

Lake Braddock Secondary School

A Large School Gradually Transforms Its Culture

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Lake Braddock Secondary School's purpose is to provide for the cognitive, civic, emotional, social, vocational and physical development of every student who walks through our doors and travels our hallways. Additionally, the school attempts to open students to what it means to be part of both the global and local communities, while providing them with a safe, nurturing and challenging environment. Our collective vision is to help every student succeed at his or her maximum potential; to function as a Professional Learning Community (PLC); and to establish an environment that fosters our five core values.

Description of the School

Lake Braddock Secondary School (LBSS), located in Burke, Virginia, nestled in the suburbs of Washington, DC, is one of three secondary schools (combined middle and high school) in the Fairfax County Public Schools- the 12th largest school system in the country. The school is located centrally within Fairfax County serving two managerial districts- Braddock and Springfield- and currently enrolls over 4,000 students in grades seven through twelve; which makes LBSS the largest school in the state based on fall membership for the current school year. This year also marks the 40th Anniversary for Lake Braddock in service to the community. Lake Braddock is a very large school, which requires all staff to work collaboratively in order for school processes to run smoothly.

In the last three years, our student population has increased and become more diverse. The percentage of students receiving special education services (12% to 12.8%) has increased each of the last three years as has the percentage of students receiving free or reduced priced meals (16.1% to 16.2%). Over the same period, the percentage of students identified as limited

English proficient has decreased (8.6% to 7.2%). We have also experienced changes in our ethnicity demographics with slight increases in all minorities groups and a 1.2% decrease in our white (non-Hispanic) population, which remains our largest student group at 52.7%. Student mobility and retentions have also decreased at both the middle and high school levels during this period.

Core Values

The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out."- T.B. Macaulay

Character Education is a process of awareness and focus. At Lake Braddock Secondary School, we work to reinforce the values of our community with examples of appropriate behavior and an awareness of our values throughout the educational process. In the spring of 2001, the Lake Braddock community, including parents, students, as well as school faculty and staff, was surveyed, with the help of the Ethics Resource Center, to determine which ideas best represented the values our people hold dear. Small discussion groups further honed the value concepts. One of our goals at Lake Braddock Secondary School is to integrate these values into our educational process and our everyday life. Our newest core value compassion was added in the winter of 2014. As a secondary school, students between the ages of 12 and 19 share the same hallways and classrooms; they interact with each other under our five core values: responsibility, commitment, respect, compassion and integrity.

Lake Braddock Values

Commitment

- Put forth best effort
- Exceed expectations
- Complete assignments

- Initiative

Responsibility

- Arriving to class on time
- Being prepared
- Positive contribution
- Problem solving

Integrity

- Doing the right thing
- Honesty
- Take ownership for behavior
- Accept consequences

Respect

- Follow adult directions
- Positive attitude towards others
- Appropriate behavior
- Actively participate

Compassion

- Demonstrate consideration
- Show empathy
- Act of kindness
- Offer understanding to others
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Programs and Services

In 2013, Lake Braddock held the status of National Gold Medal School based on the 2013 U.S. News and World Report ranking of top high schools in the country placing 197th (and 7th in the state). This type of accomplishment is indicative of the dedication our stakeholders have in the school as we face ever increasing challenges. Although LBSS was renovated in 2007, we are continually challenged for space, which can influence instructional and extra-curricular programs as well as services for students. Our Category B special education program- serving students with intellectual and severe intellectual disabilities to include autism- are at an all-time high as are the number of students we serve in the middle school Advanced Academic

Program. We face these challenges head-on, utilizing the strengths of each and every staff member, to purposefully provide all students with a safe learning environment.

