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For Tomorrow's Education Today

Positive Action® Newsletter

Spring 2007

Celebrating 25 Years of Serving YOU!

Note from the Developer



Millions of students get up every day and go to schools across the nation. Everyone—parents, teachers, principals, community members, and students—deserves to know that the policies and practices in place at schools actually work. Gradually, educators are accepting that there must be scientific evidence that what they do is effective.

At *Positive Action (PA)*, we have long held the belief that it is our responsibility to be able to assure our users that their time and money is being spent wisely on a proven program that will predictably improve their schools. That is why we are continually bringing you news about different agencies that have reviewed the research and found empirical evidence that our program works. This is an ongoing process for us, and we hope to have more good news to share with you soon.

We know that you care also, and that is part of why you use *PA*. While we have all the numbers, you see the small and large successes of the program firsthand, and we appreciate you sharing all of your wonderful stories with us. Your experiences, some of which we share in this newsletter, help others see how *PA* works in a variety of settings and meets the needs and goals of different populations.

Please keep your stories, pictures, and results coming. Let's work together to ensure that 25 years from now, they don't say that science was just another fad.

Sincerely,

Carol Gerber Allred

Carol Gerber Allred, Ph.D.
President/Developer

**Positive Action
Receives the
Highest Rating
from the U.S.**



Department of Education

PA was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) as the **top-rated character education program in the nation for improving both academics and behavior.**

PA achieved "positive effects," the highest possible rating, in both categories. Schools in the studies improved an average of:

- +15 percentile points in the **academic outcome** domain and
- +19 percentile points in the **behavior** domain.

While *PA* was number one in both of these categories, **no other program received a top rating in either category.**

The WWC findings confirm that *PA* stands alone in demonstrably helping students and schools simultaneously improve in behavior and academics.

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Highest Rating—continued from page 1

You, too, can achieve results with this program that is top-rated by the U.S. Department of Education.

PA is also recognized as a proven program by many other prestigious organizations. ■



CHARACTER EDUCATION

U.S. Dept. of Ed. What Works Clearinghouse

Character Education Partnership 

National Character Ed. Resource Center


ACADEMICS

American Institute of Research

Education Commission of the States

PREVENTION

U.S. Dept. of Ed. Safe & Drug-Free Schools


SAMHSA/CSAP Model Program 

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention

Helping America's Youth

Univ. of Col./

Study & Prevention of Violence

Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation 

 McGruff Strategies Center

INTERNATIONAL

International Safe Schools/
World Health Organization



Tyler and other kids at the car wash fundraiser.

Students Work to Save Children from Slavery

A fourth grade student at Discovery Bay Elementary School in Byron, California, could teach us all a lesson about what it means to be positive. Tyler Page participates in PA lessons every day at school, where he learns that you feel good about yourself when you think and do positive actions, and there is always a positive way to do everything.

“Seven children’s lives will never be the same because one group of children across the world applied the positive actions they were learning in class to real life.”

One day while watching TV, Tyler found a way to take positive action. Inspired and moved by an Oprah show that exposed parents selling their children into slavery in Ghana, Africa, he devised a plan to raise money to save those children.

Tyler knew that \$240 could save one child’s life. He organized a car wash fundraiser, and along with 25 other kids and the help of parents and local businesses, he raised \$1,705—enough to save seven children. The kids worked all day, only stopping for cookies and pizza. Some who had sports or other activities to go to did not want to leave,

and everyone asked Tyler when the next fundraiser would be. Tyler’s positive actions united an entire community behind a common cause.

all their efforts? A good feeling about themselves—and that’s all they need! It’s also what will lead them to hold more fundraisers to save more children. ■

Seven children’s lives will never be the same because one group of children across the world applied the positive actions they were learning in class to real life. And what do they get for

Wailuku, Hawai’i Honors Its Positive Action Teachers

Wailuku Elementary School in Wailuku Maui, Hawai’i, recognized their teachers for doing a great job implementing PA with a staff luncheon. We’d like to add our thanks to the PA Committee at Wailuku for encouraging their staff to keep up the good work. May the positive results continue! ■



Compton Excels with Positive Action

The stakes couldn't be higher for Compton Unified School District in Compton, California. It balances on the razor edge between community dysfunction and social progress. At times, the teachers' work can be discouraging, but the payoffs are immense when they see progress in the things that matter most: academics and behavior.

For the 34 elementary and middle schools in Compton, that happened when they began to phase in the *PA* program, first in only Kindergarten, Grade 5, and Grade 7, and eventually in all Grades K–8. The whole educational system became vibrant, energetic, even fun, as students and teachers actively engaged in the life of the community. The schools and community are moving beyond dysfunction and despair to help and hope—one child, one classroom at a time.

