

From 58 Students to 20: How One School Uses Universal Screening and Tiered Behavioral Supports to Strengthen Student Well-Being

When the Students Who Need Help Aren't the Ones Raising Their Hands

Like many schools, Explore! Community School initially approached student support through a familiar lens: behavior.

Students who acted out in class often received the most attention because their needs were visible. But according to Alysha Profeta, Licensed Master Social Worker, that approach left an important group of students unnoticed.

"Once we started doing the universal screener, kids were popping up that were super quiet in class, or that I knew had things going on at home but the teacher didn't know anything about."



Alysha Profeta
Licensed Master Social Worker

The school realized that behavior alone wasn't providing a complete picture of student well-being.

By combining the DESSA universal screener with Move This World's Tier 1 and Tier 2 curriculum, Explore! developed a comprehensive system for identifying student needs early, providing targeted support, and helping students build the skills they need to thrive.

The results have transformed how the school approaches student mental health and behavioral support.

Building a Tiered System of Support

Explore! Community School uses a multi-tiered approach that connects assessment, instruction, and intervention.

Tier 1:

Supports for Every Student and School-Wide Consistency

Every classroom begins the day with Move This World during morning meetings.

Students engage with videos, discussion prompts, and activities designed to build social and behavioral skills. Teachers reinforce those concepts throughout the day, helping students apply what they've learned during academic instruction, peer interactions, and conflict resolution.

The school also uses consistent visual supports throughout classrooms, counseling offices, and student support spaces.

"When kids go into any room, they can use the same things," Profeta explained. "It makes a difference when they see the same language and resources everywhere."

Tier 2:

Data-Informed Small Groups

At the beginning of the year, every student is screened with the DESSA mini universal screener, which takes about one minute per student.

The data helps identify students who may benefit from additional support, including students whose needs may not be obvious in the classroom.

Rather than relying on referrals alone, the school uses DESSA results to form small intervention groups focused on specific competencies.

Those groups are facilitated by Profeta and social work interns, using intervention resources aligned to students' identified needs.

Tier 3:

Individualized Support

Students demonstrating significant needs receive more intensive one-on-one counseling and individualized interventions.

The combination of universal screening and progress monitoring helps ensure students receive the right level of support at the right time.

Making Behavioral Support Everyone's Job

One of the biggest shifts at Explore Elementary wasn't student-focused, it was staff-focused.

Before implementing Move This World, many teachers felt uncertain about their role in supporting behavioral development.

"A lot of teachers were saying, 'I don't know how to do this,'" Profeta recalled.

The solution wasn't asking teachers to become mental health professionals.

"We're not asking teachers to do mental health counseling. We're asking them to do some basic instruction."

The structure and ease of implementation provided by Move This World helped lower barriers for classroom teachers while creating greater consistency across the school.

As teachers became more comfortable integrating practices into their daily routines, they began seeing the benefits firsthand.

Teachers reported stronger classroom relationships, improved classroom management, and greater confidence supporting students' emotional and well-being needs.

The Importance of Consistency

One lesson Profeta emphasizes for other schools is the value of consistency.

The schools seeing the greatest impact are not treating behavioral instruction as a standalone activity or a compliance requirement.

Instead, teachers are reinforcing skills throughout the day.

Some teachers use quick lessons after recess when students need support with conflict resolution. Others connect key concepts to classroom challenges as they arise.

"If it's getting done in the classroom at a Tier 1 level, when students come to group, we see much more growth because they already know it," Profeta said.

That alignment between universal instruction and targeted intervention creates a stronger foundation for student success.

Measuring Growth and Expanding Capacity

One of the most significant outcomes has been the school's ability to help students move between tiers of support.

Students participate in follow-up DESSA assessments throughout the year, allowing the team to monitor growth and adjust supports as needed.

The results have been encouraging.

At the beginning of the year, 58 students were participating in DESSA intervention groups. By the end of the year, that number had dropped to 20.

For students, that represents meaningful growth.

For staff, it creates additional capacity to focus on students with the greatest needs.

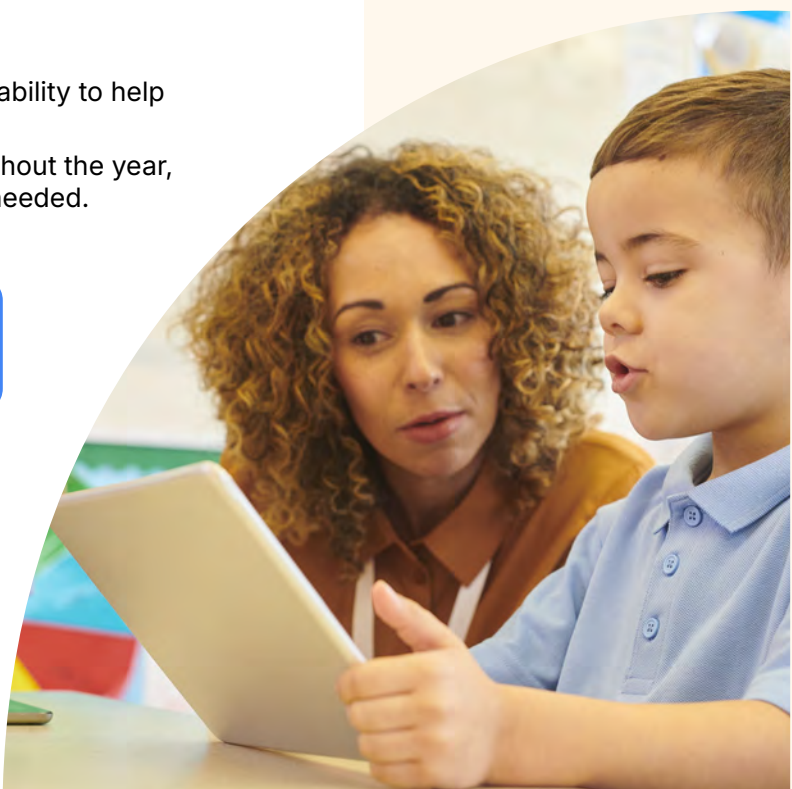
"We start off pretty heavy," Profeta said. "The goal is to see fewer students needing those supports by the end of the year."

The school has also observed stronger student confidence, increased classroom engagement, and fewer behavioral concerns among many participating students.



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Lessons for Schools Getting Started

For districts considering a more comprehensive approach to student well-being, Profeta offers three recommendations:

1. Invest in Training

Teachers are more likely to embrace behavior-aligned instruction when they understand why it matters and how it connects to student outcomes.

2. Monitor Fidelity

Successful implementation requires more than simply pressing play on a lesson.

Schools should regularly check that staff are engaging students in meaningful discussions and applying concepts throughout the day.

3. Use the Data

Whether launching a pilot or scaling district-wide, data helps build momentum.

Tracking growth, documenting outcomes, and sharing successes can help secure long-term support and investment.

A Stronger System for Student Support

For Explore! Community School, the biggest lesson has been the power of connecting assessment and instruction.

Universal screening
identifies student
needs.

Tier 1 instruction
builds foundational
skills.

Targeted interventions
provide additional support
where needed.

Together, they create a system that helps schools move beyond reacting to challenges and toward proactively building student strengths.

"I really do think putting them together makes a difference," Profeta said.
"Both platforms together have made a huge difference in our school."



Ready to learn how DESSA and Move This World can support your students?

See how schools are using universal screening, Tier 1 instruction, and targeted interventions to strengthen student well-being and build more effective systems of support.

