

CLARKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

2017 Districtwide Bullying Prevention Essay Contest



Professional
Development
School District



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ABOUT THE CONTEST

The second annual Clarke County School District (CCSD) Districtwide Bullying Prevention Essay Contest was held in January and February of 2017. In 2015, Jasia Clark, then a twelfth grade student at Clarke Central High School, envisioned the contest. Dr. Katherine Raczynski, Districtwide Professor-in-Residence for School Climate in the Professional Development School District partnership between CCSD and the University of Georgia (UGA), worked closely with Jasia to organize, launch, and manage the contest.

CCSD students in grades 6-12 were invited to nominate a CCSD employee who has made an impact by standing up to bullying or helping someone who has been bullied. Although student nominators were required to be in middle or high school, they could nominate an employee at the elementary, middle, or high school level. The person nominated could be a teacher, administrator, counselor, or some other adult, but they were required to be employed in CCSD. Students were asked to describe how this person has made an impact by preventing bullying or helping those who have been affected by bullying. Essays ranged from 250-500 words. The contest was publicized through posters delivered to each middle and high school and informational emails sent to middle and high school principals.

Entries were accepted from December 30 to February 15, 2017. A total of 43 entries were received. Of these, 35 met the eligibility requirements (i.e., the nominated adult is a current CCSD employee). Across these 35 entries, a total of 33 CCSD employees from 11 schools were nominated.

UGA graduate students in English Education served as judges for the contest, under the supervision of Dr. Sara Kajder. Each essay was read by five different raters and scored according to a common rubric. The four domains assessed were relevance, rich detail, captures acts over time, and tone.

The team of judges selected the top essay written by a middle school student and the top essay written by a high school student. In addition, the contest organizers selected winners in two special recognition categories.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organizers of the conference would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following people and companies for contributing to the success of the contest:

- Charles White from **Quality Trophies** for award plaques (Athens, GA)
- Derrick Bray from **Diamond Global** for promotional posters (Athens, GA)
- **Phil Lanoue**, Clarke County School District
- **Jack Parish**, Clarke County School District
- **Anisa Jimenez**, Clarke County School District
- **Dawn Meyers**, Clarke County School District
- **Sara Kajder** and the **graduate students** in LLED 7408 (Spring Semester 2017), University of Georgia
- **Janna Dresden**, University of Georgia
- **Erica Gilbertson**, University of Georgia

ESSAY CONTEST AWARD WINNERS

Middle School Level

Nominating Student: **Luke Krohn**, Clarke Middle School

Nominated Adult: **Shawn Hinger**, Clarke Middle School

High School Level

Nominating Student: **Stephen Matteo Castile**, Cedar Shoals High School

Nominated Adult: **Vincent Panetta**, Cedar Shoals High School

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD WINNERS

Above and Beyond Award

Tony Johnson, Burney-Harris Lyons Middle School

Special Recognition Award

Motikae Collins, Clarke County School District bus driver

WINNING ESSAYS

Middle School Level

Nominating Student: **Luke Krohn**, Clarke Middle School

Nominated Adult: **Shawn Hinger**, Clarke Middle School

With over 100 staff in our school, all of their many goals include to prevent bullying. Some of them are naturals at it, not even having to try, like Mrs. Hinger. She goes the extra mile though it comes to her like second nature, but she tries even harder to help someone out who's feeling down or bring a couple laughs to someone if they're sad about something. Mrs. Hinger is warm, humorous, and welcoming. She's the person everybody goes to just to have some fun outside of work. She is someone people trust to tell her what's going on.

People are likely to pick their counselors because they deal with bullying everyday, but they can't spend as much time talking about it as another teacher. I've witnessed her helping someone out or stopping bullying on many occasions.

One time I was going to eat lunch in the library, and when I walked in she was talking to a student and seeming to comfort them. She looked very dedicated to this one person that she might not even see that much or know that well. The student then left a couple of minutes later with a smile on their face and a more happy and bright person.

Another time is when two students were in an argument with another student and she was told about it going on so she gathered the three students and helped them settle their situation without anyone getting hurt.

Mrs. Hinger hosts and helps with many competitions. If people are confused she explains it to them. If people are failing at this competition then she helps them get on the right track for what they're supposed to be doing.

Every time I walk in the library it feels enlightened and happy because of the way she does things, because the library is impacted in such a way through her actions it in turn helps make the school a better place.

In many ways Mrs. Hinger helps bullying and impacts the school to stop bullying. These are some of the best that make me think she is the perfect candidate and example for someone who prevents bullying and has made an impact doing so.

