drug and alcohol abuse and criminal behavior when applied early-on to primary grade students. The institute claims that just one year of exposure to this positive intervention can have a 20 to 30 year effect.

Many, hearing the name of the strategy, assume that it reinforces "good behavior"; the Game actually reinforces voluntary control over attention and reduces susceptibility to demeanor, deportment, or practices that disrupt the learning environment such as leaving one's seat without permission, talking out of turn, passing notes, making noise, and playing with toys or other gadgets without permission. These behaviors are clearly defined by the teacher, but not before the teacher introduces a vision of a wonderful and happy school environment.

The Game is played 3 times a day, 5 days a week. The teacher decides when to

put the game into play, which might be before a particularly hard lesson such as a math test or reading instruction. The game can last anywhere from 3 to 30 minutes. A digital clock tells the students how much time has elapsed. The classroom is divided into balanced teams; there are four teams in each of the six pilot classrooms. The teams compete to have more "PAX" (peace) - a good thing - than disturbances, called "Spleems" - a negative thing. In order to cue the students that a Pax Quiet is in place, North Ranchito primary teachers use the tones of a harmonica to bring about silence and attention.

During the period when the game is active, if the teacher notes a team individual "misbehaving", he/she will neutrally and unemotionally state that the team has a Spleem point. No one individual is called out or penalized. The teams with less than 4 spleem points are awarded a fun activity they call "Granny's Wacky Prizes" which are often a few minutes of a normally disruptive activity such as tapping a pencil, playing "air drums", or sizzling like bacon! This is called "delayed gratification" - with permission! And reportedly, the kids are loving it.

This is a wonderfully exciting tool the district is employing for this school year. Students will learn to self-regulate behavior and have the opportunity to be fully engaged in the learning process. It also reduces a teacher's stress and increases classroom safety. El Rancho Unified School District is fortunate to have such a "Game" strategy that when used collectively will have the greatest input to empower a whole lifetime of success for its students.

Spotlight On...

Hector Palencia, Gang Diversion Counselor

Hector Palencia has intimate knowledge of the problems facing area young people. He enters his first year with the District's Diversion programs to keep those students at risk out of harm's way and on a path to productivity and a lifestyle free from gang activity.

Mr. Palencia graduated with a B.A. in English and a Religious Studies minor from the University of California, Irvine. From there he was granted an M.A. in Systematic Theology (with honors) from Berkley's Graduate Theological Union, and then adding another Masters degree in Social Welfare from U.C.L.A.

Mr. Palencia is to be applauded for such an impressive education. Putting his graduate studies to work in the field of gang resistance diversion programs, Mr. Palencia has numerous professional qualifications in addition to presenting papers on Social Welfare and Gangs, Criminalization of Homelessness, Crime of Being Homeless, Working with Trauma in Youth, and Gang Round Table Discussions.

Mr. Palencia's work history demonstrates a compassion borne out of his spiritual endeavors and a capacity for working with marginalized young offenders. He came to our district from Evergreen Hospice where he provided grief counseling and facilitated family groups in mediation. For 4 years, he was with the East Whittier City School District overseeing all middle school diversion programs, created partnerships with community agencies to meet needs not being addressed for students, and he became successful in writing numerous grants including the Safe Schools/ Healthy Students grant initiative. He served as a spiritual counselor for Hospice Care, and as an intern for the EWCSO, provided mental health services for elementary and middle school children. Early in his career, he was a drug and alcohol counselor handling at-risk youth case loads. It is clear that his experience and education will well serve the youth in our District.

For Hector's own self-care, he enjoys a variety of personal activities that include a 20-year Martial Arts regimen, plenty of exercise, and for inner well-being, he writes poetry, loves to cook, and is learning to play guitar.

The District welcomes a man of deep conviction and sensibilities to the rigorous and demanding work of diverting our youth from following the often-enticing gang connections with its inherent dangers. We welcome also his enthusiasm, his experience, and his commitment for keeping kids safe and healthy so they may grow into a life of promise and fulfillment.



ERUSD CLASS (Crime Line Assisting School Safety)

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