

Description of Model Program:

Every Story: Creating a Systematic Approach to Ensuring School Engagement and Connectivity for all Students.

Canyon Hills Junior High School believes that everyone has a unique story that shapes the people they are today and who they will become in the future. Only by getting to know the “stories” of our students are we able to build relationships which serve as a vessel to facilitate the learning experience. The Canyon Hills philosophy of *Every Story* has, at its fundamental core, a dedication to the belief that every student deserves to be personally known by one caring adult. As a district, Chino Valley Unified is engaged with bringing Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) to every classroom. *Every Story* was conceived by the Canyon Hills staff and has since spread throughout Chino Valley Unified School District to serve as a vehicle to ensure that PBIS remains student centered.

Getting Started: Our Premise

With rising incidents in school violence, mental illness, and teen suicides, the staff at Canyon Hills believes deeply that every student must be connected to at least one caring adult on campus. The Canyon Hills’ dream for education is to create a learning environment where no child will ever feel so alone, hopeless, or scared that they would want to harm themselves or someone else. Knowing our students’ likes, dislikes, goals and dreams for the future are essential if we hope to move students academically while ensuring their social-emotional well-being. As dreams without actions are little more than passing thoughts, we have created a systematic approach to relationship-building which ensures that our students connect to the school and are personally known by at least one caring adult on campus.

Implementation and Monitoring of Model Program

Step 1: “I Wish My Teacher Knew”

Canyon Hills begins *Every Story* on the first day of school. Through our English Department, students are shown a YouTube video titled “I Wish My Teacher Knew...” an idea which comes from the book, *I Wish My Teacher Knew: How One Question Can Change Everything for Our Kids* by Kyle Schwartz. Canyon Hills teachers explain to our students that we are dedicated to supporting them throughout their learning experience, and that the best way to support one another is for us to get to know each other. Next, students are provided with an “I Wish My Teacher Knew...” form that they fill out in class. Students are informed that the responses will be shared with all their teachers and are encouraged to share as much or little as they feel comfortable. Student responses range from superficial to deeply personal experiences. At the end of the first week of school the papers are collected, and a team of classified and certificated staff members read through the nearly 1,100 responses. Responses are separated by grade, alphabetized, and placed into binders. The team looks for, and makes note of, responses that identify a student as “at risk” for attendance, academics, behavior, etc. Responses that identify students as “at risk” are then shared with the site leadership team for review. Finally, the principal reaches out to the teachers of students whose responses are deemed “can’t wait” or “need to know.” By providing an opportunity for students to share their thoughts and feelings with their new teachers, the Canyon Staff shortens the amount of time that it typically takes teachers to gain valuable knowledge. “I Wish My Teacher Knew...” also

serves as a schoolwide identification tool which allows students to communicate a need for support on an academic and/or social-emotional level.

An example of a notification to teachers regarding an “I Wish My Teacher Knew...” response:

(from the principal)

Dear Teachers,

Student A would like you to know that her father lost his job over the summer and has subsequently had to move out of their home and in with a family member. Student A is currently sharing a room with her two cousins (nine and three years old). Please keep an eye on Student A and make sure to provide any supplies that you notice are missing or running low. School supplies are available in the office for pick-up (a picture of Student A is included to support the teachers in their identification).

Step 2: “Have You Seen Me?”

The second step of the *Every Story* journey occurs at the end of the first trimester (approximately 3 months into the school year). On a minimum day in early November, the entire Canyon Hills Staff meets in the media center where every student’s name is taped to the wall. Next to each name are two boxes - “face” and “story.” Staff members, armed with their pens, will go through the list of names with two goals in mind. First, can the teachers visualize a student’s face based upon only seeing their name? Second, does the staff member know something personal about the student - do they know their “STORY?” Staff members, both classified and certificated, participate in this annual event as a benchmark to determine how well they are getting to know the students on the Canyon Hills campus. The Canyon Hills staff has defined a student’s story as “information that speaks to the narrative of the student’s life.” Our students’ stories are more than simple facts and numbers. Stories consist of the background information that shapes the young adults sitting in our classrooms.

Step 3: “Do You Know Me?”

