



A Florida School Moves from an F to an A

Pineview Elementary School is located in Tallahassee, a city in Northern Florida. It's at the center of an area with a large number of non-English-speaking children. There is so much diversity that more than 40 languages are represented on the campus. The people of Pineview have decided this is a positive attribute.

"It's wonderful!" enthuses Marilyn Rahming, the Principal. "Nothing we do is the same as other schools. Instead, we've adapted the usual school traditions for our kids and our families. For example, most schools have a Fall Festival; we had an International Festival. Our students and their parents brought food, their national costumes, their music, and special items from their cultures."

"The Positive Action program is a perfect fit for us. It's inoffensive for any culture," says Rahming. "It's not an add-on; we use it as a way of operating, a way of work. It provides a behavioral guide for our children. Children need to be taught how we behave in this culture, what the rules are, what the expectations are. It's discipline, but focused in a very positive and effective way."

Pineview has involved the entire school in the Positive Action program in a variety of ways. Kevin Johnson is their Positive Action Coordinator, and a team plans all of the school's Positive Action activities.

At assemblies, students sing Positive Action songs, and awards are given. The notes from their "ICU Doing Something Positive" boxes are read aloud. The class with the most "ICU" notes is presented with a balloon with an apple attached. The kids are very proud of that award.

"We also use the program as an introduction to American culture and the rules of United States citizenship, as part of our social studies program. We work on things like washing your hands before meals, holding your hand up before you talk, table manners, and how to use money," explains Rahming.

Of course, this all goes home to the students' families, so they can use the lessons to adapt more quickly to American culture. It's the core of education for them—the core of life.

“When I first came to Pineview,” Mrs. Rahming remembers, “our students were struggling academically.” In fact, the first years that FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) preliminary testing was held in the Pineview district, the school would have received an “F.” The following year, they received what would have been a “D.” Now, they are officially an “A” school.

“We had to work diligently to achieve that, our staff and students both. The standards are changing this year, so we're not sure where we'll be. But we can assure you of this: we'll figure it out, we'll develop a plan of positive action for our teachers and our students, and we'll get where we need to be.”