

CHANTÉ PROJECT

Fort Peck Community College Newsletter

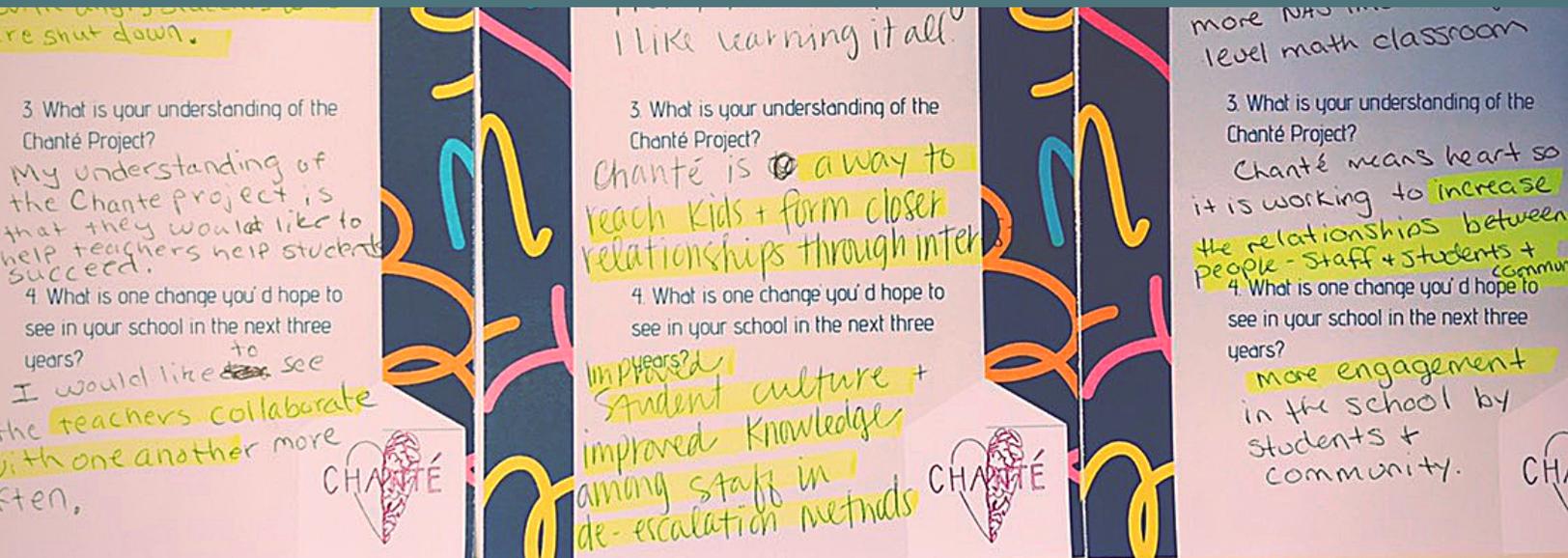


TABLE OF CONTENTS

AND FOR TEACHERS TOO - CARLY ISRAEL

TEACHER RETREATS - ROXANN SMITH

PEER TUTORING - DR. LISA STROH

CARE CLOSETS - RHONDA SORENSON

SUMMER LEADER PROFILE - JAMIE REUM



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE - AND FOR TEACHERS TOO

In talking with teachers and school staff this past year I have heard some say: "for the kids" has become a loaded term in our schools. Loaded in the way it is used, as a tool to pile more responsibility onto teachers ever-increasing load. We must assume those of us in education are here for the students. It becomes alarming when an inarguable phrase is used to apply additional pressure to an already overburdened population.

Chanté is here for students AND teachers too, because we see a need to serve those that serve our children.

Our project funding is overloaded towards personnel, which has inspired some challenging conversations. If so much of Chanté's money is for adults, is it really education reform, or is it merely job creation? In mulling over these questions and listening to teachers it has become clear we need to share their load, which in turn makes a case for more adults.

In Browning, Montana the Buffalo Hide Academy (BHA) is practicing sharing the load by hiring enough staff to cover for teachers when they are spent by early afternoon. Helping our students is a tiring game. One teacher from BHA recalls a particularly bad day. They approached their Principal by lunch saying they weren't going to be of any use by staying in the building until the final bell. The Principal trusted the teacher's limits and sent them home.

That kind of thinking, thinking that concerns the heart as well as the mind, is what Chanté Project is about. It is also what secured our funding. For the past three decades education reform has focused solely on curriculum and instruction-based initiatives. After spending large amounts of time and money we seem to be just about where we started, and in some cases worse off.

Chanté is a relationship-centered project. It presupposes: our children must feel safe and understood before they can learn, that this foundation comes from building healthy relationships, and that healthy relationships suffer when we are overburdened. People, not programs, are at the heart of any change effort. We believe students can only feel safe and understood if their teachers feel safe and understood too.



