

Practical Ideas for Visual Expectations, Assemblies, and Student Safety with Ali Kurt

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SUMMARY

Allie Kurt, a behavior coach at a Title 1 school in Lincoln City, Oregon, discusses her implementation of Conscious Discipline over the past three years. She emphasizes the importance of staff involvement and the creation of resources, such as expectation videos and the Shubert players program, to enhance student behavior and emotional learning.

- Allie is in her fourth year of practicing Conscious Discipline, with her school in its third year of implementation.*
- Teachers have taken an active role in the process, contributing to the development of classroom strategies and expectations.*
- Visual aids and expectation videos have been created to help students understand behavior standards in various school settings.*
- The Shubert players program involves staff acting out stories to teach social-emotional skills, enhancing engagement and learning.*
- A student safety team was established, allowing students to apply for roles that promote safety and positive behavior in the school.*
- Allie's approach focuses on providing tools and support for teachers, fostering a collaborative environment for implementing Conscious Discipline.*
- The school has successfully integrated breakfast in the classroom, ensuring predictability and comfort for students at the start of their day.*
- Allie finds Conscious Discipline beneficial not only for the school community but also for her personal life, highlighting its transformative impact.*

Speaker 1: Sam.

Speaker 1: So I'm here with Allie, Kurt. Very excited. From Lincoln, Oregon.

Speaker 2: Lincoln City, Oregon.

Speaker 1: Lincoln City, Oregon, on the coast of Oregon. And that is a school. So tell me what you do in the school, your position, your role, and a little bit about the school.

Speaker 2: Okay. I'm the behavior coach in the school, and so I focus on Tier 1 implementation.

Speaker 1: Implementation of conscious discipline.

Speaker 2: Conscious discipline. So there's about 400 students, and they're all in kindergarten, first and second grade. And we're a Title 1 school. And so we have six kindergartens, four first grades, and five second grades. So a lot of little kids.

Speaker 1: Yes. A lot of little kids.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: Now you're doing some phenomenal stuff. So you're actually implementing conscious Discipline.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: So what year are you in your implementation and what kinds of successes are you seeing?

Speaker 2: So I'm in my fourth year of practicing and implementing, and then as a school, we're on year three. And so really this year, the classroom teachers have taken on a huge role in participating in jobs, in our staff meetings, and taking that step of trying things and being willing to attempt different structures in the classroom. And so I've been kind of supporting them through staff meeting, coaching, going into their classrooms. They all just launched Feeling Buddies last month, and so that's really exciting.

Speaker 2: We read Managing Emotional Mayhem the whole beginning of the year because we did two book studies year after year of your first, your big blue book. So now we're kind of moving on to the Feeling Buddies. And that's really exciting. They just started that last month, so they're very excited about that.

Speaker 1: So do you have any resistant staff that are like, there's no way I'm doing this, or do you just have kind of. What do you have?

Speaker 2: Well, we did in the past and what we did last year with my building principal, Sandy Mummy, we worked with the staff a lot to help it come from them. We tried that approach of saying, you're going to do conscious discipline and this is how it's going to be, and that didn't work very well. So actually, last year we had them write a list of things they do in their classroom to support students with behavior or social, emotional learning.

Speaker 2: And they made this list. So it included things like visual schedules, visual routines, mapping expectations, safe places. And they created this list. And what I did is I compiled everything and I said, this is what you said and what's missing? And some of them said, well, you need visuals here, and you're missing visuals here. And so I just said, okay. And I wrote it all down. And then I said, is there anything we don't need for kids?

Speaker 2: And it was really a list of all of the structures and things we are teaching kids in conscious discipline, the wish well structures, all the rituals. And they said, no, we need all of it. And so it really did come from them. And then from there we were able to go into this next year of you committed to this and how exciting. And then I get to like so support you in, you know, helping you be successful in any way that I can be available for you.

Speaker 2: So it's amazing.

Speaker 1: Yeah, good for you. Because I know many schools have tried this. Like this is what we're going to do. And of course you can't force a mindset shift. You have to kind of inspire it and let it evolve. And good for you to be able to set it up for them and let them bring forth what their next step is. So in that I know you do two things that is terribly impressive and one is, you know, we're always saying do visuals, do visuals, do visuals.

Speaker 1: But you took it a step further and you made videos. So tell me about your expectation videos that you've made.

Speaker 2: Sure. So we did start with the visuals. There was a huge need for something the kids could see in all of the areas. And when I went to CD101 a couple years ago with Allie Oliver, she said, you know, just do what you can, kind of control. So like, you know, in that time I was in charge of behavior plans and school wide anything. So I just one summer I just kind of sat and we thought about all of the expectations and we actually brought it back to our staff to see are these expectations what you want?

Speaker 2: So again, it came all from them. And that was, I guess at the end of that last year. So then over the summer I used what they gave me and took pictures of kids in the year and made all of those visuals and put them up all over and. And then all I did was have one of our teachers dress up in a tiger suit. And I just. Every video is like, hello, this is the expectations video.