Instructional Programs

Lake Braddock's instructional programs are designed to empower students to be academically competitive in a constantly changing world. Our school curriculum is committed to helping our diverse student body discover talents, increase competence, develop imagination, and expand academic and personal horizons in order to be respectful and contributing participants in their school, community, and world. We believe that all students are able to learn and should be given every opportunity to be successful; students learn differently; students should be actively engaged in the learning process; learning should be inclusive and relevant; developing positive relationships with colleagues and students enhances learning; and, teachers serve as role models for life-long learning and citizenship. We are committed to: providing a safe, positive, respectful, supportive and engaging learning environment; working collaboratively with our colleagues in a respectful, professional setting; differentiating instruction and assessment to accommodate multiple and diverse learning styles; utilizing our technology to enhance instruction and assessment of our students; continuous and meaningful school improvement; using multiple forms of (formative and summative) data to make instructional decisions; and, utilizing research-based, classroom tested, best educational practices (authentic, relevant, and rigorous).

We embody these commitments through our program offerings, expectations for students, and our actions. School rules are enforced with consistency and fairness. Our core values are posted in every classroom. We respond quickly and effectively to reported acts of bullying and other hostilities. We work with students to educate them on their responsibilities as a student at

LBSS. We utilize PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) strategies to recognize the positive contributions students make to the school. Our staff utilizes common planning periods and collaboration time to share instructional strategies, analyze data, and to plan instruction. Lessons are presented using a variety of teaching strategies and thinking levels to address multiple learning styles and abilities.

Technology is used within the classroom and throughout the school to enhance student learning and to evaluate mastery of learning objectives. Data drives our instructional program and school improvement efforts. Formative and summative common assessments are used to identify instructional needs and to identify students in need of intervention. Our students write, monitor, and attain academic SMART goals, and our staff writes, monitors and attains SMARTR (strategic, measureable, attainable, realistic, time-bound, rigorous) goals aimed at student progress. We utilize the ASCA (American School Counselors Association) model to serve all students through our Student Services Offices. We use best practice methods to improve instruction and student achievement, and provide professional development opportunities for the staff arranged and presented by our staff. We hold ourselves accountable to meeting these commitments.

Students are afforded additional learning opportunities through our daily Bruin Block intervention time. Bruin Block is a remediation or intervention time specifically designed for teachers to give specific/targeted support (intervention/remediation) to struggling students. Most of our kids use it "get things done" but it is, in theory, a remediation period. This time, built into our school day also allows students to receive extra help from a teacher, make up work, meet in groups, meet with a peer tutor, and do enrichment activities (to include use of the library). Bruin

Block in not a time to introduce new material. It allows students more individualized help, and offers opportunity to finish assignments during the school day.

Creating a Behavior Management System

During the 2005-2006 school year, the administrative team at LBSS determined that there was a need for school-wide behavior management system. Upon considering options, it was determined that we would present the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) model to the staff (now Positive Behavior Intervention Support – PBIS). As a grade 7-12 school, it was decided that the PBS program would be presented to the middle school staff (grades 7 and 8) initially with the hope of expanding to the high school grades in future years.

A group of staff members were brought together as an initial PBS team to research the program and begin planning. The group traveled to Hayfield Secondary School (another FCPS school) to learn about their successful PBS program. The LBSS committee was impressed by Hayfield's hallway behavior (during class time and lunchtimes, there was not one student in the hallway) and decided to focus on hallway behavior as a starting point. At the time, we had discipline referral data supporting that many referrals were written out of student incidents that began in the hallway. We also found that there were a large number of students arriving tardy to class, indicating that improved hallway behavior could also remedy that.

The PBS model bases its effectiveness data on the program needing the school staff to reach consensus of at least 85% in order to proceed with the implementation. In May 2006, the middle school staff met and was presented with the PBS model. There was a focus on common language, expectations, and targeting locations within the school, specifically hallways. Following the presentation, staff consensus was gained via a “show of hands” and we reached far

more than the suggest 85%. While we believed that we would have reached consensus regardless, best practice would have been to allow the staff to anonymously vote.

