

The New Motto



A FASHION MARKETING TEACHER AND HER STUDENTS TOOK A NEW SCHOOL MOTTO TO A NEW LEVEL AND **CREATED A CAMPAIGN TO HELP STUDENTS STOP SWEARING.**

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WHEN BREMERTON HIGH SCHOOL (BHS) established a new school motto—"Respect, Responsibility and Safety . . . is the Knight Way!"—as a fashion marketing teacher, I saw an opportunity to develop a learning opportunity for my advanced fashion marketing students. My 2005–2006 class agreed to create and market a T-shirt to raise awareness of the new motto, and I allocated \$300 of my budget to finance the project.

My students would be responsible for creating a graphic design that would incorporate the wording of the new motto. They knew they had to conduct market research, so they started by showing rough drafts of their ideas to their peers. The most popular design was that of an "action figure" knight.

Once the design was selected, students

▲▲ Student Produced

Megan Sanchez is proud of her "Dare Not To Swear" logo design.

decided upon colors, price points and styles, and then had to create a merchandise mix that equaled \$300 at cost. This meant that students had to use their math skills and fashion knowledge to decide exactly how many shirts to order by size and color, just like a retail buyer. Their next step was to meet with local businessman Ron Flemister, a marketing advisory board member who owns and operates Unique Experience, a silk screening and embroidery business. He assisted the students with pricing and answered production questions.

Students were also in charge of planning a sales promotion strategy, creating showcase displays and selling the merchandise. The fashion students wanted to make sure that everyone was aware of the new shirts, so two weeks before the Respect, Responsibility and Safety (RRS) shirts went on sale, they wrote promotional announcements to be read daily. The students constructed two attractive showcase displays that featured the new shirts and requested that the new motto be incorporated into the school day for three months.

The Friday before the Monday campaign kickoff was designated as "Buzz Wear" day (create a buzz of interest and desire), which meant fashion students would wear the new T-shirts for a day and record the comments. The strategy paid off. When students arrived to class, they shared comments that included: "Where did you get that shirt?" and "Can I buy one now?"

During the week of the RRS shirt promotions, students sold all of their merchandise and took paid orders for additional shirts. Their new design was an overwhelming hit.

Survey Says...

The next project the students wanted to

work on was creating a survey to find out what the new motto really meant to BHS students, teachers and parents. The first survey was distributed to the teachers asking them to list three ways students can demonstrate RRS and how administrators should demonstrate the same three objectives. Then students were asked how teachers and administrators should demonstrate RRS, and finally, parents were asked what their expectations were for their children.

There were 700 students, 100 parents and 100 teachers who responded. Creating and distributing surveys and disseminating information took five months, but the results of the survey were indeed eye opening. Across the board, BHS parents, student and teachers were offended by the excessive and unnecessary swearing at BHS. I knew this was a chance to turn research information into a very worthwhile social marketing project, so the idea to create an anti-swearing campaign was hatched.

Students eagerly developed a strategic plan to attack the problem in a non-threatening manner. They brainstormed various campaign themes, and once again they polled a small focus group of their peers and came up with the slogan, "Dare Not To Swear!" The focus group felt that slogan was catchy, to the point and non-threatening.

The fashion team then developed a proposal and invited the district administrators (BHS Principal Aaron Leavell, Career and Technical Director for the Bremerton School District Susan Longstreth, and Bremerton School District Superintendent Bette Hyde) to the their classroom to present their proposal. The students requested \$1,000 to purchase blue-and-yellow wristbands that would state: "I dare not to swear!" They explained that the wristbands would be a giveaway serving two purposes: first as a visual reminder for students not to swear; and second, as a public relations tool that would announce to the Bremerton community the serious commitment of not swearing. The administrative team was so impressed with the content

and delivery of the proposal that the superintendent and principal agreed to consider jointly sharing the cost of the wristbands, and Superintendent Hyde invited us to present the proposal to the school board.

The New Team

The 2006–2007 advanced fashion marketing class was presented with the challenge of creating a marketing strategy to implement the yearlong campaign as well as a graphic design for the "Dare Not To Swear!" slogan.