Speaker 2: And I point to the visual so they know where they are in the school. But then I also kind of that modeling piece, I have the tiger walking in line quietly or keeping them hands to themselves or recess and how to play at recess. So really it's just me being willing to do that and then having someone be the tiger to model that for us.

Speaker 1: So tell me which one you did, what video? These expectation videos you did. You did like you said something, which ones have you Done.

Speaker 2: So every area of the school has a video and set of visuals. So we have hallway is a big one. Cafeteria. We had breakfast cafeteria and then lunch cafeteria because that's different. Playgrounds we had.

Speaker 1: Do you have arrival and dismissal?

Speaker 2: We have the dismissal one as they go. We have visuals out there as dismissal. And so like for example,

you know, I look on Clipart online, I try to find anything I can and if I can't find it, I draw it. And so then I just put it into the video or I put it into the visual. And so you'll see a lot of like hand drawn things around the school. But it doesn't matter if it's drawn or if it's clip art or if it's the real picture of the kid.

Speaker 2: It really seems to help them be more successful in all of the areas. And then the teachers also have this tool. And what I've learned this year is that creating tools for them and not, you know, not pushing my beliefs on them of conscious discipline, but creating things with the lens of conscious discipline and saying here's a tool you can use and they feel more comfortable trying it. So the Brain Smart start videos, they were not very comfortable, you know, learning this song in a staff meeting and then doing it right away.

Speaker 2: So we made videos for them so they could put them on and then once they got comfortable with the song, they could turn off the video and make sure they're having the eye contact and playfulness with the kids. So as much as we can do to kind of provide things for them and help them feel safe was what we learned is really helpful.

Speaker 1: Which is exactly what we do with kids. We started off, we provide it for you, we introduce it, we give you the tools you need, then we help you be successful with them. So with your videos, how did they show them? Did they show them on the whiteboard? I mean, how do you play these videos?

Speaker 2: Yeah, so we just have them on a Google folder and so they can just click it says like school wide expectations videos. And we have some that are just for classroom or we also have like assembly videos. We changed our assembly expectations this year so I made a new one with an assembly. We also had a maker space open up in the art room. And since everyone was going to use that area, we needed to make sure there were some consistent expectations there.

Speaker 2: So I just went in and kind of told, I just did it myself and said, this is what you do and modeled it for them. Sat on the carpet, quietly cleaned up, you know, said oops, modeled that Kind of thing. And then we just put it in this big Google folder and label it so everyone knows that this is the expectations. And then at the beginning of the year, in the middle of the year, after winter break, and then after, of course, spring break, we always kind of send it out again.

Speaker 2: So it's a great time to practice.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Don't forget these.

Speaker 2: Yeah. So just it's all kind of housed in one place. And it's also. The visuals are printed in books for them too, so they can read the books. It doesn't all have to be on the screen.

Speaker 1: So beautiful. And you find it successful.

Speaker 2: Yes, very successful.

Speaker 1: So you've changed. You've seen a difference in the change of the teacher's behavior and the children. Is that correct?

Speaker 2: Yes. And I think the teachers just like having a resource and, you know, it's helpful to know the expectations, especially if you're a new teacher to the school and say, these are expectations at recess. Okay. This is helpful to know what this school does. And then they can use the video to prompt conversations or problem solving after recess if there's issues. You know, it's really neat to see.

Speaker 1: I think I need to make those at my office.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: You know, just for employees and kind of like, here's the expectation here and.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And make it playful and fun. And it's just, you know, so people know what to do. And it's really. And so everybody, you know, like even our office staff, they work really hard at creating visuals for families that are coming in for registration because that can be an overwhelming process. So really any. And then of course, in, you know, behavior plans, just any visual to help kids be more successful and help remind teachers to use visuals as well.

Speaker 1: So they're not just, I think, you know, just with my office, just that health enrollment process, you know, when you get your new health plan, I mean, that should be all be in pictures and stepped you through with a support and a video.

Speaker 2: Stressful to go through all that insurance. And what does that mean again?

Speaker 1: Yes. So you also do something that's very. I mean, you do a lot of things. I mean, your school is just. Sounds like it's phenomenal. I hope to get out there and actually see it in person. But tell me about the Shubert players.

Speaker 2: Yes, that's a new thing this year. We learned about that at CD1 this summer. We got to, you know, be the Shubert players and act out the book. And I just hadn't considered that before. So now every month we have a theme and so we you know, started with composure and Shubert is a star. And so we had staff kind of more the specialists, because teachers are sitting with their classes and the specialists are willing to play each of the characters.

Speaker 2: And we have our assistant principal be the Schubert. And then. And our principal, Sandy Mummy reads the book for everyone. And everybody's the same character each time.

Speaker 1: So who was Mrs. Bookbinder?

Speaker 2: Our school counselor. Yes.