Program Refinements: The Culture Changes as 'Bruin Pride' Emerges

During the summer of 2006, the committee met and we established our PBS expectations. Taking a cue from other schools who had successfully implemented a program, we decided to start with the expectations/common language of “Respect Yourself, Respect Others, and Respect Property”. We also started referring to the program as “Bruin Pride”. At the time, our school had established “core values”, one of which is “respect”. We decided to focus on this core value as we felt it could encompass the others in terms of behavioral expectations. Rules were also created to specifically address hallway behavior. Students were going to start the year using a “passport” system as their hall pass. Students were allowed to use 3 passports times per class per quarter. Students were also given specific times that they could go to their lockers. The intention with this rule was to eliminate locker visits between most classes, allowing students to get to class on time. Students were allowed to visit their lockers 4 times per day: before/after school and before/after lunch.

Our Bruin Pride team also decided to implement an acknowledgement/reinforcement/incentive system for students and staff. We created “Bruin Pride” cards that staff members use to acknowledge students demonstrating Bruin Pride expectations. Students then submitted their cards for a weekly drawing where ten students would win small prizes during lunchtime. At certain times of the year, staff members were also given prizes as an incentive for them to continue using the cards with their students.

Our program was well received with the exception of one component. Teachers, parents, and students were not supportive of the locker visit rule. They felt it was too limiting and caused

students to carry too many of their belongings to each class. At that time, there was a perception that Bruin Pride was synonymous with small seventh grade students carrying 100-pound backpacks due to the locker rule. To the Bruin Pride committee, it was a blemish on an otherwise successful implementation of the PBS program. The other components of the program were successful and the locker rule was discarded the next year.

Bruin Pride continued to grow in the middle school. Upon our fourth year of implementation, high school decided to come on board to bring Bruin Pride to their side of the building. At this time, it was determined that using Lake Braddock's core values and school wide expectations and common language was more sensible. We decided to move from "Respect Yourself, Respect Others, Respect Property" to our core values of "Respect", "Responsibility", "Commitment", and "Integrity". A new method of student recognition was also created. The idea of a "positive referral" was considered and the "Bruin Pride Commendation" was created. Teachers were able to electronically send a form that indicated what the student did and which core value they demonstrated. The form was then given to the student's administrator who either called the student down to their office to present it (HS) or went to the classroom to present it to the student (MS). This system is especially effective for those students who receive discipline referrals and have conversations about their negative behavior with their administrator. This method became the way that high school students were recognized for demonstrating core values. In middle school, students could receive a commendation or cards for prize drawings. Additionally, a staff member created post cards that staff uses to send home to parents and/or students to commend them on their positive behavior. We've strived to give our staff a variety of ways to recognize the positive behavior that our students demonstrate.

Over the next few years, high school started implementing more and more of the Bruin Pride expectations. Currently, the program is consistent across middle and high school. The only difference is the nature of the prize drawings and the prizes themselves. Our core values have truly become our common language and teachers use them in their instruction and discussions with students. Bruin Pride has become embedded into our school culture. Parents and students new to our school often comment on how “nice” our students are here, particularly citing their respect and compassion. Administrators have had the experience of speaking to students about negative behaviors to be told by the student that they “Broke Bruin Pride and will be more respectful next time”. This is a significant victory for any school implementing a Positive Behavior Approach to student behavior.

Our goals for the future are to empower teachers with classroom management tools to work with students who are behaviorally challenging. We’ve stressed the importance of relationship building between student and teacher and are encouraging teachers to seek help when they want to refer students for discipline issues. Lake Braddock has become a model in Fairfax County for how to implement a successful PBIS program, particularly because of the challenges that a secondary school faces. We look forward to continuing to build our program and improving the climate of our school. We are committed to helping our students achieve success through Bruin Pride and its philosophy.

