

Boulware Springs Charter School

School Culture Handbook

2016-2017



Taking it to the next level.

Boulware School Culture Handbook

Section 1: Mission, Vision, and Overview

Section 2: Innovation, Culture, and Community

Innovation

School Culture & Character Education

Behavior

Family Engagement

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Section 1: Mission, Vision, and Overview

Origin of school opening: Why was the school founded?

Boulware Charter was founded by a team of mother-daughter educators, Kay Abbitt and Megan Lane. Both Kay and Megan are long-time residents of Gainesville and have combined experience as teachers, a parent, and a student of the Alachua County school system. Frustrated by both increased bureaucracy and a focus on testing in education, the team began to conceptualize a “different” type of school- one that was relevant, meaningful, and innovative when it came to the contextual needs of its students. As such, the team applied to open a charter school in June of 2014. They strategically selected East Gainesville for the location of the school due to the history of low achieving schools in the area. Essentially, the team’s objective was to ensure that underserved students who were otherwise “zoned to fail” were given the opportunity to choose a school that embodied their beliefs about education and provided them with a meaningful education.

Origin of school name and mascot: Boulware Springs Charter School (Boulware Charter), the manatee

The Boulware Springs Water Works is a historic site in Gainesville, Florida, located in East Gainesville at 3400 Southeast 15th Street. On June 20, 1985, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. The spring was the site of an 1854 meeting where area citizens voted to create a new town (Gainesville) to replace Newnansville as the Alachua County seat. The spring was the source of city water until 1913 and was important in the city's growth. The University of Florida moved from Lake City to Gainesville in 1901 because the city promised the university free water for life from the Boulware Springs. Today, the spring no longer provides water to the city or to UF, however the historical significance of it being a source of life and education was the reason why this school was named after it. Just as the spring helped Gainesville grow, Boulware Springs Charter School helps children grow in both character and intellect.

Manatees are large, fully aquatic, mostly herbivorous marine mammals, sometimes known as sea cows. They mostly live in Florida and rely on the constant temperatures of natural springs to provide the warmer water in the winter that they need to survive. Manatees are capable of understanding discrimination tasks and show signs of complex associative learning. They also have good long-term memory. They are gentle and loving. Since they are often found in springs and exhibit characteristics applicable to our school’s mission, they were selected as our mascot.

Mission: Where we're headed....

The mission of Boulware Charter is to foster the academic, character, and physical growth of all of our students so that they are prepared for the intellectual and character demands of life beyond our school.

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.” -Martin Luther King, Jr.

Vision: How we'll get there...

The program at Boulware Springs Charter reflects our belief that an education should awaken and inspire students. Students at Boulware are encouraged to take chances, foster their curiosity, and challenge themselves to improve on a daily basis. Parents, community partners, and our school family will support these endeavors by providing the skills and support necessary for students to improve in intellect and character. Ultimately, our program will prepare students to be successful in their continued schooling, active members within their community, critical thinkers, and cooperative problem solvers in real world situations.

“Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow.”
Anthony J. D'Angelo

Our Core School Values: Shared values that guide our attitudes and actions

Boulware's 4Rs encompasses the four core values that will provide the foundation for how Boulware's staff, students, families and community partners will go about achieving our mission. These four values are:

1. *Respect: We treat others as we expect to be treated.*
We embrace each individual's unique talents and honor diverse life and work styles. We operate in a spirit of cooperation and value human dignity. We speak to each other kindly and we use manners to show our appreciation.
2. *Responsibility: We do what we say we are going to do.*
We take responsibility for our actions and words. We develop trust by following through on our commitments.

3. *Being a Role Model: We set a good example.*

We are role models at school and outside of school. We use the skills we have learned to do the right thing.

4. *Reach for the Stars: We have a growth mindset.*

We respond to challenging learning with perseverance and enthusiasm, knowing that when we struggle through something, we end up growing.

Our Core Staff Beliefs: Shared beliefs that guide our attitudes and actions

At Boulware, we believe:

1. We teach in schools, not classrooms.

This seems like a nonsense statement until you consider all the mindset shifts necessary to break away from the traditional vision of teachers as islands. The purpose of this statement is to acknowledge that teachers do a significant amount of work outside the classrooms with parents, fellow teachers, and leaders. This argument is not just an ode to the value of collaboration; it is the challenge of Baldwin's quote "The children are always ours, every single one of them." If we teach in schools and not classrooms then it matters just as much how kids are in the classroom down the hall and in all the grades to come.

2. We teach on a PreK to 16 continuum.

We realize that the outcomes our kids deserve necessitate continuously strong teaching from the time our kids are four until they are twenty-two. An excellent Boulware classroom is not a catapult that sends a kid shooting off to college, but part of a bridge. And all of our excellent teaching revolves around seeing that continuum and approaching each interaction with our children with, an urgent patience, an understanding of what lies ahead of them, but also an absolutely insane focus on accomplishing the most we can with the moment in front of us.

3. Joy is a means and end in education.

Joy is more than a tool for increased engagement. Joy is what it means to teach and learn in our schools. Joy appears in myriad of ways across the PreK-16 continuum, but is palpable in every excellent classroom. It is not simply something you do in a hook to jazz kids up for a lesson. Joy is infused throughout the very act of teaching and learning. Kids should enjoy school so much that they can't imagine missing a day and attendance rules become unnecessary.

4. We want teaching to be a ray, not a line segment.

We believe in a growth mindset about teaching and learning. Like a ray, there is no endpoint in teaching and learning. It is an art and science at which we can continually get better. Becoming a truly excellent teacher is a lifelong pursuit. We want every one of our teachers to embody the belief: I can become a great teacher and will never truly get to the end of this path because there's so much to learn and so much to do in the act of teaching and learning.

