

# WCEP HELPS BROWN DEER MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ACHIEVE MEASURABLE RESULTS

A CASE STUDY



STUDENT  
ENROLLMENT

787

ADMINISTRATIVE  
STAFF

7

TEACHER  
STAFF

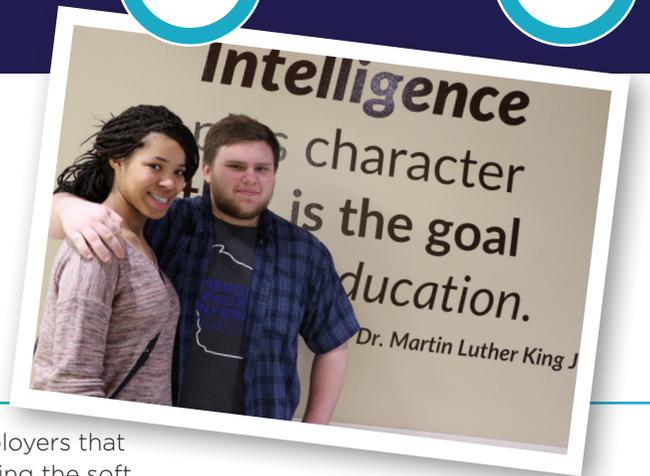
67

SUPPORT  
STAFF

41

“ *Planting tulip bulbs around the community reminded us of our goals and gave us hope for our own growth in the spring.* ”

Evan Bord, High School Senior, Brown Deer Middle/High School



## BACKGROUND

Brown Deer Middle/High School serves 787 students from the surrounding Milwaukee area. In 2012, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction informed Brown Deer of their unusually high office discipline referral rate. As a result, the state pushed the school to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This “appropriate behavior” model wasn’t enough for principal, Tosha Womack. She wanted something deeper and longer lasting, which led her to the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership (WCEP).

Tosha was familiar with WCEP from a work they did to help another school.

That school heard from employers that its student interns were lacking the soft skills that character education instilled. When Tosha heard similar feedback from Brown Deer Middle/High School partners, she immediately reached out to meet with the WCEP.

Then, after attending the “11 Principles of Effective Character Education” training during a WCEP-sponsored Character Education Conference, Tosha and Brown Deer went to work. A committee comprised of teachers, parents, student leaders, and administrators led a Character Education initiative.

They created “The Brown Deer Way,” which highlights five character traits:

- **We take responsibility for our education and our actions**
- **We show respect for ourselves, peers, school, and community through words and actions**
- **We are a community that accepts, honors, and celebrates individual differences**
- **We are honest in all we do**
- **We establish trust and confidence in each other through positive relationship building**

## The Brown Deer Way Rollout - “We’re Missing a Key Element”

In September 2012, the administration and teachers introduced the 11 Principles framework into their lesson plans and school culture. They were met with resistance because students believed it to be “elementary.” The committee met and decided to get even more students involved. It collectively determined that in order to be successful, students needed to lead the initiative and write the lesson plans.

## STUDENT LED LESSON PLANS

For “The Brown Deer Way” to be successful among students, they decided it had to be relevant to them. There are 15 students on the leadership team, who meet weekly to craft lesson plans for the entire school. These student leaders also implement the lesson plans.

Each month, the lesson plans cover a specific category or goal, and are taught during homeroom classes. They involve videos, activities, and discussions that are related to taking responsibility, showing respect, celebrating differences, being honest, and establishing trust and confidence. In addition, the lesson plans incorporate daily student life and student interests both inside and outside of school.

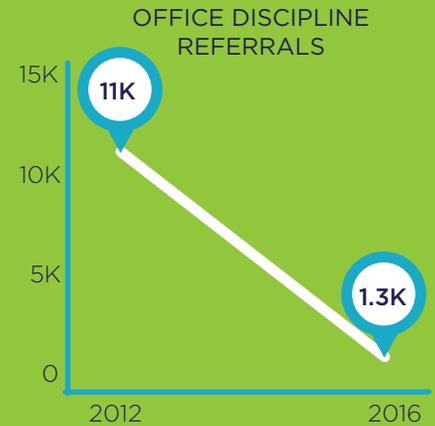
# UNPRECEDENTED RESULTS

Brown Deer Middle/High School immediately started seeing differences in their referral rate after implementing the “Brown Deer Way.” By 2016, office discipline referrals decreased significantly to only 1,300 from a high of 11,000 during the 2012 school year. Principal Tosha Womack could feel a tremendous difference and reported that she had never seen a school fall start-up with such a positive environment.

It’s also impressive that the local community has rallied behind “The Brown Deer Way.” It continues to display posters and provide other means of support. Local retailers and businesses, such as Badger Meter and Tapco, are fully invested in the initiative and lend their time, talent, and resources to ensure lasting and wide-reaching success for “The Brown Deer Way.”

Other positive outcomes of the program are that Brown Deer students and teachers are now mentoring students in the Milwaukee Public School district,

and students statewide are hearing about “The Brown Deer Way.”



**“ We would not have been able to accomplish what we did without WCEP. It’s been work, but it’s been good work. ”**

Tosha Womack, Principal

Tosha credits WCEP with the profound changes and palpable results at her school. “We would not have been able to accomplish what we did without the WCEP,” says Tosha. “Their training gave me and my staff the boost of energy needed to implement our initiative.”

Assignments completed during WCEP’s Leadership Advancing Character & Culture in Schools (LACCS) training, coupled with the powerful messages heard from its speakers, inspired the Brown Deer Middle/High School staff and led to their enthusiastic buy-in of the program. “The readings and literature were all so impressive and motivating,” Tosha recalls. “It wasn’t training; it wasn’t a class. It was like therapy that helped us become recharged and renewed by showing us different ways to connect with our students and families.” The LACCS gave her practical strategies to produce stand-up citizens.

She wonders where her school would be today without “The Brown Deer Way,” because the school was on a downward trend facing an increase in violent behavior, with three to four fights a week. This could have spiraled into high levels of staff turnover and would have been detrimental to the entire community.

Instead, teachers have been recharged and are committed to staying at the school system. Tosha is also experiencing powerful results in other areas, including an increase in accountability and respectful behavior from students and parents. She’s also seeing collaboration and ownership from families when it comes to academics.

WCEP’s hands-on professional and personalized development led to changes in Brown Deer and strengthened its educational practices. Tosha says WCEP leads to remarkable changes in education and can change the world. High school seniors, Alyssa Cuffie and Evan Bord, have been grateful for the leadership opportunities they have gained during their four-years at Brown Deer High School.

**“We always focus on doing the right thing, and not just because we’re being rewarded. We know how to take responsibility for our actions and know what’s right.”**

- Alyssa Cuffie, High School Senior, Brown Deer High School

**“When we go off to college and beyond, the tulips we planted all around the community will be a reminder of our commitment to our growth, our work and ourselves while we were students at Brown Deer High School.”**

- Evan Bord, High School Senior, Brown Deer High School



**STATE SCHOOL OF CHARACTER**



**GRADUATION RATE**



**2- & 4- YEAR COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES**