



Small Schools With a Big Vision

Judy Zazvrskey, Director of Student Activities
Classical Academy High School, Escondido, CA
HOME OF THE CAIMANS

jzazvrskey@classicalacademy.com

Recommended Reading:

School Culture By Design: Building and Sustaining Positive School Culture, by Phil Boyd

Introduction

The size of your school does not dictate the size of your vision. Although small schools often have fewer resources, less money, fewer students and static cultures. After much trial and error, I have found that the size of a school, although sometimes challenging, can also be the best and most fulfilling place in which to lead student activities.

This workshop will give practical ideas and events that have been successful over the years in a variety of small school settings, as well as offer a chance to interact with other advisors who may be struggling or just looking for new materials.

Start with Relationships. They are Everything

“The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. . . If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative. If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, and suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community.”

- Roland Barth, School Culture By Design, Phil Boyt. pp 34,37.

1. Get administrators, teachers, and staff on board

- Teacher vs student games
- Common gathering space for teachers to eat together
- Thanksgiving and Christmas Luncheons

“When we eat together, when we set out to do so DELIBERATELY, life is better, no matter what your circumstances.”

- Thomas Keller, School Culture by Design, Phil Boyt, p. 70.

- Teacher Olympics
- Door Decorating Contests
- Involve teachers in assemblies
- Teacher Gifts (Word Clouds in a frame)
- Thank You Notes

2. Choose a School Theme

- Themes should offer a challenge and be fun
- Use the theme as often as you can throughout the year
- Highlight your core values

3. All-School Assemblies

- Use teachers and staff in assemblies
- You don't need to hire expensive speakers
- First Day Assembly
- Highlight Freshman and again when they are seniors
- Veterans Day Assembly
- Election Convention
- Pep Rallies
- Performing Arts Assembly
- Community Outreach Assembly
- Senior Assembly

4. Create Tradition of Fight Song and Alma Mater

- Use at games, assemblies, graduation, etc
- Teach to teams, choir, and teachers
- Rowdy Crowd and Mascot

5. Dances - We encourage kids to come as friends – less pressure to ask a date.

- Beginning, Middle, and End of year ++
- Add other activities – ping pong, spike ball, karaoke, etc.
- Be intentional about appropriate dancing – wristbands, etc.
- Traditional “last song”

6. Homecoming (build around your biggest sport)

- Involve teachers and staff as much as possible
- Class Banners with class theme
- Choose a fun theme & decorate
- Court
- Pep Rally
- Spirit Cup
- Show video highlights of year so far

7. Add Small Events

- BBQs
- Tournaments – Dodge Ball, Ping Pong, Spike Ball, etc.
- Random Dress Up Days (ER Day)
- Mr. CAHS Contest
- Movie Night
- Film Festival
- Red Cross Blood Drive
- Christmas Ornament Contest
- Banana Split Day (Bring Your Own Banana)
- Pumpkin Bowling

8. ASB Leadership Team

- A-G Approved Class
- Keep elections process simple
- Team Concept (don't eliminate good kids)
- Sell ASB Cards – discounts to events (include a T Shirt)
- Use Committees (“Make Committees Work For You” handout)
- Quote Journals & Encouragement Notebooks

9. Freshman For a Day Event

- Invite 8th graders in your district
- ASB kids run – get them excited about high school

10. Junior Unity Day

- Get them ready to be leaders next year
- Make it a fun day with a challenge (Crossing the Line Activity)

11. The Dreaded Senior Prank!

- Left to their own devices, you will have problems
- Sell them on the idea of wanting the underclassmen to “see” what they did before security cleans it up

12. Link Crew

- Juniors and Sophomores appointed to mentor freshmen
- Work with ASB

13. Graduation

- Faculty/ Staff Tunnel
 - Student speakers and music
 - Tradition of kids giving something to the principal
 - Flash Mob at the end
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MY TOP TEN

1. Perception is reality.
2. If you want to become a better leader, you must first become a servant. Always lead by example and don't be afraid to get your hands dirty!
3. You are only as good as your last review. Don't ever become complacent and rest on your past successes.
4. People are easily swayed. Be careful that you use your "powers" for good.
5. If you want to "walk on water", you have to get out of the boat – "Fail Forward"
6. Taking a stand is risky and sometimes has consequences; you must be willing to live with those consequences.
7. The bonds of friendship are forged in the fires of adversity. We're all in this together!
8. It's not falling in the mud that's the worst, it's staying there.
9. Honesty may not always pay, but lying always costs.
10. It's not how you start, but how you finish.