The Boulware Difference: Meeting our students' needs

Boulware Springs Charter School offers unique features that seek to alleviate many of the barriers to student achievement. Some of these features are listed briefly below. However, these features will be discussed in more detail in the following sections on culture, instruction, and operations.

Extended School Year/Day

At Boulware we believe that students need more instructional time to fully reach their goals. As such, our school year starts in mid July and ends in early June. Each 50-day (ten week) term is followed by a 10-day (two week) break. Our summer is only 6 weeks long, reducing the effects of summer learning loss. Boulware also offers a longer school day to increase instructional time. Our school day runs from 8am-4pm. We have early release on Wednesdays at 2pm. Our longer day allows teachers to spend more time in reading, math, specials, and Spanish, in addition to daily science and social studies classes. Overall, Boulware offers over 1200 hours of instructional time as compared to 720-900 hours in traditional public schools.

Free After School Tutoring for Students Performing Below Grade Level

Students who are struggling to meet their learning goals are required to stay for free tutoring after school in small groups. After school tutoring provides up to 5 additional hours of instruction per week. Students not required to stay for tutoring can participate in Boulware's after school program, which runs until 5:30 each day and is reasonably priced.

Family Engagement

We believe parents are an integral part of their children's education. When parents enroll their children at Boulware, they sign a contract where they pledge to volunteer for 10 hours per year at the school, meet with teachers regularly, and positively reinforce learning at home. Additionally, families are offered opportunities to influence school policy and education policy in the greater community.

Grouping

Students at Boulware receive 1.5 hours of both math and reading instruction each day. Students are grouped by ability for these subjects so that each student is placed in a challenging learning environment to meet his or her individual needs. Groups are dynamic and fluid so that students can easily move to best fit their needs. An additional reading teacher is hired during this time to reduce reading class sizes to 12-15 students.

Character Education

Each day 30 minutes of classroom time is dedicated to a character education curriculum. During this time, students learn about manners, conflict resolution, positive character traits, and what it means to be a role model.

Spanish Instruction

All students at Boulware receive 30-45 minutes of Spanish instruction each day. Our Spanish program teaches students Spanish conversation and language, in addition to teaching students about Spanish cultures around the world.

Specials Program

We offer a variety of enriching activities in the arts, physical education, and music. All students at Boulware receive tennis lessons from tennis professionals through the Aces in Motion program. Each term students rotate between other classes such as painting, pottery, chorus, gardening, dance, and arts and crafts. We believe that exposing students to many different types of art and music is an integral part of their full development.

Community Partnerships

Boulware is a community school and believes that partnering with organizations in Gainesville is an important component to ensure that our students' needs are met.

Healthy Lifestyle

Boulware was selected as a Community Feeding school and all students at Boulware receive free healthy breakfast and lunch. Additionally, a generous donor has sponsored the Morning Mile program at Boulware so that students get to start their day with exercise and learn about keeping fit.

Teacher Selection and Professional Development

Our teachers are innovative, flexible, compassionate, and highly skilled in instructional techniques. Boulware teachers go through a rigorous selection process. Once hired, they all participate in extensive training and professional development programs to ensure an ongoing commitment to Boulware's mission and vision.

Section 2: Innovation, Culture, and Community

Innovation

Overview

Part of the benefit of working in charter school is flexibility to try new things and deviate from the norm. It is this spirit of innovation that allows schools to move from average to the next level. At Boulware Charter, we believe that our school family should respond to problems or challenges by experimenting with new programs, new curriculum, or new approaches. We also believe that our new approaches should be based on research, experience, or data.

The following innovative programs and approaches are currently being implemented at Boulware:

NeuroNet is a research-based learning readiness program designed to help students in grades K-2 develop fluency in essential reading, math, and handwriting skills. NeuroNet programs center around 4 Key Concepts:

LEARN INDEPENDENTLY

Watch and learn, then think and do. Engage in productive trial and error problem solving.

MAKE THE SPEED AND ACCURACY NETWORK

Develop fluency in early reading, handwriting, and math skills. Learn how to use what you know to enhance new learning.

GET YOUR BRAIN TO PRACTICE WHAT YOU WANT YOUR BRAIN TO LEARN

To develop fluency, you must practice fluency.

SELF-EVALUATION IS THE KEY TO MOTIVATION

Learn to self-evaluate and to equate effort and practice with improvements in performance.

University of Florida, Department of Educational Psychology, 3rd Graders

Research suggests that there is a relationship between stress, working memory, and cognitive function. (Klein & Boals, 2001a) Stress can interfere with the capacity of working memory, thus impairing the ability to complete cognitive tasks. There are reports of improvements in

working memory from expressive writing tasks where participants write about stressful events in their lives. (Klein & Boals, 2001b) However, this research was conducted using college students and adults. There is very little research of the effect of expressive writing on working memory in children. Yet this research would be extremely beneficial in that it could show expressive writing to be a cost effective tool to alleviate stress, improve working memory, and thus help children attain more academically.

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This is the school's second year implementing this program and it has been a huge success thus far. Tennis professionals are delivering tennis lessons to all of our students. Not only are they teaching basic tennis skills, but they are also incorporating character education and life skills into their tennis instruction. In fact, researchers in the Health and Human Performance School at the University of Florida have commissioned a study on the Aces in Motion program at Boulware. This study aims to understand the relationship between physical literacy and conflict resolution skills, physical improvement, and psychological benefits from the Aces in Motion tennis program.

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Every week we will meet as a school and/or as a primary and intermediate team to do activities that support culture-building and/or character education. This may include having guest speakers, doing team building activities, playing games, or collaborating as smaller groups to buddy read or do arts and crafts. This will also include our annual dances and celebrations.

