



# SUSSEX COUNTY CHARTER SCHOOL FOR TECHNOLOGY

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385 N. Church Rd. Sparta, NJ 07871 (973) 383 3250 (973) 383 2901 (fax)

Jill A. Eckel, Administrative Principal – [jeckel@sussexcharter.org](mailto:jeckel@sussexcharter.org)

## School Climate & HIB Programs and Initiatives

2013-2014 School Year

### School Climate – between Staff and Students

**Connectedness Activity:** Every Winter at a PLC (staff meeting), the staff participates in a connectedness activity. The hallways are lined with all of the students' names. Each staff member goes through each name and puts a check mark next to a student name if that teacher feels they have a "connection" with that student. At the end, the School Counselor provides the staff with a list of any students who had no check marks. The staff is then encouraged to try and reach out to those students. During the 2013-2014 school year, only 5 students had no check marks. One of those students was referred to I&RS during the same school year.

### School Climate between Staff

School Climate between staff is good as evidenced by our celebrations. School staff always come together to celebrate occasions (i.e. weddings, births) by having surprise showers. The staff also come together by having monthly breakfasts. Each department is responsible for the last Friday of the month. The group responsible brings in breakfast for the entire staff. Usually staff members take the time to plan fun breakfasts and tend to decorate the teachers' room a bit as well.

The School Counselor also initiates short activities during PLC's to help improve school climate. The Jelly Bean activity is an example of an activity designed to help staff appreciate each other's unique approach to handling different situations.

### School Climate Team

The School Climate Team meets regularly during the school year. During the 2013-2014 school year, the team consisted of the Anti-Bullying Specialist (also School Counselor), the Vice Principal, the Anti-Bullying Coordinator (also Curriculum/Instruction Supervisor), two regular education teachers, one special education teacher and two parent volunteers. The focus of the School Climate Team is to develop, foster and maintain a positive school climate. The team reviews complaints of HIB (parent volunteers are not privy to student names) and uses that information to try and identify and address patterns of HIB. The team reviews and strengthens school climate and policies in order to prevent and address HIB. The team educates the community to prevent and address HIB. The team members participate in trainings on school climate. In response to reports of bullying and peer aggression issues

on the school buses, the team decided to host a meeting for our school bus drivers. On April 3, 2014, members of the team hosted this meeting at a local eatery in Sparta. It was a productive meeting giving everyone much needed time and opportunity to share their concerns. The bus drivers appreciated our support and post survey results indicated that they would like to meet every year.

## School Climate for Students

### All Students

**Charter Connections:** Monthly character trait themes are integrated into the curriculum as follows: The theme is announced on the daily morning announcements along with an example to help students understand the character trait, the themes are prominently displayed in each building, and the themes are reinforced during Foundations each month. Also, at the beginning of the school year, each department signs up for a particular month to incorporate that character trait into a lesson that month.

**Communications:** This class meets for two marking periods, alternating with Music class. Anti-bullying lessons were incorporated into the Communications curriculum. In the 2014-2015 school year, the Communications curriculum will be integrated with the Language Arts curriculum.

**Peace Pals:** Peace Pals is the student run anti-bullying group. While there is a teacher supervisor, it is the role of the students to design and implement anti-bullying activities within the school setting. Peace Pals is a peer oriented after school program that meets every other Thursday afternoon. Students maintain a bulletin board that focuses on a variety of middle-school topics; including the school's monthly theme of the month. The group has approximately 15 members. The group attended the county's anti-bullying summit and from that came back to their school environment and began to implement concepts they had learned. For example, the students' conducted a random act of kindness program. Other activities that the students have participated in or plan to conduct are mix-it-up lunches, No Name Calling Week, Peace Day, peer support and collection of dress down monies to be donated to non-profit groups supporting anti-bullying organizations. The students also are responsible for posting anti-bullying materials throughout the school hallways.

**Spirit Days:** Student Council organizes spirit days throughout the school year. They also organize a spirit week. Students and staff participate in spirit days/weeks.

**Week of Respect:** Across the curriculum, students participate in Week of Respect activities. Teachers coordinate their ideas and plans for the week through the use of googledocs.

**Summit Planning Meeting:** The Charter School annually hosts a Summit planning meeting for the upcoming county-wide Anti-Bullying Summit. During the meeting, Charter students give input for the next summit. Other schools are invited to send representatives to this meeting. This year's meeting took place on May 8<sup>th</sup>. The Peace Pals attended with their teacher leader.

**Anti-Bullying Summit:** A group of selected students attend the county-wide Annual Anti-Bullying Summit every October. These students return to school excited, and use the information they learned from the summit to improve school climate. Peace Pal members attended the Summit in 2013.

**Shout-Outs**: Students receive a “shout out” when a staff member notices a student going above and beyond. Students’ names are announced during the morning announcements and their names are also prominently displayed in the school hallways.

**Assemblies**: Every year, Charter has assemblies that reinforce positive school climate and/or anti-bullying messages. This year, Charter had Dr. Paul Wichansky during the Week of Respect in October. In March, Keith Hawkins addressed our students, and then held a small group Leadership Workshop with 20 students. A small group of parents attended both assemblies.

**No Name Calling Week**: The Peace Pals spread awareness of No Name Calling Week this year by wearing t-shirts they designed all week.

