

Kansas School Counselor Association

December 2007



THE issue to share ideas of how to Implement Rachel's Challenge and Legacy!



Wall of Kindness

President's Message by Kris Burkholder

The Wall of Kindness is a way to recognize students who have been “caught” in an act of kindness. Middle school students love to have their pictures displayed for everyone to see.

- 1 Title a visible wall in the school as “*You Never Know How Far A Little Kindness Can Go.*”
- 2 Recognize student who have shown random acts of kindness every week
- 3 Decide upon the criteria that you want to use for a student to qualify for the Wall of Kindness
- 4 Display a picture of the student on the wall and include a quote about the student's random act or acts of kindness

School Wide Appreciation Activity

As an assignment, have each student write a note of appreciation to someone who has had an impact on his/her life. Then send each one of the notes to the appropriate person. Many time, the persons who received these notes will write back thanking the person for sending it and/or thanking the school for doing this assignment. This activity helps students understand the importance of appreciating others and their acts of kindness.

Commercial Clips

The better health foundation has produced many commercials advertising character traits and emphasizing acts of kindness. If you have Rachel's Challenge speak at your school, the school will receive a CD which includes all of these commercials or you can view and download these clips from the following website: www.forbetterlife.org. Here are some ways you can incorporate these commercials into your school climate.

- 1 At the beginning of every week, show one of the commercial clips to all students in their first hour class using smartboards or have a short assembly to kick off the week.
- 2 Challenge the students to emphasize this character trait or act of kindness this week
- 3 Remind students throughout the week of the character trait being emphasized by putting quotes in the daily bulletin, displaying posters, announcements, etc.
- 4 Incorporate an activity at the end of the week to share ways this character trait was emphasized at school

Let students be creative and make their own commercials emphasizing acts of kindness or character traits. Students love filming each other and seeing themselves on camera. They also enjoy seeing footage taken from their own school and this gives them ownership. Then share these commercials with the student body in the same manner.

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Each fall our school holds its own TASMAD retreat. TASMAD refers to “Take a Second, Make a Difference” and started out in 2001 with a campaign through the Kansas Health Foundation. Although the foundation is no longer involved, our retreat has grown and taken off on its own and is now totally community funded. The purpose of the event is to build school unity and simply to challenge our students to make a connection with those they meet.

Each year, a cross section of students is selected to attend this 2-day overnight event. The student leaders and the sponsors look at the academic minded, athletes, aggies, musicians and loners. Also taken into consid-

Past President’s Message by Val Beikmann

TASMAD

eration is leadership potential and how involvement in TASMAD might encourage them to make positive choices in the future. Approximately 4 -5 students from each class are selected each year, which makes it an honor to be able to attend the retreat.

During the retreat, students are led through various activities which focus on team building, positive interactions with others, stereotyping and promoting a safe school environment, just to name a few. At the end of the first night, there is time for reflection and also bring in a guest speaker to focus on a current issue, possible topics include living through faith (since we are not at school), volunteerism, and relationships. To wrap up the retreat students are brought back to the

school and we walk around the building and come up with improvements we can do that will improve our school building and climate. Having been in several districts, I am always amazed at how accepting our students are to those students who move into the district. I truly believe that TASMAD has something to do with this acceptance.

The activities, along with the retreat, are something that could easily be modified to fit a school’s peer program and/or the premises behind Rachel’s Challenge. If you would like more information, please contact me and I will be more than happy to share with you!

Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children.

Walt Disney

President-Elect Message

by Deb Woodard

Rachel’s Challenge: Eliminate Prejudice and Change the Water

Following are two exercises to use with high school students who may want to deal with their own fears, biases, and prejudices. They may be used with middle school students, but management will become an even important issue with them. Both are adaptations of original exercises developed by the National Conference of Community and Justice (NCCJ). NCCJ has recently joined with KC Harmony. Although they are located in Kansas City, they provide invaluable resources and will work with you to provide assistance whenever they can. Please contact them for further information at: <http://www.kcharmony.org/Contact.htm>

When working with exercises such as these, it is important to set the tone and create a sense of safety. You may want to do a norming piece before ever beginning so that students are aware that there should be no specific name calling or identification of particular people...

even through nuance. However, students need to be given the latitude to speak the truth. Unfortunately, the truth may not always be easy to hear...especially aloud.

