Building a Quality School - Celebrating Our Students - Supporting Our Students
Promoting Community Service - Using Researched Based Instructional Practices

Building/Creating the Physical Plant

CMS is a 6 - 8 building with 24 staff members serving approximately 260 students. Our district is unique in that it covers approximately 550 square miles. We have six attendance centers district wide, with the city of Chapman being the central hub, holding our district office, one elementary building, our middle school building, and our high school. Our district is responsible for transporting approximately 700 students everyday using 62 buses. To say it is a challenge to create after school student programs is an understatement.

The city of Chapman was severely damaged from a tornado strike in June of 2008. All three schools within the city limits were rendered unusable. Although this was a very horrific event, we seized the opportunity to create three modern buildings for our community. Construction was made possible through the support of our district patrons passing a bond issue. Our schools were rebuilt and opened in January 2011.

Much thought and research went into designing our new middle school facility. Our goal was to create a learning environment that emphasized positive interactions among all students as well as safety for our building. The “middle”, is a challenging period for most students. Care and consideration had to be given to create an environment that could help reduce negative situations and common stressors for the middle level student. Current best practices in education, as well as research in educating the middle level student, were utilized in creating our final facility plan.

All stakeholders had the opportunity to be involved in this collaborative effort. Our administrative team took time to tour successful schools in the region. The middle school teaching staff had many opportunities for input for classroom layouts and equipment they wanted in a new building. Our student council members provided us with interesting student viewpoints throughout the process. The CMS Site Council also weighed in and provided input from the community perspective.

This collection of data helped create a building layout that maximized organization for teaching and learning as well as safety for both students and teachers alike. With our new building plan, students were given appropriate space for learning, new spaces for learning, and more space for traveling throughout the entire building. The level of safety features our school provides, exemplifies the value that we place on our students and faculty. We have noticed a considerable reduction in bullying behaviors and negative student interaction with the new building layout.

The following design elements were implemented into our construction plan to promote safety, supervision and a positive climate:

- enlarged hallways
- enlarged classrooms
- enlarged lunchroom/grade levels eat together
- enlarged gymnasium
- weight room addition / supporting athletics
- enlarged library with built in classroom
- separation of grade level pods
- grade level restrooms / fountains
- open area student pods for best supervision
- open locker rooms to aid supervision
- additional teaching environments
- sound boards in all hallways
- sound boards in cafeteria/commons
- 100% controlled access into the facility
- security cameras throughout facility
- ceiling mounted projectors, document cameras, apple TV, and DVD players in all classrooms
- technology for student use at all grade levels
- stage built for student performances in drama, choir, band and to hold school assemblies

Celebrating Students

A vital component in creating a positive school climate, is developing personal relationships with students. Recognizing successes and celebrating milestones is an integral part of our strategy in accomplishing this goal.

1. In an attempt to show appreciation for everyone, we celebrate birthdays for students and staff alike. Student birthdays are celebrated with grade level singing and the gift of soft serve ice cream. Staff birthdays are celebrated in groups, teachers volunteer to bring treats one day each month so staff having a birthday during that time celebrates together.
2. One of our mottos at CMS is “Attitude and Effort”. When students display a positive attitude and put forth a solid effort, we make a point to recognize them and show our appreciation and support. We start each day with a student gathering in our commons area. During this time, we do all of our school announcements and student
recognitions together. We have a tradition at CMS in that our entire student body and staff give “three claps” to congratulate those being honored for the day. The reason behind this procedure is simple, middle level students are often concerned with how popular they are or are not. Our three clap method completely removes this issue and everyone gets treated the same with a quick round of applause.

3. USD 473 is proud to be classified as a tier one school. This classification, means that 20% of our students come from a military family. We take the opportunity each day to demonstrate respect and patriotism with a unified recitation of “The Pledge of Allegiance” during our morning time together. In addition, our district has begun selecting a day each April to celebrate the military child with a district wide assembly honoring these students and their families. Anytime parents are being deployed or return from deployment, we are also very proactive in allowing students to be with their families and work with our students on making work up when missed.

Supporting Students / Promoting Excellence

With the Chapman district being so large, there is a hardship for most middle level students in regards to transportation. The district provides athletic bus routes in the evening so students can participate in after school activities. We recognize that without this service, many students would not get to have an athletic experience at all simply due to the distance they live from our attendance centers.

