



Public Achievement Project Stories 2013

These are the stories of the 8 high school classes participating in the University of Denver Public Achievement program during the 2012-2013 academic year. To watch a slideshow about these projects, visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/DUccesl>.

South High School

Overview

Working with two AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) classes at South High School, nine DU coaches and two team leads worked with nearly 60 students on three different projects.

Issue: ACT Test Prep

The group identified the mental requirements that students need when heading into the ACT test in order to have success on the exam. Through extensive research students identified how important the ACT was in assisting students in getting into college and receiving scholarships. The students hoped that their project would help students feel confident heading into the examination which would create better opportunities to perform better than past students. First, the class began by raising awareness about the ACT preparation programs that existed within the school and in the community. They also created a marketing campaign that emphasized the importance of the ACT. Finally, during the week preceding the ACT date, the students combed the halls of South High School posting inspirational messages, posters, and fliers in an attempt to create a confident and relaxing atmosphere for their fellow juniors.

Issue: Using Healthy Foods for Academic Success

The students in this group identified the need for educating their school and community about the importance of eating healthy and its resulting impact on academic success. Through extensive research, students discovered that eating healthier resulted in greater awareness and opportunities to be successful in the classroom and on the ACT. The students sought to raise awareness on the benefits of healthy foods by encouraging their generation to engage in healthy eating practices. To reach their objective, students created a video that was shown to the entire school and community. In preparation for filming, students created a script that interviewed local students and educators about the benefits of healthy eating. The video also featured a funny skit presented by the class that brought some humor to the issue with the hope of catching the attention of other students.

Issue: Violence in the Community, at Home, and at School

The group worked on addressing the issue of violence within a variety of contexts, including gang violence, school violence, and domestic violence. The project hoped to challenge students to become more inclusive and supportive of others in order to dissuade violence within the school and community. During the fall semester, the students invited Principal Frank DeAngelis

of Columbine High School to speak to the class on the important role that inclusiveness plays in preventing and ending the cycle of violence.

During the spring semester, the students identified three ways in which they would meet their objective: a mural, a video, and an assembly. The students felt the first step would need to be the creation of a campus-wide video to grab the attention of their classmates. They used the video to demonstrate better ways to approach situations that can lead to violence. The first skit depicted solutions and best practices to combat bullying. The second skit depicted solutions and best practices to combat domestic violence.

The second piece of the project was the creation of a massive mural that would be displayed prominently within the school. The goal of the mural was originally to serve as a creative advertisement for the project and the assembly. Over time, the concept evolved into an artistic rendition concerning the issue of violence and represented the students' attempt to create a campus-wide coalition to combat violence.



The culminating element of the students' project was a school-wide assembly. At the assembly, the students featured and explained both the mural and the video. Principal Frank DeAngelis came back and spoke about his experiences and the importance of inclusiveness. Students followed Principal DeAngelis with personal experiences and stories about their own encounters with violence as a way to bond and create a coalition. In total, more than 200 students attended the assembly.

KIPP Denver Collegiate High School

Overview

Thirteen DU coaches and three team leads worked with over 90 students in six classes at KIPP on nine different projects.



Issue: Gang Prevention

The gang prevention group, made up of eight students, worked with a community member, Cameron Marr, a friend to PA and former gang member to gain and spread awareness on how the issue of gangs can affect their lives and their community. After spending months engaging in extensive research, students hosted a gang prevention presentation at

Henry Middle School on in May 2013. Their hope was, that by presenting to younger students, they would positively influence their younger peers to avoid the traps and lifestyle associated with gang life.

Issue: Children's Health

The group, made up of eight students, was interested initially in focusing their project on children's health issues, such as volunteering at a children's hospital. However, after much research around this issue, they later decided to expand their focus to incorporate the families of young children who are

hospitalized. More specifically, they worked with the Ronald McDonald House of Aurora to become aware of more issues facing these families.

The group put on two fundraisers (both bake sales at KIPP) to raise money to buy cleaning items on the Ronald McDonald House's wish list. Altogether they raised \$79.00 and in May 2013, they took a field trip to Wal-Mart to purchase items on the wish list of the house and donated them. This was their contribution towards supporting families whose children are in the hospital.



