



the topics under discussion.

Three important themes drive this book:

- ✓ Realize that you are the adult in the room and know that it is critical that you take action early if undesirable behaviors are to be replaced by positive ones.
- ✓ Build relationships with students quickly and renew them continuously if you wish to create a physically and psychologically safe classroom.
- ✓ Don't forget to laugh regularly with your students and at yourself.

Using these themes as part of the criteria for making decisions pertaining to classroom management will make it more likely that the best decisions are made.

Managing the Madness is bursting with practical ideas that can be easily implemented. These ideas provide a starting place for the new teacher and a point of reflection for the experienced educator. Here is another book from NMSA's professional collection that should be on every teacher's bookshelf and in every middle grades school library.

Mahoney Middle School takes on the Wii Challenge! (Changing the school culture, one Wii at a time...)

Jeff Kozaka, Project Reach Specialist

It all started in the Project Reach classroom at the beginning of last year. Mahoney Middle School had been awarded a mini-grant of \$1200.00 from "Let's Go" to promote their 5-2-1-0 campaign (5 or more servings of fruits & vegetables, 2 hours or less recreational screen time, 1 hour or more of physical activity, and 0 sugary drinks) in the school and the community. While other schools formed committees and developed curriculum, Project Reach students were given the chance to implement their own unique idea: to challenge and change the culture at Mahoney from food rewards, such as pizza parties and cup cakes, to physical rewards. That's where the Nintendo Wii Fit comes in.

The Project Reach program, which is part of Jobs for Maine's Graduates Program (JMG), is a project-oriented and adventure based program designed to address the challenges of middle school. The students and the specialist actively plan their community service projects together, giving the students ownership over the projects, rather than just being told what to do. The Project Reach students decided to purchase three Nintendo Wii systems and the Wii Fit balance board and then use a portion of the grant money to purchase healthy food and drinks. Their idea: Instead of teachers throwing pizza parties to their classes for a job well done, teachers now contact Project Reach and schedule their own fully catered Wii party for their class!

The first obstacle for the students was the teachers' fear of technology, especially game systems. So, during an after school staff meeting, a select handful of Project Reach students presented the Wii Fit and Wii Sports to the entire Mahoney staff and encouraged them to try them out. Cautiously, one by one, the teachers tried the games and were hooked! Project Reach students explained that they would be doing all the set up, instructing the students on how to play, and buying the food (fresh vegetables and fruits, juices, and bottled water). All the teachers had to do was sign up!

The students' next idea was to hold grade level competitions, with the prizes being a fully catered Wii party. Around

Thanksgiving, Project Reach sponsored Stuff-A-Bus, a non-perishable food drive for a local shelter in Portland. Students from every grade were encouraged to bring in canned goods and the homerooms with the most items collected won a Wii party. Next was a round of Wii parties as a reward for all the grades that completed the MEA's, then a school wide cell phone recycling drive by Project Reach. Another student suggested offering the Wii's at the dances as an alternative to dancing. At the close of the school year the Project Reach program has hosted 33 Wii parties with an average party consisting of 20 students. In less than a school year, Project Reach students have promoted the 5-2-1-0 movement to over 85% of the school's population!

Near the end of the school year, a select few Project Reach students were asked to be presenters to the "Let's Go" symposium for educators sponsored by Hannaford. Needless to say, the kids were the hit of the day and their workshop was packed for all three sessions. This was the first time students were asked to be presenters at a symposium and they were fantastic!

Last spring, Project Reach students were moving into the second phase of their plan: to build a vegetable garden to supplement their Wii parties and lower their overall food costs. Melding technology with organic farming? All in a day's work for a Project Reach student!

During the summer months, Project Reach students met once a week to work in the garden. After hours of weeding, watering, and applying organic fertilizers, the Mahoney vegetable garden produced over 200 lbs of produce. The first 100 pounds were donated to The Food Cupboard, a local, community food pantry that supports residents who are classified as low income families. The second 100 pounds went right back into the school to provide healthy snacks for our home economics program and supplement the cafeteria's salad bar.

Our second year has started off with a dramatic increase in our Wii parties! After only a month, we've booked nine Wii parties for October and November!