



What's the Good Word?

A series of occasional discussions with citizens of Lilly the Lash's universe

In this *What's the Good Word?* discussion, we talk with Lisa Heim, special education secretary of the Mayville School District. Ms. Heim is a longtime educator who has worked directly with children who have emotional and behavioral issues. A graduate of the Mayville district herself, Lisa is unofficially known as “the kid whisperer,” because of her unique ability to help children control their behavior.

An upbeat, affirming and calming woman, she is a perfect fit for the district's Positive Intervention Program, “which helps students with behavioral issues from becoming too disruptive in their classes,” she says. Working with children between the third and eighth grades, Lisa is “their positive person who they see at the beginning and end of each day” for check-in/check-out (CICO). She explains the basic tools of her work with students: “The children carry cards to keep track of how their day went, how they're doing on their homework. We also have a behavior sheet, which helps them remember to keep working on respect, safety, responsibility.”

Progress charts and trackers are of course one of the mainstays of child development and behavioral programs, but Lisa says that she's gotten the greatest results from a more unconventional source: the *Lilly the Lash* series of books and related materials. “I use the *Lilly the Lash* books as a way to support the basic character development we work on – responsibility and respect and so on.” She also uses the lesson plans and especially the *Lilly's Garden of Growth* motivational board game as way to provide positive feedback for her students.

“Kids relate to the *Lilly* stories and we use the board game to celebrate their progress,” she explains. “The pacing is great, we move them one or two or three spaces at a time, depending on how their day went. They get smaller rewards along the way but they know they're really progressing toward the rocket at the end of the board. It's pretty amazing, kids really want to move ahead to collect their rockets. No one has a great day all the time, so they get really bummed if they don't get to move as many spaces as they want. But then I say, ‘Tomorrow is a new day,’ and that helps them be positive and move ahead.”

The results of the program that Lisa has put together, including the *Lilly the Lash* books and materials, are an inspiration for anyone working with challenging children. “**My experience has been 100% success.** We can go from a child being disruptive enough that the entire class has to be evacuated, to that same student being able to sit in class with respect and obedience all day long. And this, all within the same year!”

If she had to pick a favorite *Lilly the Lash* book, it would be *The Kacklin' Kitchen*, with its lessons about respect, “but I like them all. For what I do, there's really nothing else like this series as a motivator for kids. And the children really relate to the emotions of the books – sharing, being kind, honesty – as much as the characters. It's all about the positive intervention, and *Lilly* gives us a simple way to give those positive messages.”