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This year Boulware will produce a school news program. This program will be used to talk about upcoming events at the school, create fun and entertaining videos, share knowledge and ideas, practice Spanish and character education, and in general, build culture.

School Culture & Character Education

Overview

The 4Rs- Our Core Values

Boulware Charter believes that through its extensive focus on the core values and character development, its school culture will be achievement-oriented with limited disciplinary distractions and happy students. Boulware values serve as the norms of interaction between every member of the Boulware community. The most common feedback we get from our school community regarding culture is that we have a “family-like” atmosphere where students feel like a person, not a number, and where everyone is approachable. We will continue to foster this spirit at Boulware by integrating our core values into the daily life of the school and ensuring that we think of our school as family, not as a set of isolated classes. The chart below details Boulware’s values, core messages, sample key behaviors and their intended impact on school culture.

Value	Core Message	Key Behaviors	Adults' Role	Students' Role
Respect	We embrace each individual's unique talents and honor diverse life and work styles. We operate in a spirit of cooperation and value human dignity. We speak to each other kindly and we use manners to show our appreciation.	Respect makes our world a better place. We learn more with an open mind.	Adults: I respect my peers' time and beliefs and have an open mind about my students. Students: I speak kindly to others and try to learn interesting things about my peers.	School community members will feel... -part of a family -open to sharing about themselves -safe and secure
Responsibility	We take responsibility for our actions and words. We develop trust by following through on our commitments.	It is important to follow through. Everyone should contribute.	Adults: I follow through on commitments and plans. Students: I admit when I've done something wrong and am willing to learn from my mistakes.	School community members will feel: -trusting/trusted - ownership over our school. - more will get done

Being a Role Model	We are role models at school and outside of school. We use the skills we have learned to do the right thing.	Modeling good behavior is powerful. Being a leader is influential.	Adults: I model school expectations for students because I know they learn from watching me. Students: I pick up trash without asking or help others in need.	School community members will feel: - accountable for doing the right thing - like leaders
Reach for the Stars	We respond to challenging learning with perseverance and enthusiasm, knowing that when we struggle through something, we end up growing.	Growth Mindset works!	Adults: -I ask myself, "what can I do about it?" when I encounter an obstacle. Students: -I say, "bring it on!" to challenges	School community members will feel: - inspired -invigorated -confident

While the four core values of Boulware will be embedded on a daily basis into a variety of school systems, culture, and activities, we will also use character education instructional time to explore certain character strengths each year. This year’s character strengths were selected in response to a needs assessment based on an evaluation of last year’s behavior and school culture concerns. As such, the character strengths Boulware will focus on this year are:

Character Strengths

1. Grit: perseverance and passion for long-term goals.
 - a. Studies show that kids who demonstrate grit persist at hard tasks and outperform their competitors.
 - b. It is especially complex because it is related to other skills and mindsets such as optimism, purpose, growth mindset, bravery, and even self-control.
 - c. Grit is much more than just encouraging kids to “try harder” or not give up—it’s also about helping kids find their passion.
 - d. Having grit does not mean never quitting—it means quitting responsibly (and not just because times get tough) and sticking to the things to which you are truly dedicated.
 - e. Demonstrating grit could involve:
 - i. Finishing what you begin
 - ii. Staying committed to your goals

- iii. Working hard even after experiencing failure or when you feel like quitting
 - iv. Sticking with a project or activity for more than a few weeks
 - f. Good reference: Angela Duckworth, <https://characterlab.org/tools/grit>
- 2. Empathy: To be able to understand another person's circumstances and to have the capacity to see beyond your needs and comfort.
 - a. According to new research, empathy is a habit we can cultivate to improve the quality of our own lives.
 - b. Over the last decade, neuroscientists have identified a 10-section "empathy circuit" in our brains which, if damaged, can curtail our ability to understand what other people are feeling.
 - c. Evolutionary biologists like Frans de Waal have shown that we are social animals who have naturally evolved to care for each other, just like our primate cousins. And psychologists have revealed that we are primed for empathy by strong attachment relationships in the first two years of life.
 - d. Highly empathetic people:
 - i. *Have an insatiable curiosity about strangers.* Curiosity expands our empathy when we talk to people outside our usual social circle, encountering lives and worldviews very different from our own.
 - ii. *Challenge prejudices and discover commonalities* by searching for what they share with people rather than what divides them.
 - iii. *Try another person's life.* One can expand their empathy by gaining direct experience of other people's lives, putting into practice the Native American proverb, "Walk a mile in another man's moccasins before you criticize him."
 - iv. *Listen and share.* To be empathetic you must practice the art of active listening and also be willing to be vulnerable to build trust.
 - v. *Are inspired to promote change.* We typically assume empathy happens at the level of individuals, but HEPs understand that empathy can also be a mass phenomenon that brings about fundamental social change.
- 3. Joy: Becoming educated should not require giving up pleasure. Helping students discover their passions will bring joy to learning.
 - a. The school day at Boulware is long, and we ask a lot of our students in terms of growth mindset and rigor. There should be intention around encouraging students to be joyful, modeling joy, and creating joyful environments.

- b. This includes:
 - i. Exuding a love of learning through facial expressions, tone, and actions.
 - ii. Being curious and displaying a love of learning.
 - iii. Smiling and laughing regularly, and bringing humor and zest to the classroom.
 - iv. Celebrating classmate's efforts and successes when applicable.
 - v. Seizing opportunities in the day to smile, laugh, and be expressive.