You may find it easiest to have students write their responses and then share with the group. However, I find that sometimes students will not write the words on paper, as they have been taught not to do so. If you are writing it on a chart paper, it becomes permissible and provides a safety net. As facilitator and counselor, steel yourself to hear some ugliness. **If they move toward identification of others, you will want to quickly remind them of the norms and re-direct.** As they snicker and laugh with discomfort, simply state that this is an uncomfortable subject and there is a cause for their laughter. They should look within themselves for that cause and consider what it means. After that statement has been clearly made, (maybe more than once,

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you should consistently ask them to “check their laughter” or “consider the cause of their laughter.”

Processing is also a very important part of working with prejudice. After you have worked through each of these discussions, talk about how they feel and why they feel that way. Ask them about their personal experiences if they are willing to share them. It is easiest to start with someone outside of themselves and they should be reminded once again not to speak about someone or a situation that everyone would be familiar with. A good place to begin with processing may be to talk in general about how it would feel to be the person who has been labeled and what they, as individuals, might do differently the next time they think about using those words...whether in jest or seriously.

Don't be afraid to try this. Do be prepared and not to take on more than you are ready to handle. If you are working in a location where parents need to be informed of what you are doing in advance, be sure to do so. They need to understand that this is a process and that they are welcome to be involved in that process.

The first of these is most general. You may want to change out the categories to fit your particular situation. The second makes it possible to be more specific and to list much more... whether in groups or individually. As the facilitator, you can choose which one will have further discussion. However, I find it is valuable if the students are allowed to choose... especially if you cannot discuss all of them.

(Worksheets on page 4)

Everyone is a prisoner of his own experiences. No one can eliminate prejudices - just recognize them.








Edward R. Murrow

Secretary/Treasurer Message by Judy Johnson

**F.O.R.
Friends of
Rachel Activity
Lend a Hand—
Be a Friend**

Because students may enter a middle school from various elementary buildings or because student cores are mixed up from one year to the next, students may not know each other. The goal of this activity is for students to meet those around them and begin to know others that they have not encountered previously.

Friends of Rachel students were asked to:

-  Look at the students in your classes/in your core.
-  Remembering Rachel's rule of three making contacts before making a judgment about that person, have you made three contacts with all of them? Have you pre-judged who you think they are?
-  Find at least one person in each of your eight classes or in your core that you feel you don't know.
-  Reach out to them. Introduce yourself and ask them three questions about themselves (i.e.: What is your favorite class? What school did you go to/core were you in last year? Do you have any brothers or sisters? What is your favorite movie? Which sport do you like the best?)
-  Every time you see those students in the hall, speak to them by name. Hold the door open for them. Smile at them when you see them from a distance.
-  Keep a journal of your contacts, your questions, and their responses. Journal about your reactions and what you see as at least one of their positive traits.
-  Report back to the FOR at the next meeting.

At the next meeting students shared their thoughts and differing opinions about the project. They did not share spe-

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Worksheets for Deb Woodard Activity (from page 3)

Name Calling Worksheet: Labeling		
	Labels or Put-Downs	How would you feel if you were put down in this way?
Female		How would you react?
Male		
Athlete or Cheerleader		
Overweight		
African American		
Disabled		
Latina/Latino		
Asian		
Honor Student		
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender		
Caucasian		

Teaching Acceptance: Name Calling Worksheet

List common labels, put-downs, and stereotypes.

How would you feel if you were labeled or put down this way?

How would you react? What would you do?

Instructions:
 Please list all of the words that come into your head for the first section of this form. It is important to be honest with yourself and others by writing as much as you can – even if you have never said the words yourself. If you feel uncomfortable doing so, ask yourself why.

Activity: Mix It Up! By Judy Johnson

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cific student names, but rather the reports concentrated on the FOR member's changing reactions and opinions.






Note: Even though this National date has passed, the activity is an excellent idea for ANY time. The materials on the web site and information from Rachel's Challenge could be implemented very easily.

National Mix It Up at Lunch day is an annual event usually occurring on the second Tuesday in November. Students are called to action to sit in a different place with different people in the cafeteria. By simply changing places at lunch, students can cross the lines of division, meet new people, and make new friends.

