



TEAMWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

**P L A N O**  
Independent School District

2700 WEST 15TH STREET • PLANO, TEXAS 75075

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## For immediate release:

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## Plano Schools Win 'Promising Practices' National Awards from Character Education Partnership

(Plano, Texas) June 14, 2012 – Two Plano ISD schools have captured 2012 Promising Practice awards through the national Character Education Partnership (CEP). The partnership awarded 297 Promising Practice awards to schools, districts and organizations from across the United States as well as from Brazil, Canada, Hong Kong and Mexico.

Thomas Elementary School's Anti-Bullying Rally and Campaign and Plano West Senior High School Theatre's "Save a Life" play and campaign have been awarded by CEP. Both schools will be honored at the 19th National Forum on Character Education to be held in Washington, DC, in November.

"Plano ISD is fortunate to have fundamental character education programs beginning in our preschools and continuing through our senior high schools," stated Marilyn Hinton, school board secretary and member of the national Character Education Partnership Board of Directors. "Not only do we employ the most caring, dedicated professionals who model character education and develop unique character education programs and lessons, these same educators empower our students to be self-directed, responsible citizens who reach out to their peers to create safe, caring and respectful schools where students flourish academically and socially."

Mark Allen, executive director for student and family services, said, "Among our core beliefs in Plano ISD is that successful learning is created by developing and maximizing each individual's responsible citizenship and character traits of integrity and good decision making. These two award-winning 'promising practices' are strong illustrations of campus-based programs that are part of our comprehensive pre-12 character education program integrated throughout our guidance and counseling lessons, academic courses and extracurricular activities."

### Thomas Elementary School's Anti-Bullying Rally and Campaign

The Thomas anti-bullying rally and assembly brought unity and awareness of anti-bullying practices and pledges for all 620 students in kindergarten through fifth grades.

#### 'Be a Buddy, Not a Bully!'

"Be a Buddy, Not a Bully!" was the theme for Thomas Elementary School's anti-bullying awareness week, January 19-27, 2012. Students participated in daily activities that week to promote anti-bullying, beginning with dressing in camouflage to "Be a HERO" (Help Encourage and Respect Others) then wearing jogging suits and tennis shoes to "Walk Away From a Bully." The campus staff and students also wore a color for each grade level to "Team Up Against Bullying."

On "Mix it Up Day," students were encouraged to sit by someone other than their friends at lunch to meet new friends. On "Black Out Bullying" day, students wore black clothing and wrote on strips of paper one way they could make a stand against bullying to make a grade level chain link. On the last day, students wore school spirit shirts and stood together to illustrate the theme "Together We Stand, Divided We Fall."

Student council members led all students in the "Be a Buddy, Not a Bully" Pledge during morning announcements. The pledge states:

**"I promise to show good character every day and to treat others the way I want to be treated. Never bully others or laugh with a bully. Always report bullying to an adult at school and at home."**

At a Thomas Texan assembly, students brought their grade level chains inscribed with all the ways to make a stand against bullying, and the grade levels joined the chains together to make a Thomas Texan anti-bullying chain.



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Thomas Principal Lynn Swanson and Counselor Katrina Hunt developed the campaign. Ms. Hunt coordinated the effort with support from the school's faculty, staff and the student council. Ms. Swanson said, "Awareness has been at the heart of our campaign. We want our students and families to celebrate that we are taking a stand against bullying at our school."

The anti-bullying theme has been a thread throughout Ms. Hunt's guidance lessons this school year. "We talk about how bullying is a repeated behavior towards the same individual and the differences between normal conflict and bullying," said Ms. Hunt.

"Students are visual learners, so a school wide campaign has been much more effective than me just telling them or lecturing them about anti-bullying," explained Ms. Hunt. "They will remember the message when they wear team colors that symbolize the theme 'teaming up against bullying' and when we go into the 'black out bullying' mode."

Ms. Hunt said that she hopes the outcome of the campaign is that students are empowered to be "bucket-fillers not bucket-dippers and that they will learn to show kindness and respect to others."

The school anticipates an increase in students appropriately reporting and dealing with bullying. "Our students know that they do not have to be ashamed to report bullying and that they will get help not only for themselves but for the bully as well," said Ms. Hunt.

### **Character Education Principles Promoted**

- Promotes core values.
- Defines "character" to include thinking, feeling and doing.
- Creates a caring community.
- Provides students with opportunities for moral action.
- Engages families and community members as partners.

### **Best Practices Addressed**

- Behavior Management / Positive Discipline
- Bullying / Peer Cruelty Prevention
- Class Meetings / Cooperative Learning
- Mentoring / "Buddies" / Cross-Age Groups
- Relationship Building

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## **Plano West Senior High School Theatre's 'Save a Life' Performance / Campaign**

Plano West Senior High School students enrolled in the Theatre Productions II course produced and presented this school year a program they entitled "Save a Life." The 10-minute skit presents bullying and suicide awareness and prevention materials in a way that achieves maximum impact through informational hand-outs, a performance (presented live or through video), an opportunity, before and after the performance, for interaction with the characters in a question and answer format.

