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September 14, 2005

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Palm Desert woman teaching America's kids to be polite

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"Please", "thank you" and "excuse me" some might say are outdated etiquette. Not for one woman who founded an organization that teaches kids throughout the US manners.

We spoke with the Palm Desert native whose mission is to sweeten kids up.

You used to go to school to learn your ABC's and 123's, but manners?

"It's when someone gets so upset because they didn't get something that they stamp their feet and they'll scream in the grocery store, have you ever seen that happen? You have!" said Christine McCoy with Doctor Carreon Academy.

Christine McCoy teaches at one of the six schools in Coachella valley that trains kids to be polite.

Kids at Doctor Carreon Academy line up on cue, walk at a controlled speed and keep their hands clasped behind their back.

And in the classroom, they sit in listening

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position, hands folded in front of them. It's all part of being a polite child.

And it's not just in social situations these kids score an a-plus.

"They're more attentive in class," said second grade teacher Phil Burnett. "Our test scores have raised so high, 58 points."

He says his second graders can sit for 90 minutes straight with full focus.

"They're not the center of the universe anymore," said polite child founder Corinne Gregory. "They look outside themselves to see what's going on and they respond to that."

"In our area, there are so many different cultures. Not everyone knows what the social expectations are in the white economic middle class America

marketplace. So we have a lot of different challenges and our schools are overcrowded and it only takes one or two to ruin it for everyone else."

And if you're wondering the price tag on the program - up to a million a year.

"It's a pay me now or pay me later we're losing so much money everyday due to disciplinary problems, absenteeism and anti bullying."

Gregory says if these children can succeed on a social level, everything else will come easy.



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