

Lloyd C. Bird School-wide Initiatives

Work Week @ the U – On the Road

Work Week @ the U is a feeder pattern initiative designed to encourage elementary and middle school students to take the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests seriously and to do their best work. In addition, the high school students are similarly encouraged as only students who have passed the SOL tests are allowed to participate in the “On the Road” portion of the initiative. State recognized athletes in all sports are given the opportunity to speak to the elementary and middle school students about how to study and prepare for the SOL tests. Other groups, including the Pep Band, Fall and Winter Cheerleading, and Boys and Girls Basketball perform for the students while inviting the underclassmen to participate through free throw shooting contests. The PTSO supports this initiative by providing lunches for the 80+ students who travel to Bellwood Elementary, Salem Elementary, Ecoff Elementary, Gates Elementary, Falling Creed Middle, Carver Middle, and Salem Middle Schools. Work Week @ the U is also a school effort to encourage our own students to do well on the SOL. Students are given bracelets with “Work Week @ the U” printed on them to remind them of the hard work necessary to be successful. Inside the bracelet is the phrase “dream big” intended to help students visualize themselves passing the SOLs.

Who Do You Stand For?

Who Do You Stand For (WDYSF)? is a mentoring program (plus much more) for seniors identified as at-risk for graduation. At the initial Project Graduation meeting in September, a “data dashboard” is created to identify potential obstacles that individual students face as they relate to graduation such as lack of verified credits, failing a “gatekeeper” course such as English, excessive absences, and anecdotal information such as incarcerated parent, pregnancy, or a death in the family. Once the students are identified, faculty members volunteer to mentor them throughout the year. These relationships become very involved with some faculty members helping students navigate conflicts with teachers, waking them up in the morning via text messages, etc. In 2011, 43 seniors were assigned mentors. The overall success rate for the first year was 84%, with a total of 36 seniors graduating. This year, 34 seniors graduated in June with seven more expected to graduate in August resulting in a 98% success rate. The Chamber of Commerce chose this program for their first-ever CHAMPS grant which allowed the students to experience three separate job-coaching sessions and mock interviews with potential employers in the community.

O-TIGER

O-Tiger was a natural progression from WDYSF as we began to identify juniors who would be in danger of not graduating if their obstacles were not addressed earlier than September of their senior year. The same data dashboard was created for juniors, but the 25 students who had multiple obstacles were assigned a graduation coach. The students met twice a month as a cohort and their coach worked with them to recover lost credit through on-line remediation and to improve grades through tutoring. The coach provided a support system for these students throughout the year. Of the 25 students who participated, 12 students received SOL remediation and earned verified credits in those courses, 13 students participated in attendance conferences and nine students recovered 1st semester credit through online coursework. Of the 25 students, 21 have 15+ credits going into their senior year.

Rachel’s Challenge and Restorative Justice

Rachel’s Challenge is a program designed to help students learn to build a chain reaction of kindness and compassion rather than engaging in negative and hurtful behaviors such as bullying. Based on the writings of Rachel, the first student killed in the Columbine school shootings, students are led through the five challenges: 1) look for the best in others; 2) dream big; 3) choose positive influences; 4) speak with kindness, and 5) start your own chain reaction. The program also involves the community and last year Bird hosted a Community Event inviting fire, police and faith-based groups to participate in a positive dialogue. Along with Rachel’s Challenge, the administrative team has implemented a slightly different approach to disciplining students by using restorative justice to guide discipline meetings. Students are asked a series of questions by the administration. These questions are designed to help the student come to the realization that their actions affect others and not just them. The questions are as follows: 1) what happened; 2) what were you thinking at the time; 3) what have you thought about since; 4) who has been affected by what you have done and in what way; and 5) what do you think you need to do to make things right? By guiding students through these difficult conversations, they begin to put into action the ideas of Rachel’s Challenge. These programs come with a significant cost, and the PTSO has generously helped us in the past and have committed to doing so again in the future.