More information and free materials for




Mix It Up day can be found at <http://www.mixitup.org> The free materials included stickers for each student, multiple posters, lesson plans, and other organizational information.

Friends of Rachel students:

-  Discussed the purpose and the short term and long lasting effects of participating Mix It Up day.
-  Organized into small groups to plan, write, and record informational skits to be aired on a school wide television system as part of the daily announcements every day for a week prior to the official date.
-  Hung up posters all over the school.
-  Made signs for the tables in the lunchroom that matched the stickers each student was given upon entering the serving line.
-  We are on hand on Mix It Up day to help distribute student stickers and help students locate matching tables.

Mix It Up Luncheons

Take the National Mix It Up at Lunch Day one step further and have a Mix It Up at Lunch Day every two weeks or every month. This is a great way for students to get to know other students, and it is a time that ALL students feel welcome and included at lunch.

-  Put Friends of Rachel Club Members in charge of planning and organizing this event
-  Divide up the students differently each time so that students get the opportunity to become acquainted with many various students
-  Have a topic of conversation for each Mix It Up at Lunch Day, and have F.O.R. members facilitate this dis-

Bringing Rachel's Message without a F.O.R. Club by Paula Russell

After hearing Rachel's Challenge in the fall of 2006, Pike Valley JH wanted to do something to help keep the spirit of the presentation alive in our building. We are a small rural district and felt that all would want to be a part of a Friends of Rachel club, so we decided to make it part of our JH curriculum. Last year, during class meetings, the class sponsors met with the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to discuss the presentation of Rachel's Challenge and how we could continue the spirit of the lessons learned from the presentation in our day-to-day school life. The classes met and individually determined how to implement their ideas. From those meetings, we had appreciation notes given in secret to various members of the faculty and staff, we had a used clothing drive, and many other short term commitments to help others. One of our biggest goals was to learn to be kind – or at least NOT RUDE – to peers here at Pike Valley. The students made posters to remind them of this goal and during state assessments, the students encouraged each other by small notes or special treats at lunch. Some of our students became ambassadors and went to

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Promoting Friends of Rachel Membership by Kris Burkholder

This is a way to recognize members of the Friends of Rachel Club. (F.O.R.) Students love to see their names displayed at school for something positive, and many students never get the opportunity to have their names displayed at school for things such as a sport accomplishment, academics, honor rolls, etc. This is a group that anyone can belong to regardless of ability, gender, age, etc.

- ✎ In the gym or in the commons area, title a wall, "Friends of Rachel."
- ✎ This may be in the same place where the F.O.R. banner is displayed
- ✎ Use the club's symbol created by F.O.R. to print something like, "I, _____, am a member of the F.O.R. Club, and I accept Rachel's Challenge" and have the student sign it.

- ✎ Then as members join the F.O.R. Club, include their name and signature on the wall.



It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference. Tom Brokaw

Parents Day Out by Kris Burkholder

This is a great way for students to do something kind for parents in the community.

- ✎ F.O.R. members volunteer to babysit for a day and/or evening free of charge
- ✎ Send out flyers to parents and distribute flyers around town
- ✎ Arrange to use the school facilities
- ✎ Ask for staff members to volunteer to help supervise
- ✎ Plan different activities for children to do. Some activities that could be arranged are: coloring, painting, crafts, watching cartoons or movies, playing organized games, playing with blocks, playing computer games, activities in the gym, etc,
- ✎ Arrange to have snacks
- ✎ Making a working schedule for F.O.R. members

Bringing Rachel’s Message without a F.O.R. Club by Paula Russell

the 4th and 5th grade to share what Rachel’s Challenge was all about.

This fall, we decided to continue the behavior goals exemplified in Rachel’s Challenge by meeting twice monthly in small groups with two staff members to discuss predetermined topics that relate to each month’s theme and Rachel’s Legacy. These meetings give students a voice to discuss concerns and find ways to help each other become better people and it allows the teachers to hear concerns that we may be unaware of.