Speaker 1: Well, there you go.

Speaker 2: Yes. And so even some of the people from the office, they come in and they do it. So she reads the book, they act it out, but we always send out the book ahead of time through email. And then we also have a safety student safety team this year. And so this is really cool because they wear these little safety vests and their job for the month is to support their class or whoever they see in the hallway and being safe.

Speaker 2: So sometimes you'll see them reminding other kids to breathe or to go to the safe place or just to walk so they don't fall or bump into something. And then they also perform at the assembly, they do a song. So they did be a star for the Schubert. That one. So we do a brain smart start with our assembly. We always sing our school family song. We breathe, we do a connection, and then we commit. And then we do our Shubert players and then our safety team does their song.

Speaker 1: So how do you get on the safety team? That's fascinating.

Speaker 2: They apply for the job. So if they're interested in it, they just basically fill out an application and they say how they are safe in the school. And really sometimes there's a lot of kids and we just take one kid from each class. Some of the second graders, they seem really old in our building. I know they're young, but they are the leaders. And so sometimes they get to do it again or they get to help train the kindergarteners just to help me out, because I, you know, it's like 15, 16 kids to help train.

Speaker 2: So they help that too. So yeah, they just apply for it or they tell their teacher they're interested or they tell me and I say, okay, we'll talk to your teacher. And we just added kindergarten this month, last month. So this is new for kindergarten. They need to be a part of it.

Speaker 1: And some of the things we've done in other schools, we call them conscious discipline ambassadors. And often we have, where we have kids who apply for it and then we have kids who have a little more struggle with regulation and we actually ask them to be of service. Now they get to do lots of greetings and a little of this and a little of that. But it seems like when they get that honor or that ability to serve others in a different way, it kind of improves their behavior too, right?

Speaker 2: It does. There's been a couple of students that have been chosen knowing that, you know, being of service is something that will help them be more successful in the day. And so they, I mean it's really neat that the teachers are seeing that. So I let the teachers choose, I let them be a part of that application process and because I know that if, you know, they don't, they're not bought in. Like they may not let them do their job during the day or something.

Speaker 2: That's a school wide job. And so. But we've had kids be successful just because they're a part of those

Speaker 1: teams. So anything else that you're doing at the school that you think other teachers would love to hear about and maybe try at theirs or other behavior coaches could actually take. And anything else you have to share

Speaker 2: with us really just kind of any new, anything new that going forward, just being creative to implement conscious discipline. Like anything that kind of comes at you, you can see it through the conscious discipline lens. So for example, I shared that we had kind of a school wide problem of disruption and our problem solving team was able to realize that the kids were doing that for peer attention. That's what they thought, that's what the data said.

Speaker 2: And then we created a whole school wide lesson about wishing well and returning back to learning. And so we were able to use that problem and bring in conscious discipline. What our kids, what missing skills do our kids need? And so, and then we also had a new district kind of expectation to have breakfast in the classroom. And that's the first part of kids days and that's kind of a big impact. And so I mean we had meetings about breakfast in the classroom, which doesn't seem like a big deal.

Speaker 2: But for kindergarten, first and second grade, that's a whole brand new start to their day. So we knew like we know now, like that is so important. So we met with the people that were going to be kind of helping us. And you know, we ordered carts that went with. And our principal was, you know, you don't understand, they need to have predictability. And you know, she was trying to tell people in our district that. So we, I created the visuals for that and we brought it to the staff.

Speaker 2: And before the weekend, I believe the teachers read the story to, you know, read the social story, read the visuals. What is going to be posted them said that when you come to school, you're going to come to class, I'm going to greet you, and you can say, yes, I'd like breakfast. No, I may not. No, thank you. And you can change your mind up until this time, kind of until breakfast gets taken away. And I mean, it's been the smoothest rollout of the district is our school, because we tried to make sure that kids can feel predictable and safe when they came to school.

Speaker 2: So anything you do.

Speaker 1: So you did the social book, social story book, so they could actually look and see what was going to happen. You put up all the visuals. And I love that notion of you can change your mind. Up until here.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: Up until I know that that's me. You know, I'm. Oh, no, I'm not hungry or. What you eating? Yeah.

Speaker 2: Yeah. What's that?

Speaker 1: And the next thing you know, I'm in there trying to eat.

Speaker 2: Yeah. So anything, anything that comes up, even though it could feel scary at first or feel like that's not conscious, you know, that's not conscious discipline. There's a way to do it no matter what. And so that's what Sandy and I have been doing is like anything we can get our hands on that's conscious discipline and kind of help people be successful is what we've done. So.

Speaker 1: So what I'm hearing from you and seeing on your face is that you find conscious discipline valuable to you, your staff and your children. Is that true?

Speaker 2: Yes. And for sure, my personal life and my family. And so it's been. It's been an amazing four years. And so no turning back. It's just going forward from here on out.

Speaker 1: Thank you.

Speaker 2: Yes, thank you, Becky.