Students also created a yearlong calendar of events and a sales pitch that would convince their peers to consider giving up

swearing at school for an entire school year.

The students were divided into small groups and assigned tasks to be performed that would be later shared with the rest of the class. Senior Megan Sanchez created four logo examples, which she presented to her classmates, who unanimously selected one. Krystal Morse and Tina Maju were assigned to create the calendar of events.

Letters requesting advice for Bremerton students about not swearing were sent to local celebrities and politicians, and students created "Give us a reason not to swear" advice cards to be distributed to parents and to the business community. The purpose of the cards was to solicit

CTSOs Respond

"As an adviser for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA)," says Susan Abbe, "I knew that the 'Dare Not To Swear!' campaign was an opportunity to encourage FCCLA members: to promote opportunities for personal development and preparation for adult life. I know how key it is for our youth to grow up into active members of communities and be good citizens. Using appropriate language in all arenas of life helps to train students in positive ways for their futures. Personal development and growth starts in small ways. Making a commitment not to swear can be one of those small ways and is a brick in the foundation of a successful future."

Cynthia Blinkinsop, a family and consumer sciences teacher at BHS says, "When the 'Dare Not To Swear!' campaign was initiated at BHS, it was the students in FCCLA that brought the idea to participate as a new business item on our agenda. Because family and consumer science is training future leaders in the family, career and community settings, Susan Abbe and I agreed that daring not to swear was a stand that FCCLA should take. As we studied the mission statement of FCCLA, several students saw a link between daring not to swear and one of the main missions of character development. That led us into a discussion into the eight FCCLA purposes."

As student Shawna Murray explains, "If we do this together, we can help each other skip the swearing habit."

FCCLA member Janelle Magditz takes an even broader view when she says that the campaign also "encourages individual and group involvement in helping to achieve global cooperation and harmony." She hopes the project "will soon spread nationwide, helping to bring a better sense of peace to us by controlling how we communicate with each other."

"As SkillsUSA adviser, I encourage students to develop into skilled and polished leaders," says Will Jones. "When swearing and profanity are part of conversation, the atmosphere degenerates significantly. A positive and creative environment filled with strong teamwork cannot co-exist with individuals cursing at one another. I am pleased with and support the effort to raise awareness regarding the level of conversation in our school."

Jones adds that, not only does he appreciate the effort that went into the campaign; his hope is that "we as a school can continue to keep it in the culture of our student body."



▲▲ Poster Production

Krystal Morse and Megan Sanchez work on the latest anti-swearing poster.

advice to share with students through the in-school televised bulletin, and they also served as a public relations strategy to encourage community involvement. The cards allow business people to share that swearing is not acceptable in the workplace—and to let them know the problem is being addressed.

I advised my students that they needed to ensure that warm bodies would be lined up and ready to sign the “Dare Not To Swear” pledge cards on the day of the kickoff. I assumed that students would encourage their close friends, but in order for the kickoff to be a real success, a specific strategy was needed. Senior Andrew

Ramirez devised a plan that would invite the participation of BHS sport teams and student youth groups. He explained that his football coach encourages high character expectations for all the players and would surely want the entire team to sign up. Not only did the football coach agree that the team would sign and even wear their team jerseys that day, but he went a step further by awarding pushups to team members and coaches if they swear during practice and games.

This in turn sparked an idea to create a letter explaining the campaign and inviting the other coaches and youth group advisers to suggest that their members sign up to not swear at school. Letters were e-mailed to all coaches and advisers with an RSVP deadline. The NJROTC commanders were so enthused that, during their own class time, they pre-signed their cadets after a discussion about the inappropriateness of swearing. They also issued pushups to any cadet daring to swear during class time or any NJROTC activity. The commanders promised to have all ca-

dets dressed in full uniform at the kickoff, where they would then sign the official “Dare Not To Swear!” pledge forms.

