



ABOVE AND BEYOND

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Just Say Hi!

This campaign started as a simple attempt to connect our students with each other and with the larger community. It came out of a discussion concerning the *Forty Assets* that Search Institute says provide students an opportunity to be successful at school and in life. (Visit Search Institute website at www.search-institute.org) We decided to focus on one of the assets rather than all forty, and making personal connections became our target. Our small town has a large number of seniors still living in their own homes but not connected to the high school, as their kids have grown up and moved out of town. The seniors were part of our target in the community as well.

Four different coloured buttons were made with the Just Say Hi logo on them. Four iPod Nanos were then purchased, and if a student collected all four buttons by the end of the campaign, they could enter their ballot in the draw for the iPod designated for their grade. Black buttons were to be distributed to all students on the first day of the campaign. A local radio personality attended our assembly, and the students were invited to say hi! to anyone and start the campaign.

This Say Hi! campaign had been in the planning stages for over a year, and the start date was picked months in advance. The kick-off assembly was held on the Monday morning and the buttons were to be handed out to all

students on Tuesday morning in home room. Tragically, the murders at Virginia Tech occurred on the Monday afternoon. It was an extremely unhappy coincidence, but the students understood even more the importance of our campaign. It was stated on the announcements that this campaign will never cure the pain and suffering that has just happened at Virginia Tech, but it is certainly part of the solution so that individuals do not feel so alienated from their community that they are driven to extreme behaviours that affect us all.

A week later, downtown businesses and municipal locations such as the library and pool in the community were given blue buttons to distribute. If a student entered a business and said Hi!, they would receive a blue button. The next two Thursday mornings, senior citizens greeted students at our three main entrances distributing green buttons to students who said Hi! to them. The final week, the municipal councillors, mayor, fire chief and police chief came to the school at lunch to be introduced and to greet students and distribute red buttons.

The close of the campaign was an afternoon assembly for the students and an evening community presentation by Mark Scharenbroich. Mark brought his Building Connections message to the students and was impressed with the simplicity of the campaign. Evaluations of the campaign were collected from participants and they were very positive, especially from our senior citizens who participated at the school. One student summed it up with, I met a guy through *Say Hi!* and now we are dating, and going to the same university. He said Hi! to me one day in the halls and we haven't stopped since! ■

Dave Conlon

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Check out the Say Hi website at www.sayhi.ca