"We've used the *Positive Action* program in the way it was designed. Lessons are taught about 15 minutes every day,"

explains Saunya Ingersoll, the Compton Unified School District Prevention Coordinator. "I visit all of our classrooms, and the first thing I check on is the state of the kit: if it's open and well-used or if it's dusty, sitting under a pile of books. We insist that our teachers use the program because it helps us with our major tasks: improving our attendance, bettering our test scores, and decreasing our disciplinary referrals. We have wonderful outcomes."

"...it helps us with our major tasks: improving our attendance, bettering our test scores, and decreasing our disciplinary referrals."



Mr. Watkins' fourth and fifth grade students complete a *PA* writing exercise.

One kindergarten teacher uses *PA* concepts throughout the day in all her subjects. At another school, first grade teachers and students wrote their own *PA* song. One class of fourth and fifth graders wrote to their teacher, Mr. Watkins, to thank him for teaching them the best ways to act.

Watkins has been an enthusiastic and faithful implementer of *PA*. He says, "I like the *Positive Action* curriculum

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Chicago School Recovers from Student Shooting

Park Manor Elementary School and the surrounding community in Chicago, Illinois, could have bogged down in negativity after one of its young members was shot. But this *PA* school is taking proactive steps to reduce gang violence, and went ahead

with a planned *Positive Action* Day shortly after the horrific accident.

Eleven-year-old Markeis Willard was riding his bike to the park by the school on March 14th when he got caught in gang crossfire and was shot in the abdomen. Devastated by evidence of violence so near their innocent children, the parents and law enforcement vowed to make it a safer place.

Just a month later, on April 17th, Park Manor held their *Positive Action* Day. All teachers taught the same *PA* lesson, every classroom made a colorful *PA* banner, and some students shared their *PA* projects.

At an afternoon assembly, the principal and *PA*

Coordinator (also Markeis' teacher) thanked the students and faculty for their outpouring of support.

Dr. Carol Allred, President and Developer of *PA*, and staff from the University of Chicago at Illinois, presented a large outdoor banner that read, "Park Manor Elementary is a *Positive Action* School." Allred then shared a brief message to encourage the school to continue doing positive actions to make their school a better and safer place.

And, to the most enthusiastic applause, Markeis himself stood behind the podium and thanked everyone.

Park Manor is evidence that nothing can get in the way when people are committed to providing a safe, caring school environment where students can achieve success and happiness. ■



Students gather proudly around their new *PA* banner.

Principal Turns School Around

When Dr. Michael Perry walked into Critzer Elementary in Pulaski, Virginia, on his first day as principal, he found one child up a tree cursing at his grandmother and an office full of kids who were already in trouble. This was all before the first bell.

That was four years ago, and those were the least of his problems. Critzer Elementary, a school of about 450 students, did not meet any academic standards—federal, state, or local. It had the highest number of reported disciplinary incidents and suspensions in the county. People called Critzer a rural, inner-city school.

Four years later, Critzer is profoundly transformed. The school is fully accredited, meeting and exceeding federal, state, and local standards. It ranks among the highest academic performing schools in its district, and half-way through this year there have only been two suspensions.

What happened between then and now? Teachers hit the academic mandate full force, a team of counselors

helped at-risk children, and the entire school—teachers, support staff, and administration—supported a full implementation of *PA*.

The implementation was so successful because Perry ensured that the program aligned with three needs: time, a complete package, and scientific validity.

1. Time—“I’m really protective of my teachers’ time,” says Perry. A daily 15-minute period, called the morning meeting, was set aside to teach the *PA* lessons.

2. A Complete Package—Perry did not want to create extra work for his staff; everything had to be provided. *PA* was a complete year-long curriculum with all materials included.

3. Scientific Validity—The school board discovered a study that showed that a socially and emotionally safe environment was necessary for



Second grade students learn to manage anger with “See Red” glasses.

academic progress, and *PA* addressed those broad aims with proven results.

Once they chose *PA*, the school partnered with Pulaski County Schools and the New River Valley Community Services agency to receive a grant from the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Fund. Soon, the program was up and running, creating healthy, safe, positive classrooms where students could learn and thrive.

Although disciplinary incidents had already dropped dramatically in his first two years at the helm, Perry was pleased to see they were down by another 50 percent after the first year of *PA*, a feat he didn’t think possible. So, how did *PA* make it possible? “We are actively instilling the concept of self and mutual respect and caring. If a child needs a hug, they will get one at Critzer,” Perry explains.