Word Spreads

Press releases with headlines that shouted, “Fashion Students Declare War on Teen Swearing!” and “BHS Youth Leadership Groups Declare War on Teen Swearing!” were sent to local newspapers and radio and television stations. I then followed up with personal phone calls.

Local reporters were eager to cover the two kickoff events (one for grades eight and nine and one for grades 10 through 12), and both of Bremerton’s local newspapers featured the kickoffs on the front page of their papers. The eighth- and ninth-grade event was featured on ABC affiliate KOMO TV-4 and the KOMO radio station.

The next day, a Seattle-based Fox radio affiliate called to ask if an advanced fashion marketing student and I would agree to an interview, and then a few days later, I was interviewed on a CBS affiliate radio station, KMPS. Channel One, an ABC affiliate that prepares newscasts to be beamed into thousands of schools, picked up the KOMO broadcast and shared it with other parts of America.

We contacted local politicians, and we requested that the mayor of Bremerton and the governor of Washington State proclaim October 26 as “BHS Dare Not To Swear Day!”—which they did. The attorney general of Washington State is also scheduled to visit BHS and participate in a “Dare Not To Swear!” activity developed by the fashion marketing students.

Demand Runs High

On kickoff day, the students had an opportunity to utilize the visual merchandizing skills they learned in the beginning fashion marketing class. Red-and-white stop signs with the word “Swear’n” crossed out were distributed throughout the school, and huge banners were placed in the cafeteria. There were sign-up tables in the school lobby and in the school’s DECA store.

Community Partnerships

For the past four years, support for the fashion marketing program has been provided by Ron Flemister at Unique Experience and by the Kitsap Credit Union, so I reached out to both to assist with the “Dare Not To Swear!” project. Kitsap Credit Union made a donation for us to purchase customized blue and gold M&Ms with the campaign theme, and Cathy Brorson with Kitsap says they are proud to support it because it is a “heads-up for teens to sharpen their professional speaking skills now.”

Flemister, right, donated 30 customized promotional T-shirts to kick off the campaign and notes that, as a businessman, he feels that not swearing “will translate into employable behavior.”



When zero hour arrived, the two sites were quickly mobbed with students, and as a reporter noted, “Forty students had signed up in 10 minutes!”

Creating a campaign to address teen swearing at school is a daunting undertaking because there is a possibility that students who swear or feel that their freedom of speech is being infringed upon may openly rebel in some way, either by swearing more or defacing the promotional posters, banners and flyers. And there were a few students who stopped by to declare that their freedom of speech was being infringed upon and a few who signed up just to get the wristbands. But when the dust had cleared, 500 high school students had pledged not to swear.

The second event was equally successful, when 543 eighth- and ninth-grade students signed up. This created a bit of a dilemma since only 1,000 wristbands had been ordered, so the fashion students had to flag the names of the students who had not received the wristbands. I would have to ask the BHS principal for additional funds to purchase more wristbands.

However, parents from outside of the Bremerton School District read, saw or heard about the campaign and began requesting wristbands. By asking that they pay for these, we were able to recover some of the cost of the wristbands.

The Results

It seems too miraculous to believe, but the swearing at BHS and the eighth- and ninth-grade site dramatically decreased just days after the kickoff. Teachers, administrators, security staff, as well as students noticed that the swearing had almost disappeared! Staff members and students alike reported “Dare Not To Swear” sightings, and it appears to be making a big difference.

Discussions about the inappropriateness of swearing are taking place in classrooms and the hallways, and many teachers are developing lesson plans and incorporating “Dare Not To Swear” in

their daily curriculum.

To maintain the anti-swearing project, the fashion class distributes flyers to all staff members, and the advice cards are shared daily. Students look forward to what the advice will be and whom it is from—for example, NFL quarterback Matt Hasselbeck, *Wheel of Fortune*’s Vanna White, Sec-

retary of State Condoleezza Rice, NAACP Director Julian Bond, or one of the parents or local merchants.

Daring not to swear is not only creating a culture of responsibility and respect at BHS, it is also helping students become more conscious of how they conduct themselves and preparing them for the real world of work. **T**