Issue: School Spirit

The group decided to raise fund towards purchasing a school mascot. The goal was to encourage a more unified and spirited student body. The class, made up of twenty students, planned three fundraisers: a technology lunch, a teacher-dare, and a dress-down day. The technology lunch involved students' donations to the cause in exchange for using their cell phones or other technological devices during their lunch period. The second was a weeklong event that combined student and teacher effort. Six boxes were placed in the lunchroom: three with teachers' names and three with wacky antics (i.e. dying hair, shaving head, etc). The box that earned the most money in each category won – the teachers that won were Ms. Dezial, the gym teacher, and Ms. Wallin, the art teacher. Both had to dye their hair. The dress down day was a final effort; the class was able to raise over \$200 through this. Through all three

fundraisers, the class was able to reach its goal and on the last day of class, May 22, the mascot was ordered. It arrived May 28th, much sooner than expected, and gave students and teachers the opportunity to see it before the end of the year.

Issue: Teen Pregnancy

The five students in the teen pregnancy group worked with Ana Ortega from COLOR (Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights) to research issues revolving around sexual health, reproductive rights, and teen pregnancy. They then developed a survey that was distributed to the entire KIPP high school student body to determine what the student body knows about the issue of teen pregnancy. The results of the survey showed that some of the students did not feel that they had properly received sex education and an understanding of the full impacts that teen pregnancy can have on the life of an individual. These results were shared with the administration of KIPP and hopefully will be addressed in the future.



Issue: Teen Drug Abuse

The four students who worked on this group project received assistance from the Executive Director of the Colorado Meth Project, Kent MacLennan, in conducting a poster-making workshop with KIPP Middle School students, and specifically science teacher Tina Snodgrass' class, to inform them of the dangers of experimenting with drug use.

Issue: Bullying

The group decided to pursue an issue that dealt with youth choices at KIPP High School and Middle School: bullying. The seven students working on the project produced a self-designed poster with the intention of empowering victims of bullying and demonstrating their support for these students.

Issue: Food Deserts

The food deserts group, made up of eight students, sought to address the issue of food deserts. More specifically, the project addressed the low accessibility to healthy foods. The class worked with community partners Adam Brock (from GrowHaus) and Bob Bell (from Food for Thought) to research these issues further and gain insight into how to best move forward to address this within the KIPP community. The class decided to create an informative video as well as brochure to hand out to the community. Both the video and brochure addressed what food deserts are, how to read food labels, food preparation techniques/methods, and food replacement (switching something healthier for unhealthy foods).

The fifteen-minute video included interviews with four KIPP students, three KIPP teachers, and Bob Bell from Food for Thought. Interview questions surrounded food and food choices, and asking experts about food deserts (Bob Bell). The video was completed and distributed to KIPP administration and teachers; it was shown to all KIPP students in morning advisory, following discussion questions for each class. At the end of this project, students have a better understanding of what food deserts are and how other students and families can be affected by them. They also were exposed to techniques to help make healthier food choices.

Issue: The Achievement Gap

The group, comprised of 12 students, worked to address the multi-faceted issue of achievement gaps. They specifically focused on motivating students who may not be receiving inspiration to give a full effort to their academics. The purpose of this project was to give students a sense of hope in their education in addition to a sense of community and empowerment to take control of whatever situation they might be facing that affects their education. The class worked with Felipe Vieyra of Stand for Children and Kristy Martin of Teach for America in order to complete research around this issue, and decide how to best move forward in addressing this issue. Students then worked to develop a poster campaign. These posters were very artistic and included motivational quotes. They served as reminders and motivation for students to attain or maintain a positive outlook on their education, while creating a sense of community throughout the KIPP environment.

Issue: Arts Education

The group of 17 students sought to address the absence of a music program within their school and researched root causes as to why that absence existed. Students also desired to further support the strong visual arts program that KIPP has in place. These issues were chosen because students believed that music and the arts are an integral part of student development and that student expression is an important part of a school community. To increase awareness about the strength of the arts program, the students worked with local artist Jesus Rodriguez in designing and creating a school-wide mural painting. This mural incorporated more than 30 students from MSLA Elementary School as well as over thirty students from KIPP. Each student was given the opportunity to paint a small piece of the mural using their handprint. Fourth period student Alexis Millian and Jesus worked together to paint a tiger (the KIPP mascot) in the middle of student handprints – to increase school pride. It will be displayed in the lobby of KIPP so that both KIPP students and MSLA students can see it.

