



## **Safe Ways to Behave Student Workshops**

During the 2008-2009 school year, Philadelphia 9<sup>th</sup> graders participated in a series of AmeriCorps member-facilitated workshops called *Safe Ways to Behave* (SW2B). After the workshop was completed the students' teachers were given a survey regarding the effect of the workshops on the students. The first part of the survey asked teachers to reflect on the changes they saw in their students' classroom behaviors/attitudes. The second part of the survey allowed teachers to respond freely and in more depth to open-ended questions about the effect on the program. Teachers were asked to comment on the program components, the facilitators and the effect the program had on their students. A total of 27 responses were tallied for this report.

### **Changes in Observed Student Behaviors**

Teachers reported observing at least some positive behavioral changes in over three-quarters (79%) of their students who participated in the *Safe Ways to Behave* workshops. Teachers were also asked to rate how much of the observed behavioral change they attributed to SW2B. Of the students who exhibited a positive behavioral change, teachers attributed that change, either partially or fully, as a result of SW2B for 81% of the students.

### **Students Grasp of SW2B Concepts**

Teachers were asked whether they felt their students grasped the concepts taught in the SW2B curriculum and, if so, which particular concepts or strategies their students grasped the most. The following concepts were specifically identified by teachers:

- Self-Esteem
- Communication
- Triggers and Response
- Self-Destructive Behavior
- Decision-Making
- Resisting Negative Influences
- Developing a Positive Support System

### **Students Using Strategies**

Teachers were asked to report whether they saw students using any of the strategies they identified. Twenty-two teachers reported seeing their students using the strategies. One teacher noted:

*At times, I notice students vocalizing that they are making choices and using strategies to avoid conflict. They seem to know the strategies that were taught but still struggle to incorporate them on a daily basis.*

### **Reported Changes in Class Climate**

When teachers were asked whether they noticed any change in the overall climate of their classroom, 6 responded not seeing any change in climate. One teacher noted that the classroom was good from the beginning of the school year. Of the teachers who noted changes in classroom climate, changes included:

*The climate is less hostile.*

*The students express themselves better, have more interesting discussions and respect classroom supplies.*

*I first substituted for this class in November at which time the classroom was a violent environment. Students were physically and verbally abusive. I rejoined this group in February--I have watched them develop into people who demonstrate respect toward one another. They are able to be seated and learn... [The students] received more skills toward creating a healthier learning environment.*

*Students are bonding better as a class.*

*A lot of the vocabulary changes in terms of climate. [Students are] using phrases such as 'support systems' and 'emotional triggers.'*

*The overall climate in the classrooms of the 8th grade has changed for the better overall. While things are not perfect, the SW2B program certainly provided an outlet for students that worked.*

### **Quality of Information Provided**

Teachers were asked whether the information provided through SW2B was necessary and appropriate. Some of their responses on how the information was necessary and appropriate were:

*The students need coping skills to deal effectively with these very real issues in their lives [that] silently often monopolize their existence.*

*My students need to know what triggers their negative behavior and what supports they have in their daily lives.*

*The students need to realize [that] there are adults in their lives [who] will support them.*

*Students need to be aware of how they portray themselves.*

## **Student Examples**

Teachers were asked to choose a specific student they saw who responded especially well to SW2B. Positive student examples included:

*My one student wouldn't speak up in class at all, but became more verbal and willing to engage both with me and his peers.*

*R. responded well to the program. She went into the program extremely defensive and aggressive. Afterwards, she was much more equipped to make less hostile attributions towards the actions of others.*

*Once I heard my student say 'Didn't you learn how to treat others or talk to them last Tuesday? Use it!'*

*The student arrived to class late, without books. When you called [the parents], the student didn't care. Now she arrives on time, makes others feel welcomed and carries books.*

*One student was extremely disrespectful and apathetic when I first entered the classroom in January. Since then he has become much more pleasant and attentive... (he still needs improvement). His attitude towards school, his peers and teachers are all improving.*

*S. used to be aggressive and disruptive but now she has shown signs of improvement by making better decisions [and] resisting negative influences.*

*R. is a student who responded very well. He was a student who was often off-task in regards to assignments and made constant poor decisions socially. I think his change is in large part due to the program.*

## **SW2B Facilitator Feedback**

Finally, teachers were asked about the quality and work of the SW2B facilitators. Comments highlighted positive aspects of the facilitators:

*The facilitators were all great. They were prepared, presented in an interesting manner and used professional language.*

*They stayed professional during tough days, came in everyday, [and] knew how to adapt the lessons to the students and communicate to the students.*

*The facilitators worked very well with the students. They demonstrated patience and respect with an ability to maintain class control. Their professionalism was consistent. They were able to be mentors to the children without becoming too personally involved. They created an environment that was good for sharing their personal stories.*

*[EducationWorks] staff was always upbeat, professional, knew their subject area well and always had a safe, nurturing environment that all the students could feel safe and share their feelings without feeling threatened by their classmates.*

*I thought all of the facilitators were well-prepared, professional and excellent role models for our students. I hope to have the program again.*