The next step in *Every Story* is to identify students with “unknown stories” and begin to build relationships with them. To achieve this, administration retrieves the names of students whose stories are “unknown” and creates an Excel spreadsheet with the faces and names of all 7th and 8th grade students with whom we have yet to form a connection. The spreadsheets are laminated and placed in the staff lounge with a simple title, “Do You Know Me?” Next, Canyon Hills staff members commit themselves each week to getting to know two or more students from the list who are in our classes, at the lunch tables, in the library, etc. Once a relationship is formed between a student and a staff member, the staff member will indicate a connection has been made by placing a mark next to the student’s picture. Two times a month the administrative team takes down the pictures of the “unknown” students, removes the students who are now personally connected to a staff member on campus, and creates a new spreadsheet - the fewer the kids, the larger the pictures - until 100% of our students have a personal relationship with one or more caring adults on campus.

Step 4: The Six & One Schedule

Canyon Hills has created a “Six & One” schedule to ensure that every student is connected to the campus. The “six” in the title refers to the six classes that every student is expected to take throughout the year (English, Math, Science, History, PE, Elective). The “one” refers to one extra-curricular activity that each student commits to trying throughout the school year. The purpose of having students engage with “the one” is to ensure that each student feels

connected with like-minded peers and staff members through an activity that connects them to Canyon Hills. To ensure fidelity of the “Six & One” schedule, students are provided with a “Six and One” page in the student agenda. This page provides a rationale for the “Six & One” schedule and provides students with a place to commit to one of the nearly 30 extracurricular clubs and activities on campus.

Every Story: Creating the “Why”

Every Story was created at Canyon Hills based upon a need identified by the school’s Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) which is comprised of administration and teachers from each of the educational disciplines. The team began to look at the culture of education nationwide, with a specific focus on Canyon Hills. During an ILT meeting in October of 2017, three pressing issues were identified as needing attention.

1. Given a 2015 Gallup Poll of 900,000 U.S. students, the team noted that school connectivity nationwide was decreasing at an exponential rate as students' progress from grade to grade. The study indicated that 75% of 5th grade students reported feeling connected to their school; however, as students progressed in their studies only 45% of 8th grade students reported feeling connected, and by 11th grade only 32% of students felt connected to their school site.

The team then began to seek correlations between a lack of connectivity and the following:

- school dropout rates (1 in 4 high school students nationwide)
 - school violence (approximately 1 incident of gun violence weekly)
 - teen thoughts of self-harm and suicide (13.8% of teens nationwide report having seriously considered committing suicide)
2. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support lacked staff buy-in since the system was being viewed as a check off list for teachers rather than a relationship building tool used to modify undesirable classroom behaviors.
 3. Canyon Hills noticed inequalities within specific student groups. The team noted that males were being referred at a rate of 3-1 when compared to their female counterparts. The team also noted that African American males represented 9.6% of the total office referrals on campus while they made up only 3.3% of the student population.

After sharing the data above, the Canyon Hills principal made the following statement: “I believe that each of us cares deeply about students, I believe that we love our students, and I know we are here to do what is best for all students. I do not believe for one second that we are here to discriminate against any student groups, I know that we want to support our students who are suffering silently with thoughts of self-harm, we want to protect our students from gun violence, and we want to ensure that our students graduate from high school. Given a common understanding of our values it is up to us, as caring adults, to find ways to turn around the negative trends we see.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, the ILT dedicated themselves to purposefully engage with students as a means of learning their “stories,” so that no student would ever suffer in silence or go through the school day unknown. The team set out to learn the “backstories” of our students to respond to the underlying causes of non-preferred behaviors rather than reacting to the behaviors themselves, and *Every Story* was formed.

Results of the Model Program

Every Story: Our Mission

The goal of *Every Story* is to create a systematic approach to relationship building in order to increase student academic achievement, decrease chronic absenteeism, decrease suspension and expulsion rates, and provide at least one caring adult connection that students can go to should they ever have thoughts of self-harm. With such a heavy emphasis placed on academic success in today's educational system it is imperative that schools provide a safe, physical and social-emotional, environment for learning. One aspect of professional development at Canyon Hills is to identify trends and patterns that arise among student subgroups as a means of engaging with pedagogical best practices. Professional development is provided by trained experts in a given field: English Language Development, Socio-economically Disadvantaged, Homeless Youth, Foster Youth, Students with Disabilities, etc.

Another professional development focus at Canyon Hills is the implementation of school wide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). Canyon Hills understands that classroom interventions identified in PBIS are tools to support relationship building; knowing students' stories allow staff members to identify applicable interventions needed to support every student. As Canyon Hills shifted to an *Every Story* Junior High we began to ask ourselves, "What do I really know about this student?" The PBIS focus quickly shifted from checking off boxes on a form to engaging with the strategies and supports provided through PBIS as a means of supporting the individual student. Canyon Hills' staff found that we are more likely to work with the students in our classroom rather than send them to the office once we have engaged with their personal stories and know the experiences of the students' life.