POPLAR PILOTS PEER TUTORING

By Dr. Lisa Stroh

One of the objectives of the Chanté Project is to increase student grades in English. As a demonstration grant Chanté encourages us to think outside the box and implement new interventions in an attempt to raise student achievement. Ms. Becky Hall, Poplar High School's 9th and 11th grade English Teacher, collaborated with Dr. Stroh, Chanté Project Coordinator, and piloted a peer mentoring program in her classrooms. Students both volunteered and were selected by Ms. Hall to serve as peer mentors to students who were struggling to maintain a passing grade.

The program ended on April 29, 2019. The peer mentors, as well as the students being mentored, felt the program was very successful. When asked what a mentor's favorite part of the program was Freshman, Jazmin Gorder said the program taught her "These kids know a lot more than they show. I found out how kind and smart they can be when they try."

The mentors were surprised to find out their peers were not necessarily lacking in academic skills but rather the application of them. Some even commented on how clear it was that their friends held them back. When asked if they thought the peer mentor program should be continued, students replied with a resounding 'Yes!'. As a thank you, the peer mentors were presented with visa gift cards and a Chanté Certificate for their time and efforts.

Ms. Hall feels very positive about this classroom intervention saying "Students who took part in the program gradually showed improvement in their grades. Several students started paying better attention and staying on task." Her classes are experiencing the benefits of peers redirecting fellow students to be their best. Along with the student mentors, Ms. Hall would also like to see this program continued next year.

Teacher Retreats By Roxy Smith

Teacher retreats were hosted by the Chanté Project in Wolf Point on March 30 and Poplar on April 6. The focus of these retreats was to introduce the project and discuss the targets of the grant.

Chanté staff and teachers discussed available resources and the types of advice new teachers to the community would appreciate. From this discussion a Teacher Resource Handbook will be provided to teachers in the fall of 2019.

Relationship building was another topic on the agenda, which is a large part of the grant. The grant is focused primarily upon Social-Emotional Learning, which centers on healthy relationships.

Integrating culture and values into learning can be challenging. Chanté will be helping teachers through ongoing professional development activities to make our schools more inclusive spaces for all.

Research in the classroom was another topic discussed at these initial teacher retreats. Teachers are encouraged build active lessons that can be shared and further used as training tools.

Tracking students and using research driven lessons such as project-based learning will be a focus of upcoming trainings. Suggested reading was available which led our discussion into initiating an on-going teacher book club. The first book is available at the Chanté Office if you or anyone you know is interested in taking part. Our first book club met on Saturday, May 4th and will continue to alternate between the Poplar and Wolf Point FPCC campuses.

In addition to these retreats the Chanté Project also conducted a survey to identify the types of professional development teachers would like to see offered. Chanté staff strives to listen carefully to teacher input and will try to accommodate as much of their requests as possible.



CHANTÉ CARE CLOSETS

By Rhonda Sorenson

The Chanté Project is proud to announce both revamped and new Chanté Care Closets for our students in Brockton, Poplar, and Wolf Point schools. These closets were inspired by HPDP Counselor, Mrs. Oh in Brockton. They will stock a variety of items such as: school supplies, shampoo, conditioner, body soap, toothbrushes, lotion, feminine products, clothes, cough drops, bottled water, band-aids, tissues and snacks.

Students are welcome to come collect supplies in between classes and at breaks. We just ask that you sign your name when you've taken any collection of things so we can keep a record of the closet's usefulness. Thanks!!

Summer Activity Leader Profile By Jamie Reum

Having a heart for students, along with a welcoming environment, are key to learning. Wolf Point teacher, Mrs. Tiffani Darby has demonstrated her large heart through the many hours outside of her traditional classroom she devotes to Wolf Point students.

"In the classroom, a teacher's attention is constantly pulled in countless directions and relationships with students sometimes slip through the cracks. Through the Chanté after school programs, those relationships have the opportunity to blossom when kids step out of a crowded classroom and into a fun, engaging activity with their teacher."
- Mrs. Darby

These extra hours, when people show up even when they aren't required, are the ones of major difference making.

Despite having four small children of her own, Mrs. Darby takes time to do after school Chanté activities and is hosting a Chanté summer camp. The camp will teach mindfulness and meditation. Students will learn techniques to reduce daily stress, diffuse tense situations, and regulate their emotions.

Mrs. Darby will teach these skills at various outdoor locations such as the riverside, lake, and parks. The goal of this camp is to empower students by teaching them how to identify and work with the feelings and emotions they are experiencing. The camp will also equip them to handle day to day stress in healthier ways through mindfulness. Mrs. Darby is down-to-earth, kind, and has a huge heart for her students.

Make sure to learn more from her this summer and register at chanteproject.com for Mindfulness and Meditation (July 8th -19th).

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