LBSS utilizes a Fairfax County Public Schools design to Positive Behavior Approach (PBA data collecting tool) to create learning environments that teach students to lead responsible, fulfilling, and respectful lives. The data collected using this tool by our Bruin Pride team selects, implements, and evaluates the evidence-based practices that actively teach and promote the acquisition of essential life skills. The effectiveness of our PBA is measured by

looking for changes in patterns in student discipline data and on their ratings of implementation. By focusing on these results and identifying the desired outcomes, our team establishes school's plan for our students' social-emotional and behavioral learning. As a division, the overall effectiveness of a Positive Behavior Approach is measured by changes on these same measures (e.g., student discipline data, ratings of implementation) when aggregated to form a division-wide profile. The work of Positive Behavior Approach is related to Responsive Instruction as schools build their three-tiered continuum of behavior support. Our most recent yearly PBA self-assessment shows that we are beyond initial implementation and certainly have support growing in the following areas: leadership, assessment, action planning, continuous improvement, professional development, instruction, integration and beliefs. Our area for growth continues to be professional development.

Addressing Bullying

As a result of the aforementioned data, in addition to the bullying behavior referral data increase from the 2012-2013 to 2013-2014 school years, one area our PBIS team took aim at decreasing bullying-type behaviors in the middle school. Comparison discipline data from the '11- '12 and '12- '13 school years showed there was a 17% increase in discipline referrals for bullying like behaviors. According to this data, there were a total 40 discipline referrals that could be interpreted as bullying-related behavior in the first two quarters of the '11- '12 school year from September through February. When comparing the data between the '12- '13 and '13- '14 school years of bullying like behaviors, there was an increase to 73 discipline referrals of the same bullying-related behaviors. This numerical representation means there was a 17% increase in bullying-related behavioral referrals.

To gain further understanding of how our middle school students felt about bullying, we administered a Bullying Awareness Survey to 967 middle school students during the 2012-2013 school year, 290 (30%) students reported they had been bullied in school within the past couple months with 166 (17%) students responding they had been hit, kicked, pushed, shoved or locked doors. Furthermore, 389 students stated they had told somebody about being bullied in school but only 15% responded by saying they told a teacher or another adult in the school.

We have recently begun a bullying prevention campaign called *Compassion in Action* (abbreviated as “CIA”). With a strong belief in our newly adopted school-wide core value, compassion, our bullying prevention theme will be visited throughout the year through various methods ranging from classroom-based discussions to school-wide assemblies. Additionally, we have a new bullying-reporting tool that is available to students 24/7, right on their Blackboard sites.

After reviewing the data concerning bullying behaviors, Lake Braddock PBIS members, middle school counselors and the technology specialist collaborated to develop an online bullying reporting button accessible through each student’s blackboard account in an effort to inspire more students to report. This button gave each student an “around the clock” means to report bullying incidences in a confidential and anonymous manner to school specialists who are trained in dealing with these types of undesirable behaviors. This reporting button was made available at the beginning of the 2013 school year and was communicated to the students through counseling lessons, in school media productions and word of mouth.

In addition to the reporting button, all middle school staff were provided and instructed to deliver monthly bullying prevention lessons created by teachers in an effort to educate our students about various topics related to bullying. Data was analyzed at the conclusion of the year

which reflected 56 submitted online reports from middle school students with only one incident of a repeat offense. With the data supporting effectiveness of the program, both the middle school and high school counseling services combined forces to create a systematic approach to bullying prevention adopting the same approach piloted by the middle school. This year the entire student body has access to report bullying online and each student will receive age appropriate, teacher crafted lessons on various topics related to bullying.

In the past, students have expressed frustration for how powerless they felt to stop bullying. Most students do not bully others, so lessons and discussions that told them to “stop bullying” seemed fruitless since they were not exhibiting those behaviors to begin with. While many students do not bully others, most students have perceived bullying. Every student can have a role to play in preventing bullying by focusing on compassion as it gives every student an opportunity to step up and help each other. Can you imagine how much better off our students will be when the prevailing thought is, "What can I do to help someone?" rather than "How am I supposed to stop someone else from bullying?" In order to support our “Compassion in Action” initiative, students will participate in teacher-led discussions during Bruin Block approximately once a month. Our Student Government Association and a new student group named after our bullying prevention initiative, the CIA, will aid in our *Compassion in Action Week*, December 8th through 12th, 2014.

