

Lakeland Leader Program

*Lakeland Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore, Maryland*

Good behavior pays off at Lakeland Elementary/Middle School. For practicing the trait of the month—respect or pride in their work, for example—students accumulate points given by teachers. The students with the most points each week win prizes, such as books or snacks, and the class that earns the most points each month is treated to a pizza or ice cream party.

The Lakeland Leader Program is paying off in bigger ways, too. The school suspension rate is lower; teachers say that students' behavior has improved significantly; and the principal sees a much better atmosphere around the school.

Looking for ways to improve student behavior, a group of teachers researched behavior reinforcement programs that worked at other schools. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) then brainstormed ideas for a program that would work best for Lakeland. The school's Awards Committee, which for several years has recognized positive behavior and accomplishments among students, oversees the program. The committee determines the curriculum, prizes, and program structure. It is also responsible for publicizing the program, rewarding the students and classes, and ensuring that teachers are actively encouraging students to perform the trait of the month.

To maximize the impact of Lakeland's program, the Awards Committee publicizes it heavily to students, parents, and teachers. Teachers highlight the trait of the month in their classrooms and give points to students

who demonstrate that quality. The school also displays promotional posters in its hallways to remind students and visitors about the month's highlighted character trait.

Students are not the only participants: The school encourages parents to practice each trait at home and recognize when their children are displaying it. The school publicizes the program in its monthly parent newsletter, and teachers encourage students to talk about what they learn at home.

The Lakeland Leader Program educates and empowers students by recognizing outstanding character qualities. By creating a positive environment in the school, the program has definitely improved students' overall behavior, school leaders say. It is also promoting a more positive academic atmosphere that will make it easier for students to learn, and it inspires individual students to be good human beings.

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