2016-2017 Goals

To improve the Boulware learning community, Boulware will use the school's core values to promote a positive, uniform, and family-like school culture that creates the environment necessary for growing in intellect and character.

To improve the Boulware learning community, Boulware will develop and implement a character education program that focuses on grit, empathy, and joy.

Action Steps

Boulware's mission, vision and values are thoughtfully aligned. Through intentional, regular and ongoing values reinforcement, this alignment will become integral to the staff and student culture of the school. Boulware will employ the following intentional strategies to establish and reinforce Boulware's mission, vision and values:

- The Boulware motto will be recited regularly during school assemblies and other school events.
- Each month we will focus on a different core value or character strength. At least 3 times per week the focus of character education lessons should be related to the value of the month. (See schedule) Two of these lessons per month will be school created and delivered by classroom teachers to ensure uniformity in messaging. Any remaining lessons are teacher choice.

After a month of focusing on a core value or character strength, that value will be added to the daily behavior program (by adding it to Class Dojo) in order to track student progress practicing the value/character strength. At the end of the term, students will receive reports on their progress regarding the monthly values/strengths.

- Teachers and students will use the value messages during praise, redirections, and throughout the day. This will allow for students to hear the key messages in many different contexts and situations.
- Teachers will choose a student(s) that has exhibited the value/strength of the month, and submit their name with an example of how they exhibited that month's value/strength and how it connected to achievement and success. These students will be recognized at a monthly ceremony.
- Teachers will be observed for culture and environment at least five times per term (see observation rubric). During observations, the observer will listen and document the ways in which teachers and students are using the values/strengths and positive reinforcement to contribute to Boulware's culture.
- Our monthly school newsletter will highlight the value of the month and shout out teachers, students, families, or local/national/global heroes who have exhibited that value.
- At least once per month our Wednesday school assemblies will focus on promoting one of the core values or character strengths.

Our regular tv broadcast will include the value/strength of the month in entertaining and unique ways.

During the last staff meeting of each month, teachers and administration will "norm" on what the following month's value/strength looks like, how to measure it in the classroom, and idea share about how to teach it.

Feedback from focus groups with parents revealed that parents were especially encouraged and pleased when teachers reached out to them about positive things their child had done (e.g., not just when they were in trouble). As such, we will aim to send parents a positive message about their children regularly.

A staff shout-out board is hanging in the hallway in the main office. Use this to shout-out teachers and staff!

Uniforms are an equalizing force in schools. They represent solidarity and a school culture focused on acceptance. As such, this year, we are being very strict about the uniform policy. Appropriate uniform includes:

Tops: Boulware light or dark blue polos, long sleeved or short sleeved

If students wear a long sleeved shirt underneath their polo it must match the color of their shirt (either light or dark blue)

Bottoms: Navy blue pants, skirts, shorts, or jumpers are acceptable. Shorts and skirts must sit below the fingertips.

If students wear leggings or tights under their bottoms they must be navy blue

Shoes

Only athletic shoes are allowed.

No flats, boots, sandals, or flip flops.

Socks

Only white or black ankle socks are allowed.

No knee socks or colored socks.

Outwear

Only Boulware sweatshirts are acceptable to wear inside during cold months.

Jackets, scarves, gloves, and hats may be worn to school and outside for PE, but must be removed whenever indoors and on campus.

If students are out of uniform, please send to the front office immediately.

Culture/Character Education Schedule:

AUGUST: VALUE- RESPECT					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT
Week 3	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT	Tchr: RESPECT

SEPTEMBER: STRENGTH- GRIT					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY
Week 3	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY

OCTOBER: VALUE- RESPONSIBILITY					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RESP	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: RESP
Week 3	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RESP	Tchr: RESP	Tchr: RESP

NOVEMBER: STRENGTH- EMPATHY					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: EMP	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: EMP
Week 3	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: EMP	Tchr: EMP	Tchr: EMP

DECEMBER: VALUE- ROLE MODEL					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: RM	Tchr: RM	Tchr: RM	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RM	Tchr: RM	Tchr: RM
Week 3	Tchr: RM	Tchr: RM	Tchr: RM	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RM	Tchr: RM	Tchr: RM

JANUARY: STRENGTH- JOY					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY
Week 3	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: JOY	Tchr: JOY	Tchr: JOY

FEBRUARY: VALUE- REACH FOR THE STARS					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: REACH	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: REACH
Week 3	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: REACH	Tchr: REACH	Tchr: REACH

MARCH: REVIEW OF VALUES					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: RV	Tchr: RV	Tchr: RV	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RV	Tchr: RV	Tchr: RV
Week 3	Tchr: RV	Tchr: RV	Tchr: RV	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RV	Tchr: RV	Tchr: RV

APRIL: REVIEW OF STRENGTHS					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: RS	Tchr: RS	Tchr: RS	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RS	Tchr: RS	Tchr: RS
Week 3	Tchr: RS	Tchr: RS	Tchr: RS	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	School: RS	Tchr: RS	Tchr: RS

MAY: TEACHER CHOICE					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 2	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 3	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice
Week 4	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice	Tchr: Choice

Guidelines/examples for value/character strength lessons:

- Reading a book that is related to the value/strength and discussing the value/strength in the context of the book
- Art/music activities that are related to the value/strength
- Learning about famous people who exhibit the value/strength.
- Learning about historical events that are related to the value/strength.
- Team-building activities that require the use of the value/strength.
- Chelsea’s Pinterest Board
- Lessons do not have to explicitly teach the value/strength, they can also model something you might do when exhibiting that value/strength. For example, during the role model month, you could have your class work on a community service project to help the homeless. Connect the activity to the value/strength by explaining that role models help people in need, which is what they are doing by working on the service project.
- Any Second Step or SkillStreaming lesson related to the value/strength