High School Level

Nominating Student: **Stephen Matteo Castile**, Cedar Shoals High School

Nominated Adult: **Vincent Panetta**, Cedar Shoals High School

Mr. Panetta set an example my freshmen year that set a very high standard for teachers' tolerance of bullying for the rest of my academic career. In my class we had a few disruptive personalities that could eventually turn to harassment or even bullying of other students, and Mr. Panetta showed zero tolerance of these activities. The second he caught wind of anything that could possibly be detrimental to the classroom atmosphere or anyone's personal rights he put his foot down and dealt with those at fault.

One instance that I specifically remember was when we got a test back and someone was making fun of another student because of their grade and Mr. Panetta immediately pulled them out of class and had a talk with them and then right after talked to the person that was bullied to make sure that they were in the right state of mind and ok. This example speaks volumes to Mr. Panetta's character.

Early in the year it was made clear that any activities that could possibly be related to bullying wouldn't be acceptable in his classroom. As he got to know us as students and kids he could see even better when someone was being put down by others and became even better at identifying and dealing with issues. The frequency of these activities lessened and lessened throughout the year and I think had a lasting effect on the "perpetrators" as they since encountering Mr. Panetta have almost permanently changed their ways to be nicer and more accepting members of our school and community.

Thanks to him and his continual fight against bullying in his classroom and throughout the school he made my time in his classroom and in the Freshman Academy feel even safer and more enjoyable.

OTHER NOTABLE ESSAYS

Nominating Student: **Eleanor Day**, Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School

Nominated Adult: **Tony Johnson**, Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School

Tony Johnson is the most pleasant and caring custodian anybody could ever meet. You would expect someone that cleans up disgusting boys bathrooms to be testy at best, but Tony is the exact opposite. Tony will smile at you no matter what kind of day he's had, and you can always count on him for a high five.

I remember yesterday, I was talking to Tony and he actually seemed like he enjoyed the conversation, whereas most adults will only pretend they care (and they aren't very good at it). We were talking about what high school I was planning to go to and he popped off with a question that really surprised me, "Anybody giving you trouble lately?" At first I was surprised that he asked but it wasn't much of a shock because Tony really is a nice guy. I told him that there wasn't anybody I could really think of since at BHL people are pretty accepting and do their best to be kind. "Well, don't let anybody get you down," he told me, and in that moment I knew, I was going to write about Tony.

I look forward to talking to Tony after dismissal because I know he will always listen, and he's always telling bad jokes that make me laugh anyway. Tony is an all around nice guy, and he'll talk to you about it if you have a bad day, he'll listen to your problems, he'll even help you resolve your problems. Tony really has made a huge difference in my life this school year.

Nominating Student: **Raymond Pan**, Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School

Nominated Adult: **Melissa Kurtz**, Whitehead Road Elementary School

Mrs. Kurtz was my ESOL teacher when I was at Whitehead Road Elementary School. Life was very difficult for me because I could not speak English. Kids were always making fun of me because of my lack of English. I had given up many times because life just seems hopeless. Mrs. Kurtz was always there for me like a blazing torch in the scary darkness. She was always patient and does not care the length of time it takes for me to learn as long as I tried my best. I was awarded sweets and was told to not give up. Her gentle voice and her sparkling smile are things I will never forget for the rest of my life.

I believe her actions were just as awesome as teachers who stood up to bullying. She made me felt as important as everyone else in the class. I only had to take the ESOL class for two years! Many teachers were awed by my performance because, in first grade, I was just a kid from Asia who does not know any English. Then, I was a kid who took normal classes with all of his fellow classmates as if he was there his entire life. What many of them did not know was that I would not be where I was if Mrs. Kurtz was not behind my back. I would definitely not be where I am today, taking all advanced classes and have straight A's on my report card. She is a teacher that needs to be recognized.



Nominating Student: **Robby Ratajczak**, Cedar Shoals High School

Nominated Adult: **Stephen Castile**, Cedar Shoals High School

Words can cut like knives. However, no visible injury can be seen from words. There is no bandaid to the emotional damage words inflict on humans. I have known Mr. Stephen Castile for close to 6 years now and of all the people I have encountered, he is the closest thing to an emotional surgeon, capable of sewing up the wounds forged by the hurling of evil words.

In modern day, physical abuse is seen less and less. It is punishable by suspension and sometimes incarceration but fighting in a battle of emotions is more present than ever. All my life, I have been a kid that has been bigger than others and presents a strong personality. With this, I have encountered lots of incidents in which words were exchanged about me that weren't the nicest. I have learned over time to just ignore them and move on. Nothing that someone says can affect me in the long run if i pay it no mind. However, that attitude can be punishing. When you find yourself ignoring more and more insults and attempting to forget more and more wounds that have collected, it can be difficult to keep your mind looking ahead. You find yourself wanting to stop your forward progression and ponder in pity of the present situation.

