

PARKER SCHOOL DISTRICT

A COMMUNITY'S CHARACTER

• PARKER STUDENTS GET TO KNOW COMMUNITY LEADERS THROUGH PROJECT

The Parker School District went through a relatively unique experience in 2014-2015 when it experienced a significant turn-over in staff.

Two administrative positions were new hires, which encompassed superintendent, high school principal, junior high principal, elementary principal, activities director, special education director, and Title I director.

There were also twelve new certified teachers hired, along with three paraprofessionals, which encompassed nearly 40 percent of the staff that works with the students of Parker.

The vision and goals for the new administrative staff centered on staff unity, community involvement and overall development of a positive school culture and climate.

High School Language Arts Teacher Cindy Froiland jumped on board with that philosophy even before the school year started and the changes in staff were fully in place.

Froiland put her community project in motion months before the actual events. Throughout the summer she thought about a discussion with former PE teacher, now High School Principal Bill Leberman about PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support), and the changes in her career, throughout the school and about the community.

Reflecting on the vision of the people in the Parker community, Froiland researched her own list of values and found that within those various positive characteristics are themes she teaches in her literature class.

"Authors and their characters usually have to persevere to achieve goals and after reading some stories in our sophomore class that had characters with influential leadership qualities, I decided that I had to make it real for my students," Froiland said.

"I wanted them to appreciate those in our community who were the 'movers and the shakers' in the past and who are continuing to make good things happen in Parker today."

First, Froiland and her class held discussions on various past and present leaders in our world and who the equivalent may be in our community. The students had many people they looked up to in the school, church, their jobs, but not many knew of the influential men and women in town within the business community.

Froiland worked with her 23 sophomore students to develop interview questions, prepare for the interview, conduct the interview and gain an overall respect for those who work to make the Parker community what it is.

The next step was to pair up her students with a leader in the community.

The students wrote letters to community leaders, inviting them to the school and to be part of the event. Twenty three students conducted interviews with 23 leaders in the community. Each sophomore was expected to greet the community member



they were interviewing with a handshake and collect some refreshments prior to finding a place to begin their interviews.

In order to work on eye-contact during the interview, the students used their IPADS to record the interview instead of taking notes. They had a list of questions prepared but the goal was to communicate in a conversational and informational way.

The project proved to be a big success.

"I loved seeing my sophomores go from apprehension to achievement," Froiland said. "They were the hosts; they had to be in charge of the situation. Many of the students who were nervous about interviewing someone whom they didn't know surrounded me at the end and were all talking to me at once because of what they had learned. That was so fun!"

The students concluded the project by creating a Keynote presentation on iPads and presented the information to Froiland, after which, she turned the tables on them by conducting an interview with the student.

Froiland said she sees leadership skills in many of her students and the project helped them find the skills in themselves.

"They often don't know their own strengths," Froiland said. "I know they can do it. In fact, they always do so much more when the idea is dropped in their laps, and they need to work it through. To me, that is what the real-world will expect of them."

With the collaboration on the project between students and community members, the future of the Parker community looks bright, said Froiland.

"I really want to thank the 23 people who were willing to give up their time and answer questions about their past and present, in making and keeping Parker moving forward," Froiland said.

"I knew that these individuals would put my students at ease, give truthful and thoughtful answers and realize that our youth are our future."