After announcements, each homeroom (K-8) has a character lesson for about 10’ a day at the beginning of the school day that emphasizes a skill to be learned from the character word of the month. As the counselor, I provide material monthly to each grade level and I also tie the themes into the daily announcements. I feel it is helpful for me to provide the lessons because all of the lessons tie together and the teachers don’t feel stressed that I have added MORE to their day. The teachers are free to add les-

sons of their own and to include activities offered when they have time. When I do the classes’ weekly counseling lesson, my material ties into the lessons the classroom teacher is teaching, the daily announcements, and the materials displayed throughout the school. We feel that our messages are all consistent in this manner.

I felt it was important to remind students and teachers that Rachel’s Challenge and Legacy could be an attitude of daily practice instead of just a one-time program or a separate group of kids. Mr. Vignery, my Building Principal, and I have worked closely together to

keep our focus on building better individuals and a kinder school building.

The JH students also meet once a month to have a community member come to share how they feel the character word of the month fits into their adult life in our communities and the many times their character helps shape their choices. We rotate this speaking schedule so that the time used doesn’t come from the same class period each month. The speakers have also included handouts that the homeroom teachers can use for their daily discussions.

We have plans to incorporate the small group meetings to the 4th & 5th grade in the 2nd semester.

All too often, hearing a speaker lights a fire that cannot be sustained; we feel that by doing a little bit each day, we are keeping the ‘fire’ going within individuals and peer groups. The need for bullying education fits very well into the format we have chosen.

We always see things that we can do better and so this plan is constantly being evaluated. I hope this gives you some ideas for continuing Rachel’s Challenge and Legacy within your school.

Want to learn more about Rachel’s Challenge?

<http://rachelschallenge.com/>

<http://www.racheljoyscott.com/>

Five Principles for Living a Life Filled With Appreciation

Taken from ‘Going Bonkers’ Winter 2008 and written by Mike Robbins, a former pitcher with the Kansas City Royals. For more information about his work and his book, visit www.focusonthegoodstuff.com

- 1. Be Grateful:** Focus on the many blessings in your life and all that you have to be thankful for. Take inventory daily about all of the good stuff in your life and around you.
- 2. Choose Positive Thoughts and Feelings:** Make a conscious decision to transform your negative thoughts and feelings into ones that empower you. This is not about avoiding the bad ones; this about noticing your thoughts and feelings, and choosing to focus on the positive ones.
- 3. Use Positive Words:** Pay attention to the words you use with yourself and others. Speak with the most positive words

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possible.

4. Acknowledge Others: Focus on what you appreciate about the people around you and let them know. Be genuine and let others know the positive impact they have on your life.

5. Appreciate Yourself: Celebrate who you are, what you do, and the many gifts and talents you have. Self-appreciation is not arrogance; it's an awareness of your own power and the key to self-confidence, success, and fulfillment.

ACTIONS: What You Can Do

Share your gratitude each day:

Sit down for dinner with family or friends and have everyone at the table take turns sharing what they are grateful for. If you are dining alone, say aloud at least three things you are grateful for. Don't wait for Thanksgiving; make this an every day

event.

Use an Appreciation Journal

Write down things you appreciate and for which you are grateful. Make it a habit to write in this journal regularly as a way of reminding yourself of the many things you appreciate.

Create a "Sunshine File"

When you receive a care, an email, or some other form of written appreciation, put it in this folder. When you're having a bad day and feeling negative about yourself, pull out this sunshine file and read through it.

You'll be reminded of how much you are appreciated.

Send Weekly Thank-You Cards

Take the time to write ONE or more heartfelt cards of appreciation each week. A physical card means a lot, especially since most of our written communication is by email.

Just Say 'Thank You'

This is a big one! So many of us aren't very good at receiving compliments. As a way of practicing self-appreciation, practice accepting compliments from others. The best way to do this is to train yourself to simply say "thank you" when someone acknowledges you.

When we truly focus on the good stuff, our world transforms and we are able to see and experience the greatness and fullness of our lives.

Don't wait until everything is handled. Don't wait until everything is perfect. Don't wait for people to do things exactly as you want them to. Appreciating life, others and yourself "as is", right now. Focus on the good stuff and tap into the power of appreciation today!



If you have any questions or suggestions for strengthening KSCA or are looking for a way to get involved, please see one of your board members who are listed below.

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