According to the article, *Why Adolescents Don't Disclose Incidents of Bullying and Harassments*, it states “one of the most commonly recommended strategies to stop bullying is for youth to report incidents to adults. Despite the fact that anti-bullying programs have this strategy as a cornerstone, research has consistently found that only a small portion of bullied or harassed children disclose their victimization” (deLara, 2012, p. 290). According to a study

conducted by researchers Garbino and deLara (2004), they found that 52% of males said that while in high school they were afraid of people at school and 46% said that their parents never knew this. While it is clear that research indicates a high level of underreporting when it comes to victimization, researchers depict the same picture for reporting peer victimization (reporting on behalf of a friend or peer). Another study, found that 41% to 61% of all adolescents never report peer victimization to any adult (deLara, 2012, p.291).

Leadership, is a critical component of our Positive Behavior Approach, as a school since this can dictate a school's climate/culture. Our administrative response to disciplinary issues prior to a formal referral, or after, is one based on the concern for the student; what if anything can we do to intervene so that the student does not repeat the behavior. How do we also make sure that the wrongdoing is repaired? Specific scenarios may help to explain this.

Scenario #1: A student was being teased, bullied, and harassed on the bus. Dealing with this is as much about helping the victim deal with such incidents as it is about disciplining the student committing these transgressions. One administrator had the victim, "Roy," come to her office. After hearing his complaint, she talked with him about how he can deal with such situations. He had no idea. He did not believe that he had any control. The administrator role-played, she playing him, the victim; "Roy" played the bully. The role-play offered him some solutions as to how he can handle future situations. He agreed that he could try one of the responses, which was, "You have a problem with me? Maybe we should talk about it in the principal's office." The "bully" backed down. He had been in the administrator's office before and did want to return. The student was given tools to use so that he no longer felt like a victim. When the administrator saw "Roy" sometime later she asked how he was, how was he feeling. She could tell that he was more relaxed and that "things were better on the bus." The direct

response to the bully was still a disciplinary consequence, but he too received counseling to determine what he was doing and why he felt it necessary to bully someone.

Scenario #2: A student barged into a class room yelling at a teacher for “failing her”. As she walked out she said that she “could just kill Mrs. A.” The teacher was startled and alarmed. She notified her administrator about this. The student was called to the office, her parents were contacted and she received a disciplinary consequence. In addition to the consequence a threat assessment was conducted. It was important to determine the level of threat; was it considered substantive or transient. Detailed documentation was taken about the threat. Information was taken from the victim, the student, as well as from the witnesses. It was decided by the team involved with the assessment that the threat was transient. The student was required to meet with the teacher and offered restoration so that teacher would feel comfortable in the student’s presence. In this case the student wanted to make amends to the teacher. As she said, “I was just sounding off.” She expressed that she really liked her and felt bad about what she said.

Scenario #3: Students with excessive absences have participated in Attendance Circles, which is a process whereby students can share why they struggle getting to school, analyze how it makes others feel and how it will ultimately impact on their future. Seeing other students in a similar situation was helpful. They were able to go beyond commiseration. They helped each other problem solve and ultimately decide what it would take to get back on track. An overall improvement in attendance was seen. This process was, and still is, in many cases, the only means to move students back to attending school regularly.

Creating a Cycle of Continuous Improvement

Administrators look for a myriad of ways to address discipline. Restorative justice is used when one student is wronged by another. Peer mediation is used when two, or more,

students have conflict. When there is conflict the administrator has to find ways to ensure that students can get along and live side by side each other when at school. Consequences may include in-school suspension, but more frequently it is an after school detention or an assignment to a Saturday detention. The goal is always to keep students actively involved in school while feeling that they've been heard. The students have to find ways to maneuver through the world around them. The administrators seek in order to help them do that.