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations for culture and character will take place at least 5 times per term. The purpose of these observations is to:

1. Ensure consistent messaging across the school
2. See how teachers are implementing character education lessons in order to idea share about innovative and effective character education across the school and from year to year
3. Understand strengths and areas of growth as part of teacher’s professional development

Teachers will enter their character education lessons in Alma for the upcoming week by Sunday at 5pm. Some observations may be scheduled (let me know if you want me to come for something in particular!), others may be unannounced. The following form will be used for culture/character education observations:

Teacher/Grade/Subject:

Date/Start Time/End Time:



CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGH OBSERVATION

LEGEND

- 1- Unacceptable
- 2 - Needs Improvement
- 3 - Acceptable
- 4 - Exemplary

Focus on ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE

QUALITY EVIDENCE	OBSERVATION	FOLLOW-UP
Classroom Appearance		
Organized, neat & uncluttered	1 2 3 4	
Student expectations and learning goals are displayed	1 2 3 4	
Standards-based student work is displayed	1 2 3 4	
Other visuals support learning	1 2 3 4	
Classroom Management		
Class Dojo is being used appropriately	1 2 3 4	
Safe & orderly environment	1 2 3 4	
Routines & procedures are evident	1 2 3 4	
Evidence that students understand behavioral expectations	1 2 3 4	
Positive behavior is reinforced	1 2 3 4	
Negative behavior is addressed through effective means	1 2 3 4	
Teacher circulates throughout the classroom	1 2 3 4	
Teacher manages/monitors many activities simultaneously	1 2 3 4	
Teacher manages proactively & calmly	1 2 3 4	
Teacher displays energy & enthusiasm	1 2 3 4	
Time is used effectively & efficiently	1 2 3 4	
Classroom Culture		
Respectful, positive student-teacher relationships are evident	1 2 3 4	
Common language for core values and character strengths is used	1 2 3 4	
Students are comfortable sharing ideas, questions, concerns, or needs	1 2 3 4	
Evidence of celebrating student success	1 2 3 4	
Strengths		
Areas of Growth		

Points Earned/points possible=

Average rating:

Measurements of Accomplishment

90% of staff will report an overall positive staff culture on EOY staff survey.

90% of staff will report that activities relating to core values positively impacted school culture on EOY staff survey.

100% of staff will score an average of 3 or higher (acceptable to exemplary) on their culture observations during the last term.

90% of students will report an overall positive school culture on EOY student survey.

95% of students will be able to explain, model, and give an example of each value and strength by the end of the year (a smaller selection will be sampled).

90% of students will have an overall positive score in all 7 values/strengths by the end of the year as measured by Class Dojo.

Behavior

Overview

In past years at Boulware, behavior plans were unclear, disconnected, and ineffective. This year, we are making several (small) steps to help make classroom management more clear, uniform, and effective.

To do this, you must possibly shift your mindset. Emerging research and evidence clearly demonstrates that students with backgrounds based in adversity or stress have a clear disadvantage when coming to elementary school. On a biological level, these students' brains are underdeveloped. In the classroom, this can result in students being in a constant state of flight, fright, or freeze. The smallest triggers can make them explode. Similarly, students may shut down when tasks get too hard. The traditional way of thinking is that "problem students" just need to be punished and then they will learn not to repeat the same behavior. However, experts in behavioral research are finding more and more that students from adverse backgrounds just see punishment as another reason to feel discouraged and defeated, further feeding their instinct to lash out.

One way to alleviate this is to teach character strengths that counteract some of the negative instincts that students have developed. Another, rather new, way is to help students develop their brain connections and try to strengthen them more quickly than average using a combination of movements that increase oxygen to the brain and also challenge the brain to grow (this is what the NeuroNet program aims to do).

Our job as educators is to understand the context from which our students come and respond with love and sympathy. This does not mean that students will not be held accountable for their actions. Rather, it means that we must understand the effect that stress has on the brain and psyche, and respond with a degree of understanding.

This is the context in which this year's behavior plan was developed. One, it is simple and clear. There are no crazy flowcharts that teachers must follow. Two, it is uniform. All teachers will use the same system, which helps create stability and security for students because expectations remain consistent from class to class. Three, the focus has shifted from sending students home to rehabilitating students by keeping them in school and giving them extra courses in character education and skillsets to better handle similar future situations. Lastly, it has as its underlying values empathy, respect, and growth mindset.

2016-2017 Goals

To improve the Boulware learning community, we will implement a behavior system that is fair, efficient, and empathetic.

Action Steps

The first thing we must norm on is expectations. By setting school-wide expectations we are expressing that in all areas of the school expectations are the same. The following are universal expectations for Boulware. You are welcome to come up with supplemental expectations in your classroom (or “brainstorm” with your class to come up with this list), so long as they don’t negate/add confusion to any of the following.

School-Wide Expectations

Our Boulware expectations are the same in every classroom and in every part of the building.

Work Hard

Be a good listener.

Do your best. (REACH FOR THE STARS)

Ask and answer questions.

Stop and think.

Beat the clock. (work urgently and within the allotted time)

Be Kind

Use materials appropriately.

Take care of our space.

Use nice words.

Help a classmate.

Share a smile. (JOY)

Stay Safe

Follow directions the first time.

Stay in your assigned area.

Keep your hands, feet and objects to yourself.

Hip and lip. (No attitude)

Use the designated noise level.

Five-Star Listener

We define a “good” or Five-Star Listener as:

1. Eyes are watching
2. Ears are listening
3. Lips are closed
4. Hands are in lap, still and silent
5. Feet are still and silent

Noise Levels

Level 0- No noise; silence

Level 1- Whisper manners only- thank you, sorry, excuse me, you’re welcome, bless you

Level 2- Quiet talking to elbow friend.

