



PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT PROJECT STORIES 2014

These are the stories of the students from the classes of South High School and S.T.R.I.V.E Smart Preparatory Academy and their involvement in the University of Denver's Public Achievement Program.

South High School

Overview

Ten coaches and four team leads worked with 110 students in four different classes to produce a project regarding a topic of their choice.

Issue: Teen Homelessness

Students brainstormed ways to help the homeless students at their school. They decided that they would like to accomplish two different projects: a fundraising event to donate supplies that could be used to set up a closet in the school stocked with donated clothing that would be available to any student that needs it. This group was able to raise over 200 dollars through the Students vs. Teachers basketball fundraising game. Students were also able to host a bake sale during this event for additional fundraising. This group was also able to successfully set up a closet filled with donated clothing and set up a sustainability plan for the project in future years.



Issue: Tattoos and Piercings in Professionalism

Students of this group chose the topic of tattoos and piercings in professional settings because they felt as though this was an issue that would dramatically affect their future careers. They began with utilizing the numerous social media outlets that are most commonly used in their generation. A Tumblr page and a Facebook page were created to campaign the issue. The students also created their own website dedicated to topics in body modifications in the workplace. Both the Tumblr page and the Facebook page were successful. Students were able to spread the word throughout the school about their Facebook page, resulting in over 60 likes. Additionally, someone outside of South High School cited the Tumblr page for a paper. The students also worked to involve other students outside of their PA class by distributing surveys and hosting meetings that allow interested students to discuss the topic. Finally, the students began reaching out to local businesses to set up in-person conversations to discuss some of their policies and opinions in a semi-informal setting. If a business decided it supported their cause, their group would provide that business with a QR code to display publicly. This QR code would link customers and clients with the social media and web campaigns listed above.

Issue: Anti-Bullying Initiative

These students identified bullying as a major issue in their school. They wished to reduce the occurrence of bullying by educating the students and increasing unity within the school. Students first began by researching the topic and examining the current bullying policies that have been implemented at South High School. The class then split into four different groups: the Documentary Group, the Safe Spaces Group, the Assembly Group, and the Bracelet Group. The first group interviewed students about their experiences with bullying and compiled various stories to create a documentary. The second group worked with teachers to designate specific classrooms to be “safe spaces” against bullying. They also created a Bully Box to allow students to anonymously submit names of students that have been bullying others. The third group hosted an assembly at Grant and Merrill Middle Schools to speak to the 8th grade classes about bullying and the effect it has had on their lives. The fourth group created an anti-bullying campaign within the school to unite the students by creating bracelets that read “Love, Peace, Happiness #Anti-bullying”. Both students and their coaches felt as though their project went above and beyond their expectations. All of these groups were successful in their campaign to unite the students and raise awareness.

Issue: Health Programs at South High School

The students of this group chose their topic because of the current lack of awareness regarding the health programs at their school. The students first began with creating a survey that was to be given to the student population. This questionnaire asked the students about what they knew about the current programs available and what their opinions were regarding the matter. Students then worked to create a student driven health club at South High School. This club would serve as a resource to students that were interested in learning about health related topics. In order to maintain sustainability, a plan was created to make sure that students both inside this class and out of it would maintain the club and begin recruiting incoming freshmen for the upcoming school year. This group was successful in both spreading awareness and creating an outlet for future development on this topic.

S.T.R.I.V.E Smart Preparatory Academy

Overview

Ten coaches and two team leads worked with over 150 students in five different classes to produce a project regarding a topic of their choice.

Issue: Immigration

This group was particularly special due to the number of students who identified the topic of immigration as a prominent issue in their communities. Three of the five classes chose this as their topic.

Period 1: These students worked hard to put together an informational packet as a resource for students and parents regarding general statistics, community resource referrals, and other useful information that may help families that have members with an immigration status.

Period 2: This group of students decided to work through two different projects. The first group chose to host a food drive at their school to raise canned goods for a local food shelter. The students identified this as a need because of the large population of low-income families in their community, which also had a large immigrant population. The second group of students worked diligently to put together a YouTube video that featured personal stories from both students and community members regarding their experiences as immigrants in the United States.

Period 3: The last group that chose immigration as their topic also decided to put together a YouTube video to share with the 9th and 10th grade students at their school. The students gathered facts and statistics to educate the viewers on why immigration reform is an important issue to discuss. Students also put together a creative way for students to share their stories without putting them or family members at risk by recording anonymous students and their individualized responses to, “Just because I’m _____ doesn’t mean I’m _____” that were written on a piece of paper and held in front of their faces. Through these statements, students were able to express themselves about their experiences with stigmas and stereotyping towards people that identify as Hispanic. Three student volunteers introduced the video showing by sharing why the topic of immigration was so important to them. The video is currently on YouTube and can be found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tnlrf-bn4mM>

Issue: Gang Activity and Youth Involvement

Periods 5 and 6 worked together on an event named “Games not Gangs” to raise awareness about youth involvement in gang violence. These students first started their project by gathering information about gang involvement in the city of Denver. The students learned how prevalent gang violence was in their city through their research and discussion with community members that volunteered to speak to their classes. The event was organized entirely by the

students in the two classes and was open to the public. The event comprised of a number of games and hands on demonstrations that can serve as alternatives to joining a gang such as dodgeball, T-shirt stenciling, physics experiments, and other activities. The students that attended took a pledge to stay away from gang involvement by signing their handprints with paint to a board containing the full pledge. Two community members came to the event and gave a powerful speech to the students regarding their experience with gangs and challenged the students to stick to the pledge written on their board. A total of 11 students came to help at the event. All proceeds from the event were donated to a nonprofit organization called Open Door Youth Gang Alternatives.