Every Story: Monitoring

Canyon Hills is dedicated to ensuring that all of Chino Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) goals are implemented with fidelity. *Every Story* supports CVUSD's LCAP Goal 2 (state priorities 3, 5, and 6) which state, "Staff, Parents, Families, and Students are connected and engaged to their school to ensure student success." Canyon Hills supports the district goal by partnering with all stakeholders to ensure that every student is personally known and cared for by at least one caring adult on campus; *Every Story* created by the Canyon Hills Leadership Team and has quickly spread across the school district as we work to ensure that parents, families, and students are connected and engaged to their school to ensure student success.

The first year that Canyon Hills worked to become an *Every Story* school the staff laid the foundation for the school wide experience. In year two the ILT began to engage family members with the *Every Story* philosophy. First, Canyon Hills partnered with the Parent Teacher Student Association to purchase *Every Story* shirts for the staff. Next, during 7th grade family orientation, the administrative team introduced our incoming families to the *Every Story* philosophy, with a focus on the importance of school connectivity. At this time the Six & One schedule was also introduced to families as was the purpose for school engagement outside of the classroom. To further highlight Canyon Hills dedication to knowing "*Every Story*," the school Renaissance shirts have a message on the back which reads "*Every Story Matters*." Finally, the title of the Canyon Hills yearbook for the 2018-2019

school year is “What’s Your Story?” and focuses throughout the book with the theme of knowing the stories of those with whom we engage.

As *Every Story* grew; the Canyon Hills philosophy continued to move beyond the walls of our school site and across southern California. The philosophy behind *Every Story* was shared with activity directors and administrators at the 2018 California Association of Directors of Activities Conference, the 2018 World’s Greatest Schools Conference, and the 2018 National Renaissance Conference in Orlando, Florida. *Every Story* has also been shared with all the principals within CVUSD, with administrators from the Association of California School Administrators’ Region 12, and as professional development for numerous elementary, junior high, and high school staffs throughout CVUSD.

Canyon Hills fundamentally believes that engaging with every student’s story is imperative to ensuring a positive learning experience for our nation’s youth. To support our belief with evidence, the Canyon Hills ILT evaluates the effectiveness of *Every Story* in a variety of ways. One way Canyon Hills measures the effectiveness of *Every Story* is with the California School Dashboard. The Canyon Hills ILT uses the School Dashboard to identify successes in student progress and to determine next steps for improvement. Site office referral data, student GPA, chronic absenteeism, and student “threat” assessments for self-harm are all in-house metrics that are used to evaluate the effectiveness of *Every Story*. Upon engaging with the data, one specific data point caught the eye of the ILT; schoolwide the reporting of threat assessments had increased at a rate of two to one from the previous years. Threat assessments are administered when a student reports a feeling of wanting to engage in self-harm behaviors. The reporting increase in threat assessments at Canyon Hills is attributed to the fact that students are connected to a caring adult on campus and have a safe place to go when they are considering self-harm. Statistical data from *Every Story* is shared with all stakeholders; the Canyon Hills Parent Teacher Student Association reviews the data bi-yearly, the Superintendent’s Executive Cabinet reviews the data bi-yearly, and the Canyon Hills ILT reviews the data monthly.

***Every Story*: Statistical Data**

Data collected prior to *Every Story* as compared to the data collected after *Every Story* demonstrates the following changes when comparing data from August-October 2017 to data from August -October 2018:

- Students with 1-5 absences decreased by 1%
- Students with 2-5 office referrals decreased 2.7%
- Students with a 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) or higher increased 2.1%
- Unknown Stories:
 - December 2017
 - 7th grade = 183 unknown stories
 - 8th grade = 124 unknown stories
 - November 2018
 - 7th grade = 60 unknown stories
 - 8th grade = 10 unknown stories

The Canyon Hills staff is dedicated to ensuring the success of all students. As a World's Greatest School, we believe that all students have futures, and we believe that no one gets anywhere without a "teacher". Our dream for education through the *Every Story* philosophy continues to focus on creating a learning environment where no child will ever feel so alone, hopeless, or scared that they would want to harm themselves or someone else. Through deep connections between students, staff, and families, Canyon Hills continues to celebrate individual successes, achievements, and ensures opportunities for students to be the World's Greatest version of themselves.