Perry recently visited one of his classrooms, well-disguised as a banjo player called Mr. Tex. In a thick drawl, Mr. Tex told the children, “You are so smart. I wish I’d been so smart when I was a kid.” The children replied, “But Mr. Tex, you are smart and you can do anything.”

Their encouragement of another human being demonstrates that Critzer is well on its way to meeting its mission—“to build a community of lifelong learners who care about themselves and others.” It’s a real-world demonstration of *PA* at work! ■

Critzer Teachers: In Their Own Words

“Through the *Positive Action* program, our students are building self-confidence and learning to solve their own problems in appropriate ways.”

~Susan Wirt, Kindergarten Teacher

“I think the students have changed their way of thinking in dealing with situations at school as well as home. They often use the vocabulary from *PA* and refer back to lessons learned when similar situations arise.”

~Kym Allen, Grade 2 Teacher (See her class in the picture above!)

“What I love most about *Positive Action* is the way it pertains to the real issues students face in today’s world. It heightens student awareness about traits that enable them to become successful in life. ... The teacher’s manual is self-explanatory and easy to implement.”

~Lori Kessinger, Grade 5 Teacher

Compton—continued from page 3

because it allows teachers to discuss issues such as self-esteem, respect, and hygiene in more detail than we normally would, which helps the students tremendously. Due to the daily reinforcement, my students' behavior has improved immensely and, therefore, has made a positive impact on their academic achievement and attendance. My students now have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses because they now have a new and positive concept of themselves."

The changes in Compton middle schools are equally impressive. One school became a "Distinguished School" through the California Department of Education after adopting *PA*. Other schools report significantly lower disciplinary incidents.

"Every school needs a character-building program," adds Ingersoll. "We use *Positive Action*. We all want our kids to have the best—to be the best they can be." ■

Congratulations to California Districts for Improving Scores

We'd like to congratulate the California school districts using *PA* on their improved scores on the Healthy Students survey. We've recently heard good news from:

- Byron Union,
- Compton Unified,
- Escondido Union,
- Norwalk-La Mirada Unified, and
- El Dorado Union High School.

Here are some of the improvements reported from Escondido Union:

- Lifetime smoking reduced by 50%,
- Lifetime marijuana use reduced by 30%,
- Lifetime drunk/sick/high reduced by 40%,
- Bullying in last 12 mo. reduced by 25%,
- Carrying weapons in last 12 mo. reduced by 27%,
- Feeling safe at school increased by 56%,
- Meaningful participation at school increased by 50%, and
- School connectedness increased by 36%.

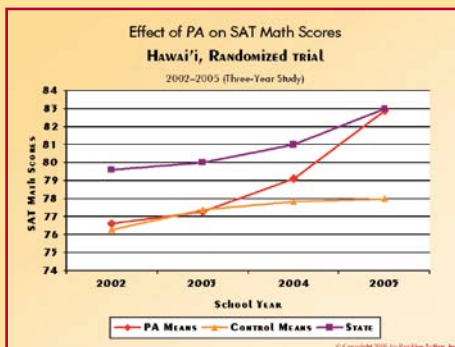
If we haven't yet heard about your great results, please let us know! ■

New Research Shows Positive Action Is Effective

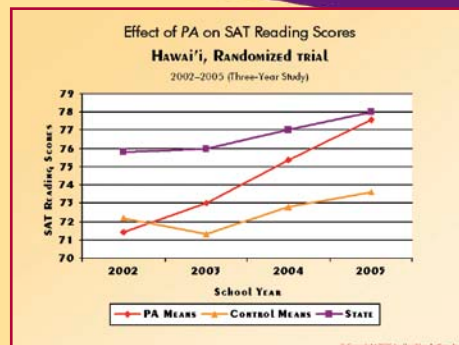
Report on the Hawai'i Randomized Trial

PA is currently being evaluated using data from a rigorous randomized experimental design in Hawai'i. For the study, schools sharing similar characteristics were paired with one another. One school from each pair was then randomly assigned to use *PA*. Those schools that were not selected to teach *PA* served as the control group for the study. After three years, the obtained results clearly and consistently indicate that the *PA* program achieves positive academic and behavioral results!

For academics, after three years' exposure to *PA*, students' mean math scores on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) rose by 6 percentile points compared to only 2- and 3-point increases for the control-group and state-reported averages for the same period. (See figure.)