At CMS, our daily schedule is largely dictated for us, due to the fact that we share many staff members with other schools in our district. With some teaching time restricted in this way, a flexible schedule can be very difficult to achieve. Despite this hurdle, we have worked to provide some wonderful opportunities for our CMS students during the school day by taking advantage of teachers when they are available to us. In addition to our core classes, we have created the following course opportunities at each grade level:

- 6th grade - Art, Band, Choir, Writing, Everyday Math, Mechanics, Music, and Technology
- 7th grade - Art, Band, Choir, Writing, Everyday Math, Lifetime Fitness, Music, Personal Growth and Technology
- 8th grade - Band, Choir, Writing, Drama, Jazz Band, Lifetime Fitness, Stage Set Design, Spanish, and Vocational Agriculture

Our students participate in a variety of fundraisers at CMS. Although most money raised is generally for charitable causes, one fundraiser in particular is just for our students. On average, our students raise approximately $12,000.00 every fall selling cookie dough. This money is 100% for student use. Each student program is supported so that all money raised is spent out over a twelve month period. The following celebrations and activities are paid for through this school activity:

- **3 - Sport Program** - In an effort to encourage students to participate in MS athletics, we created the 3 - Sport program. All students that participate in three different sports during the school year, receive a t-shirt recognizing this accomplishment. We also take those students on a sports related field trip at the end of the school year.

- **Fitness Night** - Fitness night is an activity to celebrate being fit and exercising. Our PE department organizes events for student to participate in including weight lifting, dodgeball, dancing, and obstacle courses. Students are also given fitness facts throughout the school day. During our advisory period, students can come to the gym and line dance for 20 - 30 minutes. During PE class on the day of Fitness Night, students can take part in a “30 minute Survivor Run” or other physical activities. The after school portion of the activity has an award ceremony to close out the evening. Students can win certificates for achievement in the weight room and dancing portion of the event. Students that completed the 30 minute run during the day are awarded t-shirts of recognition. All students that participate are also entered to win $50 and $25 gift cards for sporting goods. All students that participate also receive an “Irish Fitness” wristband.

- **Hallelujah Program** - Our Language Arts teachers have a system for recognizing success in all classes at their grade level. When students earn an A+ on tests or quizzes (from any class), they can take their work to the Language Arts teachers for recognition. This program focuses on rewarding for one individual achievement as well as sustained performance.

- **High Five Award** - Students that earn an A average all the way through middle school have their names placed on an academic award displayed in our commons area. These students also get an academic medal and certificate at 8th grade promotion.

- **Holiday Meals** - In December, we identify needy CMS families and provide them with a complete holiday meal.

- **Honor Roll Program** - We have treated this as a renaissance type program with drawings for prizes for those students that make the honor roll. We also take all HR students on a field trip rewarding their achievement. Field trips include bowling trips, movie trips, Kansas State sporting events, Hockey games in Wichita or Topeka, trips to the Salina Zoo, and recently a trip to see the Harlem Globetrotters.

- **Reading Program** - Students achieve points for reading accelerated reading books out of our library. A system has been created by our Language Arts staff where kids can win prizes for earning points and eventually win the right to go to a AR party at the end of each quarter.

- **Regional Band/Music Honors programs** - Students that participate and are awarded in these program have their entry fees paid through this fundraiser.

- **Spirit Week** - We have several Spirit Weeks through the course of the school year. Prizes are given for students that are voted best dressed each day. We also have a drawing for prizes for those students that participated each day of the week.

- **Student Activity Meals** - When our students are involved in activities away from school, they often arrive home very late. Through funds raised, we are able to purchase meals for these students.
Promoting Community Service

A great number of CMS students voluntarily participate in community service programs. Students can participate individually, or in several group activities each year. In our first semester this year, 30% of our CMS students were committed to helping our community individually. Students logged from 15 to 134 hours. These students totaled more than 1000 hours collectively. Students can only provided services to non family members. Students assisted neighbors with yard work, provided free babysitting, made cards and gifts for seniors in the community, and sponsored events showing support of those who are battling with Breast Cancer, Leukemia and Lymphoma.

In general, our CMS group service programs benefit people or groups who are struggling physically, financially, or who are away from home serving our country. Each year, our CMS students commit themselves to several different charitable programs. Our students chose the following activities for this years service work:

- Students and teachers brought in items that were mailed to troops engaged in combat situations. 26 large flat rate boxes were mailed to Afghanistan and other parts of the world. Each box was packed with non-perishable food items, toys, hygiene items, and hand made gifts.
- Students collected 75 pounds worth of pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald house at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City.
- Students bought holiday stickers during their lunchtime to “vote” for a teacher to wear an elf costume and hand out Christmas candy. The money raised, helped offset the cost of purchasing holiday meals for needy CMS families over Christmas break.
- A school wide fundraiser was conducted to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. CMS students raised over $800.00 in a Pennies for Patients competition among grades.
- Students supported the Pink Project by selling t-shirts for cancer awareness showing support to students with family members battling breast cancer.

