

**League for Excellence:  
Improving School Climate - One Step and One  
Child at a Time!**

**2016 CADA Annual Convention  
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Grand Sierra Resort  
Reno, NV**

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## **MISSION:**

To build student connections to the community of Columbia High School by rewarding, recognizing and treating every student at Columbia High School with respect and kindness. We want to provide a positive school climate for all students, staff and faculty at CHS. We respect diversity, will accept others and promote integrity among everyone. When we recognize, validate respect, reward and reinforce EVERYONE at CHS, we will get results! Overall this is a climate/culture initiative to make CHS a better place for ALL!

Why? Students are under an incredible amount of stress in high school. More students were being treated for depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse and other mental health issues. Test anxiety, and an increase in 504 plans and IEP referrals for students who were struggling academically, physically and emotionally. Teachers becoming more stressed due to the drive for higher test scores with decreased funding in education has caused more tension in our building in all staff areas. Morale was on the decline so I recognized a need and with the support of administration began this initiative to address these issues as soon as possible!

## **THE BEGINNING:**

The Assistant Administrator and I met to review what we would like to see this group to become. Combination of ideas taken from Josten's Renaissance program and Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS) <https://www.pbis.org/> programs implemented in elementary and middle schools. We wanted to not only recognize academic achievements but wanted also the social-emotional well-being of students!

The Beginning: Invited a group of students from a wide variety of 'groups' at CHS to brainstorm ideas of what we can do to improve school climate. The student council advisors and administrators also attended this session. The end goal was to come up with ideas that could possibly recognize every student in our school. We also wanted to find out what students perceive as a 'reward'. Students agreed that food and t-shirts would please all students!

**Funding:** Utilizing Student Council funds as this group is a committee under the Student Council Organization.

Year 1: We want to reward students at different levels for behaviors that we would like to see displayed and become habit forming on a daily basis at school.

1) Focus on behaviors: tardies, attendance and office referrals. Will also focus on morale and school climate issues by implementing as many positive programs as possible!

2) Improve positive behaviors between students to students; students to teachers; and staff-ulty to staff-ulty. **Weekly** recognition every Friday with nominations made for the '**You Rock!**' Award for the week. Read over the announcements and students choose a gift (candy, gift card, food item, etc.)

3) Students who receive no tardies, no office referrals and attend school 95% of the time each **quarter** are **Zero Heroes**. They will earn a food bar during lunches at the end of each quarter. Students chose which bars they wanted: Build your own ice cream sundae bar; Holiday Movie "Elf" & popcorn; Nacho bar; and Cookie Bar

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter
2013-2014	52% Ice Cream Sundae	47% Holiday Movie & Popcorn	45% Nacho Bar	45% Cookie Bar
2014-2015	51% Ice Cream Sundae	47% Nacho Bar	34% Krispy Kreme Donuts	45% Soda Float Bar
			18% Off Campus Lunch	14% Pizza Bar
2015-2016	50% Ice Cream Sundae	55% Krispy Kreme	Nacho Bar	Dessert Bar

4) Students who earn **Zero Hero** for all **4 quarters** will received a t-shirt at the end of the year! (1<sup>st</sup> Year)

5) **Soaring Eagle Ceremony – Annual recognition held in May:** Teachers choose 1 student for any reason they see fit to have earned the title of “Soaring Eagle”. They write a paragraph about why this student is their selection which is read at the ceremony. Students do not know which teacher has selected them until the ceremony. Teachers and students get a 5x7 picture and the booklet filled with the written paragraphs. Cookies and punch/water were served for a short reception following the event. 100% Staff participation!

### **YEAR 1 REFLECTIONS:**

**Successes:** Students LOVED it! Parents LOVED it! Staff LOVED it! Felt that numerous students were recognized including many that do not get recognized academically or fall through the cracks....

**Challenges:** Still not recognized by everyone... some students still thought it was only for the smart people! Also more adult driven than student driven this year. Being under Student Council did not give it an entity of its own. Funding – more expensive since most programs were start up this year. Had \$1000 from Student Council but needed more by the end of the year.