Improvement in reading scores was equally good, with *PA* students' SAT reading scores rising by 6 percentile points, while the control-group and state-reported averages lagged behind with only 1- and 2-point increases for the same period. (See figure.)



For behavior, daily absences by *PA* students declined by 11%, while absences for the control group remained flat. *PA* schools also reported 88% fewer suspensions.

Teachers consistently rated *PA* students as less disruptive than the control students across an array of behaviors: destroying others' property, getting in fights, bullying other kids, and being disruptive in class.

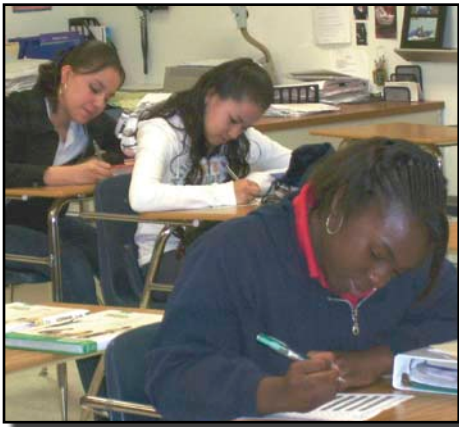
Continued on page 8

Data Shows Family Classes Program Works

A recent scientific study looked at 29 Utah families who were court-mandated to take part in *PA Family Classes*. Parent surveys administered before and after the seven-week program revealed immediate positive effects on three assessed factors:

- family conflict was down by 9%,
- family cohesion was up by 7%, and
- parent/child bonding was up by 10%.

Data from 45 families who participated in subsequent programs replicated the results of the pilot trial. This is a family program that really works! ■



Terrell middle school students take the *PA* pretest.

Preventing Substance Abuse Community-wide

When a parent calls you and asks, “What did you do? My kid is being nice at home and helping out around here,” you know you’re doing something right. And that something right for the Dallas, Texas, office of the national non-profit substance abuse prevention agency, Phoenix House, is *PA*.

It has worked especially well in Terrell, Texas. Phoenix House recognizes that families play an essential role in preventing drug use in youth, and *PA* supports their efforts to involve families.

“One of our most successful communities, Terrell, has adopted the *Positive Action* program in total—teaching the concepts and behaviors in the schools and adopting those practices in families and in the community. We could hardly believe the level of commitment and accomplishment from this community,” shares Diana Burns, Director of Program Planning.

The Terrell community recognized that its children were at stake and took action—*Positive Action*—to find a solution. The resulting positive environment spread through the community, reducing incidents of substance use and improving the

Continued on page 7

NEW AND REVISED PRODUCTS

Curriculum Revisions

PA is continually revising and creating new products based on customer feedback and current research. Within the last two years, Grades 2, 3, 4, and 6 materials have been revised, and new editions of Grade 7 and High School Kits II and III have been developed. More revisions are coming soon.

Standards Alignment

Customer feedback about increasing pressure on teachers and administrators to deliver academic results has prompted *PA* to align its lessons to core academic standards—science, language arts, social studies, mathematics, and health—for 49 states. The standards are searchable on the website, a CD-ROM, or a booklet for Grades 4, 5, 7, and 8, with alignments for more grades coming soon.

Spanish Translations

In further efforts to make these vital lessons accessible to as many people as possible, *PA* is translating its curriculum into Spanish. Spanish kits currently available are Grades K–4, 7–8, *Middle School Drug, Family Kit*, and *Conflict Resolution Kit*, with more coming soon.

Family Classes and Parenting Classes

New kits from *PA* take the guesswork out of teaching family classes. In the *Family Classes Instructor’s Kit*, seven completely scripted lessons and prepared materials introduce the *PA* concepts to separate classes of children, adolescents, and parents, and then the whole family comes together. Families take home assignments from the *PA Family Kit*, which has been used to improve families’ lives for more than 10 years, and teach the lessons together before coming back to the next class. In the *Parenting Classes Instructor’s Kit*, parents *only* attend classes to learn the concepts, and then teach the *Family Kit* at home. The classes develop family members’ abilities and feelings of self-worth and prepare them for lifelong success and happiness.



Grade 7 Instructor’s Kit

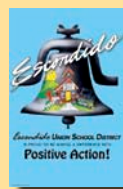


Family Classes Instructor’s Kit

NEW AND REVISED PRODUCTS

Custom Posters & Banners

Display a colorful poster or a weather-resistant vinyl banner with a PA logo and your customized message.



Wristbands

Seven different silicone wristbands remind students of the PA concepts and reinforce the positive actions they do.