Additional Academic Strategies and Use of Best Practices

CMS students have made consistent academic improvements during this last assessment cycle. We feel that part of the academic success is certainly due to our efforts in creating a quality caring environment promoting educational growth. However, we also knew that in order to make a real impact on student learning, we had to take steps to improve our educational policies and practices collectively. CMS had already made strides with educational training and focus on teaching in “the middle”. Many teachers were using best practices, but collectively, were lacking in focus and consistency in the application of middle level practices across the board. Some of us were in middle school, and some were still in Jr. High. Bob Marzano’s “Classroom Instruction that Works”, was one of the first pieces of educational research utilized to create a new educational mind set. Using research by Ruby Payne and Marzano, a chain of events opened the door for a greater understanding of the current culture of education.

Wanting to focus on specific needs at “the middle”, leadership allowed us to do inservice days on our own. We provide our staff time to work in teams to drill deeper into our own assessment data. (At that time, local data was not being used effectively to drive decisions in curriculum and instruction.) Once given the opportunity to research our own data, staff could more easily see the holes in our curriculum that were hindering student success. From that point on, our team had a renewed focus and student achievement began to steadily rise. Our paradigm shift was guided by the work of many educational leaders. Ruby Payne, Robert Marzano, Rick Wormeli, and Richard DuFour, have been invaluable resources for our us during this time of educational growth.

In the past two years we have implemented three distinct programs that we feel will make a dynamic impact on teaching and learning at Chapman Middle School.

1. Professional Learning Communities - Beginning in 2011, we took a second attempt at PLCs. In this new approach, CMS devised a two team effort for all staff members. Teachers all belong to a discipline team that meets weekly during the school day. Our unique schedule allows for a 30 minute period in the day where an opportunity for teaming can occur. These teaming opportunities, provide time for the discussion of teaching techniques and curricular challenges specifically for their discipline. All teachers are also on a grade level team. These teams meet once a week before school. To make this meeting time possible, teachers are released from morning supervision. These meeting are more like mini-staff meetings in that grade level programs, procedures and shared students are generally the topic of discussion.

2. In-school Grading Policy - Piloted in 2012, this program has been a little challenging. New ideas can make people very uncomfortable. This grading policy was developed through personal experience with nongraded homework, current CMS data regarding homework completion, and research on grades and grading largely by Rick Wormeli. It was obvious that our old procedures for grading were problematic for teachers and an invalid way of measuring learning. This program has been called a “No Homework Policy”, but that moniker really doesn’t describe our program well. Our teachers actually give work in all core classes for our student to do at home. We call this home-study. Students are given the opportunity to practice home-study daily. We encourage our students to spend at 15 - 20 minutes daily on home-study. Home-study allows students to practice new curriculum and review material. Piloting this program with the 8th grade in the Spring of 2012 was successful. We then implemented the program school wide beginning August 2012. There are many reason why our grading procedures had to change, but the root of our decision was really based on our local data. Issues with homework not getting completed was on
the rise and programs intended to promote homework completion created little to no change. More student grades were reflecting what the student didn’t do, rather than measuring their level of mastery. Grades earned, were not indicative of whether students were going to meet proficiency on local or state assessments.

If our student grades were not accurate in predicting proficiency, we were obviously not doing something correct in either our procedures to teach or measure learning. The following research revealed to us, that we were making a huge mistake in attempting to use graded homework as a tool to accurately demonstrate knowledge gained:

- Grading work that has been completed away from the teacher’s supervision, is an invalid way to assess students. The fact that schools have no way of knowing who actually completed the work or what resources were used, raises questions of the quality of what has been learned from the work all together.

- We know that students have many different home environments, yet we don’t even take that into consideration when homework is required for a grade. We compare homework performance from each student on the same scale, knowing that the educational supports for each student is not equal. Grading homework, is a huge disadvantage to those students that don’t have a home environment that promotes learning with the same passion that our schools do. Completing work at school with the same resources available to all students, levels the playing field for every student.

- Since implementing the new policy, the percentage of CMS students making honor roll has increased. The negative aspect of “homework” has decreased and teachers are no longer battling missing work and assigning zeros for work not completed.

3. **Super 7** - Introduced in 2013, these seven strategies are paramount in the development of classroom lessons. The seven instructional methods we focus on are as follows: creating essential questions, applying activation strategies, using relevant vocabulary, using graphic organizers, asking HOT questions (higher order thinking), and using exit tickets to create data for instruction.

A lot of change has taken place over the years at Chapman Middle School. While there have been many stressful times and hard lessons learned, we have also enjoyed celebrating staff and student achievements. Our success is a testament to the quality of our CMS teaching staff.

We have learned to not be satisfied with our current rate of academic growth. We will never announce that we have discovered “the” best methods for instruction. By utilizing current research and best practices from the educational community, we will remain proactive in our educational approach. **Our culture is constantly changing.** We have learned that we either make things happen, watch what happens or wonder, “what happened”. Working as a team, we are determined to maintain our expectations for academic excellence at Chapman Middle School.

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<th>Math %</th>
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