**Girl Power Hour**: A former Charter Student, who is currently attending Sussex Tech, has been working towards earning her Gold Award. She put together a program called Girl Power Hour and was able to work with her former teachers at Charter to gather a group of 20 girls on May 8th to participate in this after school program. During the meeting, the group discussed mean or unkind things that have been said to them. They then focused on coping mechanisms for when these negative actions by others take place. Three different stations were set up around the gym. Participants made Positivity Posters. As each group cycled from station to station, they added content to the posters. Another station had Positivity Notebooks; each notebook had a participant’s name on it. When girls were at this station, they wrote something positive about the person. At the end of the event, the girls took their Positivity Notebooks home. At the last station, the girls wrote down negative experiences they had in the past and then crumpled up what they had written after they completed it. The culminating activity was to focus on the fact that those experiences happened and cannot be changed. The participants then shredded the crumpled papers with the negative experiences which was symbolic of “letting go” of the negativity. Feedback from students who participated: "The exercises were powerful and made me think." "It was so much fun. I hope we can do it again!" "I loved it! It was so much fun. I wish we could do it again."

**Peer Mentoring**: Trained Peer Leaders from Sussex Tech High School are matched with Charter students who are referred to the program by their teacher, counselor or principal. Charter students go on a field trip every month during lunch/foundations to meet with their peer leaders in the Student Center at Sussex Tech. Through the special friendship that grows between the high school mentor and the Charter student, self-esteem is enhanced, security and acceptance are met and personal growth occurs.

## **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Relational Aggression**: The School Counselor meets with 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls in small groups (8-10) and talks about relational aggression. During the meeting, relational aggression is defined, and the various behaviors that are typically seen or felt are explored. The girls take a “Sisterhood Survey: Who are you?” The girls also complete an activity called “Link It Up” where each girl gets a link (chain link) to write some of their good qualities on. These papers links are then taped up around a prominent doorframe in the school. The girls learn that they are stronger when “Linked Together.”

## **6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens:** This program is brought to Charter by the Center for Prevention and Counseling. The program introduces the 7 Habits as they apply to teens and how each can enrich their lives and the lives of those around them. This program is a prevention program that enhances leadership skills and social competencies. This year, it was introduced to one 6<sup>th</sup> grade class and one 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. The program met 5x for an entire class period. Program ran March 2014.

## **7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Girls' Circle:** This program is brought to Charter by the Center for Prevention and Counseling. Girls' Circle is designed to foster self-esteem, helps girls maintain authentic connection with peers and adult women in their community, counter trends towards self-doubt, and allow for a genuine self-expression through verbal sharing and creative activity. During the meetings, girls take turns talking and listening to one another about their concerns and interests, and express themselves through creative or focused activities such as role playing, drama, journaling, poetry, movement, drawing, collage, clay, computer, and so on. This program was run February through May. The group met 10x, once a week for an hour during lunch/foundations. Eight girls consistently attended.

**Boys' Council:** This program is brought to Charter by the Center for Prevention and Counseling. The program provides a unique approach to helping boys navigate growing up male in today's society. This is done by providing a safe place where boys can come together to be creative, express their ideas and share their "true" selves without fear of ridicule or outcasting, as well as build trust and supportive relationships with other males (peers and adults) in order to overcome challenges and celebrate successes. In addition, the group gained skills and knowledge to assist them in dealing with issues such as relationships, conflict, education, leadership and community service, diversity, mass media and future planning. This program was run March through June. The group met 10x, once a week for an hour during lunch/foundations. Eight boys consistently attended.

## **8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Betrayal of Mankind:** This Tech rotation encompasses the Holocaust and genocide curriculum. Eighth grade students take this course twice during the school year. During the first rotation, students learn about such terms as racism, stereotypes, prejudice, and scapegoating, as well as a brief history of the Holocaust, in order to understand why and how this atrocity occurred and how we can try to prevent something like it from happening again. During the second rotation, the class focuses on more recent genocides in Rwanda, Sudan, and Syria. Students participate in a debate about human nature and then research organizations whose goals include helping those who have been, or are currently being, affected by genocide.

**Project Altitude:** Project Altitude is a community based program that is available to 8th grade students. Project Altitude, along with representatives from Newton Medical Center, The Center for Prevention and Counseling, Pass It Along and United Way, have a vision to create a community that is supportive in its attitudes and behaviors of a youth culture that makes healthy life choices. This program implements a multi-pronged intervention having a foundation in positive psychology that utilizes evidence-based practices and strategies designed to reach 8th graders and their parents/caregivers, families and the community-at-large. The goals of Project Altitude are to increase awareness and promotion of a positive youth culture, increase healthy decision-making and coping skills among 8th graders, increase

the ability of parents/caregivers to utilize parenting techniques that have a foundation in positive psychology that encourage youth to make healthy life choices, and increase the perceived risk of the use of alcohol and marijuana and the abuse of prescription drugs by youth among parents, youth, and the community- at-large.

**Lock-in:** This is a Charter tradition – the 8<sup>th</sup> graders arrive at 7:00 p.m on a Friday night at the end of May/beginning of June and stay overnight until 7:00 a.m. the next morning! Teachers and PTO members organize some structured activities, while students also have lots of time to also do whatever they want. Teachers volunteer to stay up all night with their students!

### School Climate - Parents

**Cyberbullying and Internet Safety Parent Workshop:** This program is brought to Charter by the Center for Prevention and Counseling. The program addresses the dangers and ramifications of cyberbullying and sexting. Interactive workshop. Workshop empowers parents to have discussion regarding concerns and problems they are facing along with strategies for prevention. This program was offered to parents on April 24, 2014. 8 parents attended, 2 staff attended.