Mini-TAF Badges

These miniature versions of the Thoughts-Actions-Feelings Circle can be worn by teachers or students, and serve as friendly reminders to choose positive thoughts, actions, and feelings all day.



New DVD Series Supplement the Positive Action Message

Enhance PA in an age-appropriate way with these engaging, high-quality DVD series produced by two nationally-recognized developers of educational materials.

Auto B Good™ Series from Wet Cement Productions

For Grades K–6, this series features entertaining characters in a car city, and teaches young students valuable character education lessons. Twelve DVDs have three episodes each.



Reality Matters Series from Discovery Education

For Grades 6–12, this series includes 13 DVDs: *Big Decisions*, *Cruel Schools*, *Deadly Highs*, *Extreme Measures*, *Family and Friends*, *High Performance*, *Obesity and Nutrition*, *Prescription for Trouble*, *Risky Business*, *Smoke Signals*, *Stress and Anxiety*, *Taking Care of Me*, and *Under the Influence*.



Skills for Healthy Living Series from Discovery Education

For Grades 9–12, this series includes 10 DVDs: *Advocating for Better Health*, *Analyzing Media Influences*, *Coping with Change*, *Dealing with Disabilities*, *Handling Stress*, *Learning to Like Yourself*, *Making Healthy Choices*, *Playing It Safe*, *Setting Goals for Healthy Living*, and *Taking Charge of Your Health*.



Preventing—continued from page 7

lives of individuals and families in an unprecedented way. “It turns out that a positive environment, which includes families, schools, and communities, is profoundly important for young people,” says Burns.

“With Positive Action, you get a U.S. Department of Education-approved character program that also improves academics...”

In addition to Terrell, Phoenix House is using PA throughout Texas to reach 15,000 children with universal, preventive drug education, and they also have programs for selected and indicated populations.

“Positive Action dovetails with our mission and our language. We teach and encourage positive behaviors—it’s part of our mission statement,” says Burns. “With Positive Action, you get a U.S. Department of Education-approved character program that also improves academics... That’s absolutely great.” ■

TV Special on ABC Family and Oxygen TV Channels to Spotlight Positive Action

PA has been selected by New Line Media for a starring role in their educational series, *Today’s Family*. We’re proud of this recognition and are looking forward to the opportunity to reach a new audience in the feature segment, “Building a Solid Foundation,” in the show’s series, “Touching Hearts, Changing Lives.” We couldn’t have described PA any better ourselves! The episode will air on the national networks ABC Family Channel and Oxygen TV®, as well as on 25 regional networks. Check our website to see when and where it will air. ■

A Teenager Transforms

"A young man in our after-school program was traveling down a bad road, otherwise going nowhere, lost in an impossible situation. ... At first, the two of us went around and around. And then we began to teach the *Positive Action* concepts and **those common sense, essential behaviors that can make a good life.** Even things as basic as health or the need for studying is new to some of our kids. This young man was able to

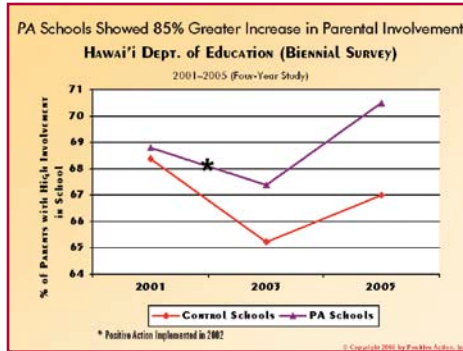
use those positive thoughts and behaviors and began to project what might happen if he continued to pursue negative behaviors. ... He began to choose another way of communicating and to use a myriad of positive behaviors. I'm so pleased with his progress. ... He's more positive, happy, and engages in the work we do here. ***Positive Action* was an essential part in that transformation.**"

~Deborah Gregor,
Executive Director,
Youth Achievement Center,
Leavenworth, Kansas

Finally, *PA* schools also showed an 85% greater increase in parental involvement. (See figure.)

New Research—continued from page 5

Concerning substance use, students in *PA* schools were 30% less likely to have used tobacco, 35% less likely to have used alcohol, 78% less likely to have been drunk, and 100% less likely to have tried an illegal drug than students in control-group schools.



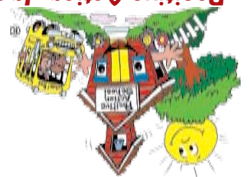
Simply put, *PA* is an easy-to-use, comprehensive approach to education that supports and engages everyone involved: administrators, school staff, teachers, students, parents, and the local community. **For 25 years, *PA* has been consistently producing compelling results!** ■

www.positiveaction.net

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