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# National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

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EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

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Day Creek Intermediate School  
Etiwanda Public Schools  
Etiwanda, California

## **Video Transcript: Building Character and Knowledge in Middle School**

*Dana Guerra, ELA & Social Studies Teacher:* PACK is a program we have here at Day Creek that's personally achieving character and knowledge and we work with students at their level in language arts and math as well as on their development in character. So we're focusing on both academic and social aspects of our students. It's more than just an intervention program, it's regularly embedded within our school day.

*Andy, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student:* It's the only class in our period, in the whole schedule that is based on how you, how well you do in academics. So, let's just say maybe if you're struggling in math, then you'll be placed in a lower PACK class. However, that isn't a bad thing because PACK classes are specially designed for you and your needs.

*David Apodaca, Principal:* Students are placed in PACK based on data. However, these groups, these classes that we create are flexible. Each grade level and each content level in each grade level have the ability to move students very fluidly throughout the year, depending on how students are performing on, not only common assessments, but how they're performing in class.

*Dana Guerra:* I would say that the highlight of being here at Day Creek is truly the fact that we want to meet our student's needs academically, but we also really want to help their character grow.

*David Apodaca:* Working with middle school students, you have to respect the fact that this is a huge transition time in their lives. They're going through changes in not only their physical body, but emotionally. And if we don't recognize that and respect that, then academic success will never come. So the way we respond to meeting the needs of, of middle school students is by helping them develop in their character through our character education program. We have a philosophy here that we believe that if students know this kid who's sitting next to them more, they're more likely to be kind to them.

*Andy:* So character education, it takes up our PACK period, um on every Monday. They'll just show you about character and like optimism, responsibility, selflessness, all types of like, character acts so what we're trying to promote here is just a more positive community and how we can help each other out and just not, this school is just not about academics, it's more like even just outside of school, like how you behave and like how you act and how you're toward other people.

*Mikah, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Student:* We talk about stuff like respect and influence and responsibility. We do activities to get to know people in our class. I think that matters because it could make people second guess bad choices or, and it helps you to build friendship and communication skills and to get to know people around you.

*Dana Guerra:* If another school wanted to work with the PACK program, I think one thing that the administrators and leaders need to invest in is developing the data and giving the teachers the time to really plan for meeting the student's needs. That's been instilled into the culture here, into the teachers new and old and into the students. And I think the students are comfortable enough that if they feel that they're not getting the support, they'll come up and say, I need to be enriched, I really need more support and I think having that flexibility within the administrative level and the teacher level is what allows the program to be successful.

*Alexandra Kuramata, Student Services Assistant:* I think, in order to support some of the students that might need it the most, you kind of have to build that connection with them first. I think the relationship is the number one place to start with because they want to be able to trust you. And you're going to gain that trust by having that relationship. And once that relationship's built, then you can go from there and work on the educational practices.

*David Apodaca:* It's very important to make sure that every kid feels like they're a part of the Day Creek family, Day Creek community. And the only way to do that when you have a large school is to empower your teachers and every staff on your campus, because you can't do it by yourself as a principal, every adult on campus has to make sure that they make a connection with with as many students as they can and reach out. And you really allow each teacher to do that in their own way. Whether using PE teachers, custodians, campus support, instructional aids, every aspect.

*Matilda Kaneshina, Math & Science Teacher:* When we got the Blue Ribbon Award and I was telling all my friends, and I think it's such an honor. And, of course, they ask, "Well, what makes you special?" It's because the teachers work so hard for all of our students here at our school and our students are great kids. They're kind, and they work really hard, and they know that they can achieve.

*Kenny Evans, ELA & Social Studies Teacher:* I think there's this idea out there that middle school kids are hard to get along with. And, I'm here to tell you that that's just not the case. They all come with their own unique set of struggles, but when it comes right down to it, they're just developing people like all of us.