<http://engage4schools.com/> (0-2:05) (2:12-2:56) (3:44-4:35)

<http://rakweek.randomactsofkindness.org/Home> (0-2:05)

<https://randomactsofkindness.org/lesson-plans-pilot-program> (0:00 - 1:40)

<https://cmohfoundation.org> (“A Legacy of Service”) (0:00 – 9:13)

### **YEAR 2:**

#### **New Initiatives in 2014-2015:**

1) Academic Incentives: Recognize academic achievements for all students

- Honor roll locker banners at end of the semester
  - 3.0gpa and above – ended up with 578/740 (78%) students earned a 3.0 so students changed it to a 3.33gpa to receive a locker banner
- Academic letters awarded to Senior students who earned a 3.33 gpa and above their Senior year
  - Cost of letters were above our budget for all students.

## 2) Staff-ulty Incentives: Improve staff-ulty morale and build camaraderie

- Staffulty committee formed to help make decisions and encourage positive activities to take place throughout the year to build camaraderie
- Staff Lounge – was dingy, messy and unorganized! Decided to clean it up – added paint to the walls; new curtains made by an administrative assistant; and added a wall to share personal accomplishments/celebrations by sharing pictures, articles, announcements, etc.
- Departments take turns preparing a breakfast, snacks, appetizers, etc. each month so all staffulty can come together for a brief period of time and be treated with awesome food! We held potlucks at Christmas and at the end of the year during final exams when everyone shares the same lunch periods. Also put together a recipe booklet of all recipes shared throughout the year!
- Last day of school held a “Christmas Vacation” Happy Hour event at a historic schoolhouse in town. Huge success!
- No funds are used for any of these events... staff share costs.

## 3) CHS Motivational Speaker:

- Scheduled Judson Laipply’ “The Evolution of Dance” motivational speaker to hold an assembly at the end of the school year! Every student attended and enjoyed his presentation! It truly promoted a positive climate closing out the school year.

## 4) School Climate Survey:

- Students helped write a 40 question survey to collect data identifying needs and problems as well as successes at CHS. Once we identify problem areas or can understand why some students have chosen not to be engaged in school, then we can provide programming to capture these students.

## **YEAR 2 REFLECTIONS**

Successes: More recognition to students; League for Excellence perceived as an organization separate from student council; students more excited about Zero Heroes; much more student driven this year; more students wanted to be involved in League for Excellence; and Krispy Kreme fundraising was a success! Everyone continues to love the food!

Challenges: Many students involved in many activities limiting times available to hold meetings at school; Climate survey was difficult to calculate – did by hand this year! Unable to purchase academic letters for all students due to limited funding. Locker banners did not work too well! Students moved them, etc. Need to find a different way to academically recognize students!

Funding: Received a \$1000 grant from PTA and we sold Krispy Kreme donuts 4 times

## **2015-2016 INITIATIVES**:

Plan to continue all the above incentives and programs. Plan to refine many of the events and build upon what we have. Will meet to provide more recognitions throughout the year. Promote KINDNESS!!!!

- Leadership 101 pilot course for first time at CHS!
- Present our program to local community service organizations
- Student ID’s and lanyard pins
- Become a RSVP school!

- Post large list of Honor Roll Students for everyone to see instead of locker banners
  - Silver stars lanyard pins for 3.33 gpa's for 1<sup>st</sup> semester
- Will present initiatives and data to the Board of Education
- Will search for additional funding
- Work closer with all clubs & club members – difficult for all to meet
- Improve communication and publicity within the school and the community!
- Administration has begun to add recognitions. They now have a “100% Lanyard” award winner (to motivate students to remember to wear their lanyards every Friday in addition to our You Rock award.
- Administration randomly selects classrooms to walk in and have lanyard checks. If the classroom has 100% lanyards they earn a treat or a coupon to the Flight Crew Cafe!
- Other organizations are on board with finding initiatives to promote kindness throughout the school!
- More unplanned Staffulty social events throughout the year!
- Recognition pins to staffulty for their lanyards!
- Purchase a program to track student involvement/engagement
- Dream would be to train and incorporate Link Crew!

## **CLOSING**

Being a small unit district in the Midwest (located close to St. Louis), high stakes testing and raising the bar has created a school climate full of anxiety and stress. Since we have begun our League for Excellence program, we have not eliminated these issues but we have recognized that this is a problem and have started a program to improve student engagement as well as student recognition on many levels to assist in making our school a better place for everyone! It has been a pleasure to be part of a program that has helped improve our school!