

PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse Rates *Positive Action* as the *Only* Program in the Nation to Have Positive Effects in Improving Behavior and Academics

Improving students' behavior improves their academic performance, test scores, and the overall environment of a school and a community. Using this approach, the *Positive Action* program has earned the distinction from the U.S. Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse as the only evidence-based character education program in the nation to achieve the top rating of "positive effects." These "positive effects" were demonstrated in both the behavior (average of +19 percentile points) and academic outcome (average of +15 percentile points) domains.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) was established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to provide educators, policymakers, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence regarding what works in education. The WWC standards are rigorous, and few studies and programs have been able to meet its stringent requirements.

To date, WWC has systematically rated the effectiveness of over 70 national character education programs designed for use in elementary, middle, and high schools. Programs are reviewed for student outcomes related to positive character development, pro-social behavior, and academic performance. Additionally, the WWC reviews closely related areas, such as social-emotional learning, conflict resolution, violence prevention, social skills training, and service learning.

Positive Action earned its top rating based on two studies: a randomized experimental trial in Hawaii and a high quality matched-control study in a large school district in the southeastern United States. Both research studies evaluated academic progress and behavior in schools using the Positive Action program. The research was conducted by Dr. Brian Flay, Professor, Department of Public Health, Oregon State University. The research compared elementary schools participating in the Positive Action program to comparable elementary schools not using the program. These are the results according to the WWC Improvement Index.

- Standardized achievement test scores in reading and math: average of +16.5 percentile points
- Grade retention: +36 percentile points
- Suspension rates: average of +19.5 percentile points
- Substance use outcomes: average of +22.25 percentile points
- Violence rates: +18 percentile points
- Absentee rates: +10 percentile points

Carol Gerber Allred, Ph.D., President and Developer of the *Positive Action* program, believes these results are due to the program's philosophy that "you feel good about yourself when you think and do positive actions, and there is always a positive way to do everything." Allred explains, "*Positive Action* is a comprehensive character education

program that teaches a full range of positive behaviors, creating a safe and encouraging environment, and giving students the skills and motivation to become effective achievers.”

Educators from participating schools have heralded the evidence-based character education program as one that gives students skills for a lifetime of achievement. Suzee Fujihara, a teacher from Lihikai Elementary in Maui, Hawaii, applauded the effects of *Positive Action*, noting that the program “gives children strategies to change negative attitudes to positive ones. The children are actually taught how to help themselves, and others, to be positive when negative thoughts and actions are present. *Positive Action*... makes them more independent in solving their problems and gives them the feeling of power to change their attitudes and actions themselves.”

Moreover, the positive effects of the program are enduring. Fujihara went on to say, “Teaching *Positive Action* does not end only in the first 15 minutes the lesson is taught—children learn how to be positive and empathetic to others. What a wonderful world we would have if everyone learned that they should treat others the way they want to be treated.”

For nearly 25 years, the *Positive Action* program has offered K–12 evidence-based character education kits. The kits contain instructor’s manuals with 15-minute lessons designed to be taught several days a week throughout the school year, as well as hands-on and student materials. The lessons focus on physical, intellectual, social, and emotional positive behaviors. The *Positive Action* program has been used in all 50 states, serving approximately 13,000 schools in 2,500 school districts and approximately 2,000 community groups and agencies. In addition to the WWC rating, the program has earned a place on many prestigious national lists of effective programs, including: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Prevention’s (SAMHSA/CSAP) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) Model Program; Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS); and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

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Resources:

1. What Works Clearinghouse

<http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/Topic.asp?tid=12&ReturnPage=default.asp>

Scroll down and click on “Positive Action” to read the WWC evaluation.

2. Positive Action, Inc.

<http://www.positiveaction.net>

<http://www.positiveaction.net/research/index.asp?ID1=3&ID2=121&ID3=285>

<http://www.positiveaction.net/research/index.asp?ID1=3&ID2=121&ID3=247>

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