Watch pisdtv-produced video: ["Save A Life"](#) 📺(8:55 min).

What began as an idea of Plano West Counselor Linda Puster blossomed into a full-fledged production of advanced theater students. After attending a professional development class in Dallas, where she saw a dramatic skit, she asked Plano West Theatre Teacher Grant Goble if he thought that his Theatre Productions II advanced class would be interested in making an anti-bullying/suicide prevention production as a class project.

"Well, the students immediately loved the idea," said Ms. Puster. "They felt great about doing something important and making an impact on their community."



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Ms. Puster, who is also a licensed professional counselor, said that she wrote the play's original framework; however, the students developed the script on their own. And, far exceeded her expectations with their work and final performance, she said. Students researched the topic in order to understand fully what the characters would be dealing with in the scenario.

Theatre Teacher Grant Goble said, "When I first gave the project to the students, they were immediately very interested in spreading the idea of suicide awareness. Several of them had known somebody who had known somebody who had thought about suicide. They realized quickly that this is an important message and not something that is brought across to them in a meaningful way. So, they were excited about using their skills as actors to spread a message that's beyond something that teachers might present with facts and a lecture. From the get go, they had strong conviction of how they could use their talents to present this to their peers in the community."

Mr. Goble gave the student's Ms. Puster's framework and said, "Here is your information, just the facts that you need to know. Make it your own, use your language. "So, they took all that information and re-wrote the script so that it sounded like them and got the message across that would communicate to teenagers," he said.

"Save a Life" presents material designed to develop prevention and awareness relating to bullying and suicide at the high school level. The skit includes an interactive format after each performance for the audience to ask questions of the characters. It has been utilized for counselor professional development, staff training at Plano West and in the classrooms at Plano West.

The presentations all include additional hand-outs on bullying and suicide and additional information presented to each group. Newspaper articles were also utilized in the classroom presentations to increase the student's awareness of the magnitude of the issues.

Cast members serve as mentors and leaders as they interact with the audience; they perform a public service as they deliver this message in a moving way which never fails to make a dramatic impact on the audience. The cast has been asked to perform at the 9th and 10th grade levels and at the middle school level.

#### **High School / Senior High School Performance Cast**

Olivia Cable-Barber, Olivia Cinquepalmi, Colin Edgar, Caroline Huey, Rebecca Huey, Jessi Laday, Kiersten Mock, Jasmine Sabino, Alex Thompson, Sam Young.

#### **Elementary/Middle School Performance Cast**

Daniel Baker, Catherine Cable-Barber, Alex Hutchins, Braden Keeter, Lauren Klinkert, Kevin Middleton, Marcus Mills, Taylor Owen, Jewells Santos, Jeff Silverthorn, Kristen Weaver.

Plano West Senior High School Principal Kathy King said, "The theatre students put their hearts into this play and have touched others. After the first performance, one of the cast members stated that he had never experienced a feeling like he did that day. It was obvious lives had been touched by what was presented. The impact of this was amazing!"

The connection with the audience and the comments made show impact on both adults and students. Counselor's professional development comments included, "This is the best session ever attended!"

Several students picked the brains of the cast to understand why the bullies behaved the way they did and how they could stop this behavior. The service to others was touching as the audience stopped to reflect on their own actions and the behavior of others and its impact.

"This method of delivery and the genuine concern of the students to deliver this material and produce awareness in others produced powerful responses," said Mr. Goble. "The cast has been empowered to do something to help their school climate and their own character development while teaching students and staff members signs of awareness for suicide."

Counselor Puster said that, "The theatre students have described how much more aware they are of what they say and do with others. One of the male cast members has talked about how he now tries to pick out individuals he feels may need an extra smile or kind word and he does that for them."



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Other comments from students include how easy it is to make negative comments online, and many engage in this, but now the students do not get involved. It is being witnessed that students stop themselves from negative comments as they are interacting with each other. They discuss how they are changed from this experience and more community minded.

Ms. Puster said, "This experience has shown them how positive it is to be aware of other people, instead of being focused on themselves all the time. Very real and observable behavior changes have occurred for the theatre group and PWSH as a whole."

### **About Plano Independent School District**

The Plano Independent School District (Plano ISD) – <http://www.pisd.edu/> – endeavors to foster the highest level of student learning. The mission of Plano ISD is to provide an excellent education for all students. Plano ISD is located 20 miles north of Dallas, Texas and serves the residents of approximately 100 square miles in southwest Collin County, including 66 square miles in the city of Plano, northern portions of the cities of Dallas and Richardson and parts of the cities of Allen, Parker and Murphy. Plano ISD employs 7,000 faculty and staff members who serve more than 55,000 students in 70 schools and 11 service facilities. Participating in Plano ISD schools enables students to adapt to new learning opportunities throughout their lives, collaborate with, and contribute to, the global community and to be creative and disciplined in their thinking.

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