

Behavior Banquets and Makowski's Shining Stars

*Stanley M. Makowski Early Childhood Center
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To improve student discipline, the Stanley M. Makowski Early Childhood Center partnered with the University of Buffalo to create a student-behavior program called Makowski's Shining Stars. Teachers tracked students' behavior and rewarded those who followed five schoolwide rules. At specially planned dinners, psychology doctoral students talked with families about child development while other psychology students worked with the children on positive social skills.

A steering committee of teachers from each grade level chose the five rules. Children who followed them each day received a positive note to take home; four positive notes earned the child an opportunity to participate in a "Fun Friday" activity.

The Steering Committee and the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) knew it was important to inform parents about Makowski's Shining Stars so that they could support the positive behaviors at school and at home. As a result, they hosted a "Behavior Banquet" to explain the new behavior rules to families. Parents eagerly attended and expressed strong interest in learning more about managing their child's behavior. The Steering Committee and the ATP decided to expand the banquets to three a year. They chose topics of interest to teachers and parents, such as helping children with homework, getting children to listen, dealing with bullying, and neighborhood safety.

During the free dinner, a psychology doctoral student talked to parents about the evening's topic. Meanwhile, the students enjoyed pizza and Buffalo wings and worked with gradu-

ate psychology students on positive social skills. One graduate student worked with the pre-kindergarten through second-grade students while another worked with the third- and fourth-grade students and any older siblings in attendance.

The University of Buffalo supplied the staff and the dinner, and the ATP provided dessert and drinks, the building space, and staff to assist the doctoral students. School staff volunteered their time, because they recognized the program's importance.

Almost 100 families attended each Behavior Banquet, with some families attending all three. Parents looked forward to expressing their concerns and feeling supported. In addition to suggesting topics for future banquets, parents said that they used the strategies learned at the banquets at home and enjoyed assisting their children with social skills.

Since the start of the banquets, teachers and administrators have seen an improvement in student behavior. The number of suspensions has decreased and the number of students able to participate in Fun Fridays has increased. Because completing homework is one of the five schoolwide rules, the number of students completing all of their homework has also risen. In the future, Makowski plans to use the banquets to inform parents about other important topics that lead to student success.

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