Whenever I have encountered a situation like this, my teacher and life mentor, Mr. Castile, has been there to guide me back on track. As my relationship has developed with him over the years, he has been able to notice when I'm not myself. He cares about my personal well being and will take time out of his life to stop and talk to me. There have been multiple incidents in which I have felt lost, not knowing which way to turn and all it took was a text or talk with Mr. Castile to point me towards the future. He shares stories about his struggles and lets you know that he truly cares and understands. He has helped me develop my personality that I display today and my attitude towards life as whole. He understands the impact of bullying and is a first responder to save the lives of high schools in distress.

ALL NOMINATED ADULTS AND PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

The following Clarke County School District employees were nominated by students for their role in preventing or responding to bullying.

Nominated Adult	Adult's School	Nominated By	Student's School
Mr. Mark Aquí	Hilsman MS	Eden Dvorak	Hilsman MS
Mr. Chris Batson	Clarke MS	Jerry Bhardwaj	Clarke MS Middle
Mr. Cory Cain	Hilsman MS	Christopher Camp	Hilsman MS
Mr. Stephen Castile	Cedar Shoals HS	Robby Ratajczak	Cedar Shoals HS
Ms. Motikae Collins	Clarke MS	A'Dasia Hamm	Hilsman MS
Ms. Ashley Destafani	Hilsman MS	Mauria Smith	Hilsman MS
Ms. Ashley Destefani	Hilsman MS	Montarious Rogers	Hilsman MS
Dr. Scarlett Dunne	Oglethorpe Ave. ES	Jillian Cook	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Ms. Melissa Ellard	JJ Harris ES	Chris Rhodes	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Ms. Karen Farsworth	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS	Donte Hill	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Mr. Marc Ginsberg	Cedar Shoals HS	Ben Barkdoll	Cedar Shoals HS
Ms. Ariel Gordon	Cedar Shoals HS	Henry Sampson	Classic City HS
Mr. Nolan Gottlieb	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS	Jesus Camacho	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Ms. Shawn Hinger	Clarke MS	Luke Krohn	Clarke MS Middle
Mr. Tony Johnson	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS	Eleanor Day	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Ms. Veronica Johnson	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS	Jasmine Cleveland	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Mr. Jim Jones	Classic City HS	Laishaun B. Woods	Classic City HS
Ms. Tiffani Knight	Classic City HS	Jajuan Jackson	Classic City HS
Ms. Melissa Kurtz	Whitehead Road ES	Raymond Pan	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Mr. Mark Martin	Hilsman MS	Jada Taylor	Hilsman MS
Dr. James Maudsley	Classic City HS	Ansley Sand	Classic City HS
Mr. Bryan Moore	Cedar Shoals HS	Kamia Caldwell	Cedar Shoals HS
Mr. Joshua NeSmith	Clarke MS	Alliyah Rodriguez	Clarke MS Middle
Mr. Vincent Panetta	Cedar Shoals HS	Stephen Matteo Castile	Cedar Shoals HS
Mr. Richard Pavone	Hilsman MS	Ashari Potts	Hilsman MS
Ms. Melissa Perez-Rhym	Cedar Shoals HS	Amaranta Santillana	Cedar Shoals HS
Ms. Ashlee Perry	Clarke MS	A'Dasia Hamm	Hilsman MS
Mr. Jason Pratt	Hilsman MS	Rasun McCaleb	Cedar Shoals HS
Ms. Cherrelle Pullen	Hilsman MS	Jalen Royal	Hilsman MS
Ms. Cherrelle Pullen	Hilsman MS	De'Asia Odister	Hilsman MS
Ms. Karen Richburg	Cedar Shoals HS	Jasmine Clark	Classic City HS
Mr. Robert Sampson	Classic City HS	Maubricio Salazar	Classic City HS
Ms. Barb Saunders	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS	Olivia Knowlton	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Mr. Stephen Seagraves	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS	Marquis Allen	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Ms. Polly Stagg	Classic City HS	Sara Purdy	Classic City HS

The following students also submitted entries to the contest.

Student's Name	Student's School
Ahmari Adams	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Nathaniel Bolton	Hilsman MS
Yesenia Camero Delarosa	Cedar Shoals HS
Allie Chang	Hilsman MS
Olivia Falcon	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Martavious Foster	Clasic City HS
Samuel Joseph	Burney-Harris-Lyons MS
Ka'lah Paige	Cedar Shoals HS
Nykeria Pass	Hilsman MS
Shantisa Strowder	Cedar Shoals HS