Level 3- Spirit voices (no screaming, screeching, or silliness)

Getting students familiar with these expectations is the first step. Posters will be provided for your classroom with these expectations. In addition, they will be posted around the school. Please spend time explaining them to your class and providing examples of what they mean. Students should be explicitly taught how to meet these expectations and practice it repetitiously until we get it right as a team.

Class Dojo

Class Dojo is a very useful classroom management tool. It’s simple to use and communication with parents is immediate and automatic, alleviating a lot of work for teachers.

Class Dojo will be used by all teachers (and Specials teachers, if applicable) to track student behaviors. It will also be used as a tool for determining student awards, in addition to being a tool used to place students in rehabilitative classes and more intensive behavior interventions.

We will use custom “positive” and “needs work” points to award to or subtract from students. These will naturally reflect our school expectations. Additionally, as we focus on character values/strengths each month, those will be added to the “positives” and “needs work” categories in order to track how often students are using the learned character strength as a positive. The following reflect the “positive” and “needs work” points:

5 Star Listener (+1)	Not listening (-1)
On task (+1)	Off task (-1)
Staying in seat (+1)	Out of seat (-1)
Participating (+1)	Disruptive (-1)
Raising Hand (+1)	Calling out (-1)
Kind to space/materials (+1)	Unkind to space/materials (-1)
Being kind (+1)	Being unkind (-1)
Helping others (+1)	Not keeping to yourself (-1)
Good attitude (+1)	Bad attitude (-1)
Working hard (+1)	Excessive talking (-1)
Teamwork (+1)	Throwing Objects (-1)
	OFFICE (-5)

All teachers should use these (and only these) Dojo points. Please ensure your points are set to either +1 or -1 (with the exception of office).

We will create “classes” by grade level. That way team teachers can share students. We will also share all of the classes with each other in case we ever need access to a student at a different grade level.

You can create groups within each grade level (for Mercury and Venus, for example) to distinguish between homerooms and ability groups.

As we learn about values/strengths, those will be added to Class Dojo and their point value is more. At the end of each month part of our Wednesday staff meeting will include “norming” on what the next month’s value/strength looks like in the classroom so that we are all awarding/subtracting points in a uniform manner.

The following is a list of the values/strengths and their corresponding values. By February, all values/strengths will have been taught and teachers will continue to emphasize and use language in the classroom to reinforce the positive behaviors associated with each.

Being respectful (+2)	Being disrespectful (-2)
Exercising grit (+2)	Giving up easily (-2)
Being responsible (+2)	Being irresponsible (-2)
Exercising empathy (+2)	Being insensitive (-2)
Being a role model (+2)	Modeling a bad choice (-2)
Exuding joy (+2)	Being a joykiller (-2)
Reaching for the stars (+2)	Not trying my best (-2)

Manatee Bucks

While the ideal outcome is to foster intrinsic motivation in students, most younger students must ease into this mindset by first starting with extrinsic motivation/rewards. Current reward systems at Boulware, like MOTM or class celebrations, occur infrequently enough to possibly lose the attention of students. Younger students, especially, need more immediate feedback and reinforcement.

In order to create a more immediate and appropriate reinforcing system, at the end of each week teachers will “pay” students using Manatee Bucks for the cumulative amount of points that student has earned on Class Dojo that week. For example, if a student has earned a balance of 15 points on Class Dojo that week, they will be paid 15 Manatee Bucks (we will provide the Manatee Bucks to teachers). If a student ends the week in the negative, they will receive no Manatee Bucks.

Manatee Bucks can be used to buy a menu of options, ranging from smaller things (like pencils and 10 min of computer time) to larger items (like a bike? and eating lunch with admin/teachers). All of these purchase options will be managed by administration, unless teachers elect to contribute in-class items/activities to the reward menu. We will use one of our first staff meetings to figure out what items should be worth (based on the first week or so of implementation of Class Dojo) and when students will be able to purchase/redeem items.

Enrollment in Rehabilitative Courses

At our weekly staff meetings, we will also pull Class Dojo reports of students whom teachers are “concerned” about or who have demonstrated repeated

infractions as captured by Class Dojo. We will evaluate the frequency with which students are exhibiting these “needs work” traits. Those students with the highest frequencies of such traits will be enrolled in a rehabilitative course that will be implemented by administration during lunchtime twice per week. Students will remain in the class until they reach certain benchmarks that indicate that they have made progress and are likely to display the trait with much less frequency.

When to send students to the office

All non-major infractions will be handled in class using Class Dojo, cool-down spots, warnings, parent contact, buddy classrooms, or however you see fit. Less experienced teachers may want to idea-share with more experienced teachers in order to find best practices about how to manage non-major infractions. It also might be something that you can discuss in your team meetings or do a book study on.

Major infractions should be referred to the office immediately. When sending students to the office for a major infraction, please record the incident immediately in Alma so that we can pull the incident report when students come to the office. Please ensure that there is evidence (trustworthy eyewitnesses, camera evidence, physical evidence, etc.) before sending a student to the office and that all of the evidence is noted in the incident report.

Not sitting properly	Hitting
Not listening	Cursing
Talking	Hurting themselves, another student or adult
Playing	Throwing or kicking large objects (chairs, desks, books)
Not doing work	Inappropriate touching of own body or other student’s body
Not participating in activity	Possession of Weapons
Making a mess intentionally	Possession of Drugs/Alcohol
Tantrums*	Gang-related materials/behavior
Loud Crying*	Bullying that causes severe psychological/physical damage
Pouting	
Using mean/potty words	
Defiantly not following directions*	
Not using designated noise level	
Licking tongue/rolling eyes	

Toys and/or Electronics (including cell phones (Teacher will confiscate)	
Minor bullying/gossiping	
Tracking the door, visitors or misbehaviors	

*For tantrums, loud crying and defiantly not following directions that occur to the point where teaching is largely interrupted or the classroom is unsafe, teacher will immediately send student to office.

