

### WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE?

The New Jersey deputy commissioner of education, visiting Antheil Elementary School, was about to read a story to Bob Kohut's third grade class. As he opened the book, a student asked, "Did you put your fish up on the board yet?" The deputy commissioner looked perplexed, until the third grader explained. "We have an attitude board. Whenever we come in our room, we choose a fish. Each is a different color. There's happy, confident, sad or angry. We put our fish up so we are aware of the attitudes we're choosing here."

The attitude board is one example of how Bob's class uses The FISH! Philosophy to guide how they approach their work and treat each other. "I can usually bring students back on task simply by reminding them that they need to be there for me," he says.

"Plus, they're more willing to wait patiently because they know that when I do get to them, they're going to get my full attention. That makes classroom management easier."

Kohut's students keep daily journals, reflecting on what they've done to make someone else's day. "One day one of the quietest girls in my class was struggling because she said she hadn't done anything to make anyone's day. I had the rest of the class stop writing, shared her dilemma and asked if anyone could share how she had made their day. Six or seven hands shot up and her classmates said things like, 'She held the door open for me when my arms were full of books, She laughed at my joke. She stood in line for me because I had crutches.' A huge smile spread across her face. Not only had she made their day, but they had made her day.'

Bob says The FISH! Philosophy is an important foundation for children. "I have never yet had a student leave my third grade classroom and go directly to college or the job market. They've got a lot of time left to learn the academics. In the meantime



they need life skills – knowing how to work with others, caring, becoming confident in who they

are. Besides, if they don't have those social skills and confidence, it's much harder to learn the academics later."