As we continue to move forward and rededicate ourselves as a school program to continual improvement, as previously noted, we do a great deal of reflecting and analyzing of data. At year's end we analyze our PBIS data carefully to determine areas of success as well as areas that continue to need improvement and refinement. However, there is also data that is not quantitative, but qualitative, that speaks volumes about the success of our PBIS program—data that will never show up in a graph or a percentage. A critique of Positive Behavior Support systems is that students are behaving “for the tangible rewards”. There are often initial concerns that the improvements are fleeting once the novelty of what can inaccurately be referred to as a reward system has worn off. What we have found at Lake Braddock over time, is that the true reward is less about tangible prizes and more about the relationship building of students and staff and the recognition for a job well done, as seen in the examples below.

In a conversation with a student whose teacher saw him open his binder to reveal a large stack of Bruin Pride cards that could have been turned in for an opportunity to win a prize in a raffle, when asked why he had not turned them in he replied *“I don't like turning in my Bruin Pride cards to be chosen in the prize drawing. I like to see how many I can collect during one school year”*

A recent email to our PBIS Committee Chair from a Lake Braddock Government teacher read as follows: *“One of my Government students just visited with me a few minutes ago. She had a purple Bruin Pride Commendation in her hand (I recently submitted the recognition for some outstanding work she completed in class) – she said, “Thank you for this,” then a long pause. “I don’t usually do well in school, but this means a lot,” and she began to cry. She had a friend with her and they walked away together. I’m not often brought to tears, but I was on the verge of crying. That one sheet of purple paper made all the difference in the world to that child.”*

This is the very essence of where we are going as the Lake Braddock Secondary School community. As a program of positive support becomes synonymous with the daily culture of the school, we know we have built a quality house with a strong foundation. And, always, we will reflect, analyze and continue to innovate and change. As our population of student changes and the needs of our students evolve, we as a staff and school community can adapt and evolve from our foundation of positive interventions and core values.

Two years ago, a student created the design for the Lake Braddock logo that was printed on our annual school t-shirt. The design featured the PBIS core value words formed into the shape of a house. The symbolic representation of this message was not only that Lake Braddock is our home, our community, and where we are family—but also that for any house to remain standing, it must have a strong foundation. PBIS and our core values are the foundation that can be found throughout Lake Braddock; in the interactions of our students, our staff, our multitude of parent volunteers, and our community support network. From this framework and foundation, we have continued to grow and evolve. Lake Braddock Secondary School is filled with reflective practitioners and highly skilled educators who continually ask the questions, “What else can I

do? What more can I do? What can I do better?” As a data-driven program, we are in a constant state of reflection and reinvention. As the population and needs of the students at Lake Braddock have changed over the years, we were at the forefront of seeking out new and innovative ways to reach out further to groups of students who were feeling marginalized and disengaged.

Lastly, starting 2014-2015 school year, Fairfax County Public Schools created a new position in all 25 high schools called “System of Support Advisor (SOSA).” The overall focus of the Systems of Support program is to provide continued education and in-school intervention opportunities for students in the discipline process, provide strategies, language, and options to help students effectively manage challenges and frustrations, utilize PBIS and Response to Intervention models to reduce behavior incidents, reduce recidivism rates, and respond to student behavior issues, and build whole-school teacher capacity to respond to behavioral issues and discipline. Lake Braddock is front runners in having their SOSA receive additional training in conflict resolution, peer mediation, and restorative justice practices. In the past three years alone, Lake Braddock has built on its foundation created by our PBIS program and integrated these three new and innovative ways to continue addressing relevant, student based, community wide concerns. In addition, each SOSA is in the process of being fully certified in cognitive coaching strategies. While there is no effectiveness data at this point, we are clear that the ultimate goal of the program is to reduce the amount of days students are suspended from school.

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