Consequences

Students sent to the office for these infractions may be sent home or suspended, may be enrolled in rehabilitative courses automatically, may be required to participate in an individual behavior intervention plan (including both parents and students), and/or may be assigned to other tasks or punishments. Alma will be updated to reflect the consequence, so please check Alma to find out the outcome.

Students inappropriately sent to the office will be sent back to class and a meeting will be scheduled with that teacher immediately after school to discuss the matter and problem-solve the handling of similar behaviors in the future.

Parent Communication

One of the major benefits to using Class Dojo is that it makes communicating with parents relatively easy. Teachers should use Class Dojo to message with parents about behavior as their primary mode of communication. Parents also report that seeing photos and reading about what students are doing keeps them engaged and improves communication with their children about what happens in school.

For major infractions (when students are sent to the office), parents will be contacted by an administrator as deemed necessary. Your responsibility as a teachers is two-fold:

- 1) Mark on their class dojo that they have been sent to the office (immediate parent notification) and
- 2) Immediately record the incident in Alma (parents can read the incident report later to get more information).

This way, parents are notified as soon as the event happens, and a follow up phone call by the office/log in to Alma detailing what happened will also take place. If the parent contacts you about the incident, you can tell them that they can contact the office or wait to hear from the office.

Measurements of Accomplishment

50% decrease in major behavior incidents (current number of incidents: 500+)

90% of teachers will report that the behavior system was more effective than previous years

90% of parents will report improved communication methods regarding behavior

Family Engagement

Overview

Simply put, parent involvement is often more of a "doing to," while engagement is a "doing with." With involvement, schools tend to lead with their *mouth* -- generally telling parents what they should be doing. Engagement, on the other hand, has schools leading with their *ears*. By listening to parents' ideas, and by eliciting from them what they have found works best with their children, we can develop a more genuine partnership that is helpful to young people.

Boulware's focus this year will be to move away from "parental involvement" and more towards the practice of "authentic family engagement." In the context of school reform, authentic participation can be characterized by:

1. A community of parents committed to school improvement
2. Relationships of trust between parents and schools
3. Development of parent participation and leadership skills
4. Parent opportunity to influence the process and outcomes of an issue
5. Parent participation in a deliberation process where all participants are on an equal footing
6. New roles for school administrators and teachers as partners who listen to parent concerns, work with them on issues, and engage them in open dialogue
7. Changes in local administrative systems to support authentic participation (Harvard Family Research Project, 2003)

A strong body of research shows that students do better in school and in life when their parents are engaged in their education. The roles parents play in their children's success are: setting high expectations, monitoring performance and holding children accountable, supporting learning at home, guiding children's education through college, and advocating for them. Boulware can foster these by creating an environment in which parents feel engaged.

2016-2017 Goals

To improve the Boulware learning community, we will develop and implement a school-wide family engagement plan that includes parents in meaningful and authentic ways.

Action Steps

This year, in order to begin to move towards this vision, we will implement the following steps to authentic participation.

Home Visits

The concept behind Parent-Teacher Home Visits is simple: teachers and parents come together as equal partners to form a trusting relationship, which becomes the basis for collaboration to support student learning. After a three year study of 14 schools engaging in teacher home visits for students, researchers at the California State University at Sacramento (CSUS) found evidence that home visits could increase student performance, jumpstart parent involvement, reduce discipline problems and increase overall positive attitudes toward school. If done correctly, a home visit program can give teachers, parents and students a better opportunity for connection, communication and collaboration.

This year, teachers (and admin) will be highly encouraged to visit families at their home with the goal of building relationships of trust and respect between home and school. These visits provide opportunities for educators to spend time in the neighborhoods in which they work and to listen to the perspectives of community members. The visits are not designed to be assessments of families; rather, they are relational in nature and are specifically designed to be respectful of families' assets and strengths and to build the capacity of both the educator and the family to support the academic and social success of every student. (Henderson, Hill, & Mapp, 2011) Based on the best practices reported by other schools implementing home visits, Boulware will adhere to the following guidelines for home visits:

51. The focus of the home visit is to meet and learn about your families, as well as to establish trust and respect. While there are many other things a school may want to communicate about to families, such as dress code, homework policies, rules, etc., the home visit is not the right time for that communication. Teachers begin the home visit conversations by asking families to share their hopes and dreams for their child as well as information about their child's strengths and possible challenges.

0. When teachers meet with families outside of school, teachers break down families' mistrust and uncertainty about schools. Furthermore, teachers learn more about students' backgrounds, interests, and life experiences, which they can then draw on to improve their teaching, when they meet families in the home. If a family is highly resistant to a visit in the home, educators may offer a neutral location in the community.

0. In order to build strong, trusting relationships with one another, both teachers and parents

must feel respected and valued. Forcing a family to host you in their home doesn't build respect. Neither does forcing teachers to visit families when they don't want to do so.

Teachers must make sure to visit a broad cross-section of students with differences in behavior and academic performance. While we *encourage* teachers to think strategically about which students they visit, it is critical for parents to see these as positive visits. If word gets out that only struggling students get home visits, families will be less likely to want to meet with you.

Scheduling in advance is a sign of respect and shows how much you value parents' time. Furthermore, because parents will know you are coming, it keeps you safe and ensures you won't see anything you shouldn't see. At Boulware, teachers can arrange their own schedule of home visits in collaboration with other teachers, or administration can arrange home visits given a schedule you provide.

Going on home visits with a partner ensures you will be comfortable and safe. It also allows families to meet an additional person in the school community, which makes them feel even more welcomed. Finally, your partner is an extra set of eyes and ears to help you remember what you learned after you leave the visit.

Boulware respects the hard work teachers are doing to improve family engagement. As such, we have applied for funding to pay teachers for their time while making home visits. There may also be opportunity for teachers to use PD time on Wednesday afternoons to make home visits (we must agree on the day as a school).

Family Fun Nights

Feedback from parent focus groups over the summer indicated that parents were extremely interested in meeting as a class of parents with the teacher present in less formal methods. Working parents, especially, expressed a desire to meet in the evening. For example, some parents mentioned that meeting once a term or so at a local restaurant as a class would be a great way to informally communicate and build culture with parents present. Another example may be holding "workshops" for parents in your classroom, going over strategies they can use at home to help their children with what's currently being taught. These type of events are not mandatory, but are suggestions based on direct feedback from parents. If you host a get-together like this, it would count as volunteer

hours for the parent and would count as subtracted contract time for you on dedicated Wednesdays during staff meeting time or teacher workdays.

Civic Engagement

As parents and community members learn about school performance and achievement gaps among students, they seek greater participation in the basic decisions that affect their schools. Beyond providing input on school plans, they strive toward authentic participation at the community policy level. Recently, the disparities between East Gainesville and the rest of the county or state in the quality of education have been forefront in the news (although the problem has existed for a lot longer). For example:

Alachua County has the fifth-widest income gap in the nation, with the majority of black households earning below the median income.

Black students in Alachua County schools make up 36 percent of total enrollment, 10 percent of students enrolled in gifted programs and 43 percent of those suspended from school.

Black students in Alachua County are 4.8 times more likely to drop out of school than whites and 1.6 times more likely to drop out of school than blacks in the rest of Florida.

Alachua County has the highest rate of disproportionate contact between black youth and police officers in the state of Florida.

- Twenty-three percent of Alachua County youth ages 15-19 are black while only 7 percent of University of Florida undergraduates are black.

There are potential policies that could help reduce these disparities, and parents are in a prime position to give feedback and help problem-solve. As such, Boulware will host several events throughout the year that invite parents to participate in policy-making, either at the school level, or higher.

For example, in August, Boulware will host a forum in which School Board candidates will meet with parents to discuss the current state of education in Alachua County (and at Boulware). This will be an opportunity for parents in East Gainesville to advocate for the community of East Gainesville and for Boulware as a school.

Measurements of Accomplishment

90% of parents report feeling “connected to” and “engaged with” Boulware in a positive and meaningful way on EOY parent survey

100% of teachers perform home visits for 75% of the students in their homeroom class.

Community Engagement

Overview

A community school is a place and a set of partnerships connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community. A community school is distinguished by an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development. Community schools extend the school day and week, reaching students, their families, and community residents in unique ways. Community schools are thus uniquely equipped to develop their students into educated citizens who are ready and able to give back to their communities. (Blank et al, 2012)

Research shows that students in community schools in and around Tulsa, Oklahoma, for example, are outperforming non-community schools on state tests in math by 32 points and reading by 19 points. What's more, another study found that community schools outperform matched non-community schools on measures of dropout and graduation rates. (Adams et al, 2010)

Furthermore, volunteerism, is an American tradition with deep roots. Through this ethic of service, Americans express their belief in the importance of individual effort and concern for others. One way in which this value has been passed on to younger generations is through the inclusion of community service and service-learning opportunities in schools, where young people begin to develop their roles as active members of the community who make contributions to addressing community needs. The idea that the nation's schools serve as a crucial place for young people to learn this ethic has been corroborated by research by scholars such as John Dewey. Based on his work on education, Dewey found that the habits of democracy are most effectively achieved when students, educators, and community members actively work together to address society's needs. (Spring et al, 2008)

2016-2017 Goals

To improve the Boulware learning community, we will partner with local organizations to raise awareness and bring resources to Boulware (become more of a community school).

To improve the Boulware learning community, we will partner with local organizations to arrange for a variety of community service projects for all students at Boulware.

Action Steps

Community School

Boulware already has several existing relationships with community organizations. For example, we partner with the following for a variety of services, including putting on events, improving school grounds/helping clean the school, and connecting our families/school with resources:

- City Church
- Girl Scouts
- UF Campaign for Charities
- Chamber of Commerce
- St. Leo Counseling Internships
- Community Foundation
- Alachua County Emerging Leaders (ACEL)
- Boys & Girls Club
- Chi Phi Fraternity

This year, the school will continue to foster these partnerships, while also trying to form new partnerships.

Community Service Projects

Boulware experimented with a community service project at the end of last year. Five students went to Al'z Place, which provides care for people ages 18+ with Alzheimer's disease or severe memory impairment. These students engaged with patients there, playing games with them and helping them with basic skills. The students reported that it was a very positive and enriching experience, and the staff at Al'z Place reiterated their gratefulness and invited us back as often as we could come.

Based on this positive experience, Boulware intends to continue community service projects, expanding opportunity to the entire school. These projects will be arranged and implemented by administration, but teachers can elect to run their own projects within the school or organize a group project outside of the school. By the end of the year, the expectation is that all students will have had the opportunity (and seized it!) to go off-campus to participate in a community service project.

Measurements of Accomplishment

90% of all students at Boulware perform at least one community service project during the year.

90% of students report positive experiences as a result of participating in community service projects.