

### HOW ONE HIGH SCHOOL DRAMATICALLY REDUCED NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR WITH RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND A PAPERLESS REFERRAL SYSTEM.

Lorri Benjamin is a passionate administrator who believes education has a tremendous impact on future generations. She started out her career as an Elementary Teacher, and worked her way up through the ranks towards her current role of Assistant Principal of Cocoa High School. Her belief in the power of education, and seeing her students graduate, is what motivates her every day. Even for her 7th graders, she is inspired to think of that student crossing the stage for graduation.

**“I think that education is the only thing that’s going to make a difference in this country.”**

#### THE PERSONALITY OF COCOA HIGH SCHOOL

Cocoa High School in Florida has a unique population, combining middle- and high school grades 7 through 12. They are the only Title 1 school in the district and have a high ESE (Exceptional Student Education) population. The Cocoa High Tigers football team is the best team in the district, and recently won the state championship. The community truly cares about the school, and pride is high among students, faculty and residents. Cocoa High’s Principal is from the community and inspires faculty members to make every day great by sending daily motivational quotes.

## DESPITE THE EMOTIONAL BACKING OF AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY, COCOA HIGH STILL HAS ITS STRUGGLES

Cocoa High's biggest challenge is discipline—fighting, excessive tardies, inappropriate language, even larceny—and many referrals are submitted to the Dean's office as a result. In the past, these referrals were documented manually via a paper referral form. Since Cocoa High's campus is very large, it took a long time to walk these paper referrals to the front office, and get the dispositions back to teachers. This was incredibly frustrating to teachers, administrators and staff. This is why they decided to improve their referral system and go paperless, and turned to Hero for the 2016-2017 school year.

## NEW PROGRAMS: STARTING SMALL TO WIN BIG

At first, like any program, teacher buy-in was a struggle. But Ms Benjamin tried to combat this by rolling out Hero to the front office and administrative teams first. Then, in the fall, when the pilot group felt well-versed in the new system, they introduced it out to faculty. This was done in a computer lab, where staff could practice for a few weeks—outside of the chaos of a real-life campus setting--the new process of entering referrals. Teachers needing extra assistance were given extra training, and in a few weeks, everyone was feeling up-to-speed.

After the initial transition and training period, Ms. Benjamin made it mandatory that teachers use Hero to submit referrals—no more paper referrals were accepted. She also created a cheat sheet to help teachers quickly remember their training, wherever and whenever they needed it most.

**Now, 100% of Cocoa High staff members are using Hero to submit referrals ,and paper referrals have become a thing of the past. Ms. Benjamin says that this is when she noticed that things started to change.**

## THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY OF A DIGITAL REFERRAL SYSTEM

Now, Ms. Benjamin receives referrals almost instantly and can pull accurate reports from Hero based on what has been submitted. ESE and resource teachers at Cocoa High can access student behavior data, enabling them to have richer, more informed interactions with students. A digital referral system has provided accountability and transparency, which is invaluable when talking to parents. When Ms. Carter gets a call about a student, she can easily look the student up, and give a concrete, objective record of their behavior. Plus, tracking referrals digitally is helping Cocoa High to give back to the environment by saving paper.

**“My office clerk has less paper. She isn’t having to shred all the paper referrals, or put them in the mailbox. Things are at her fingertips now, which saves her time. It has made our organization more efficient.”**

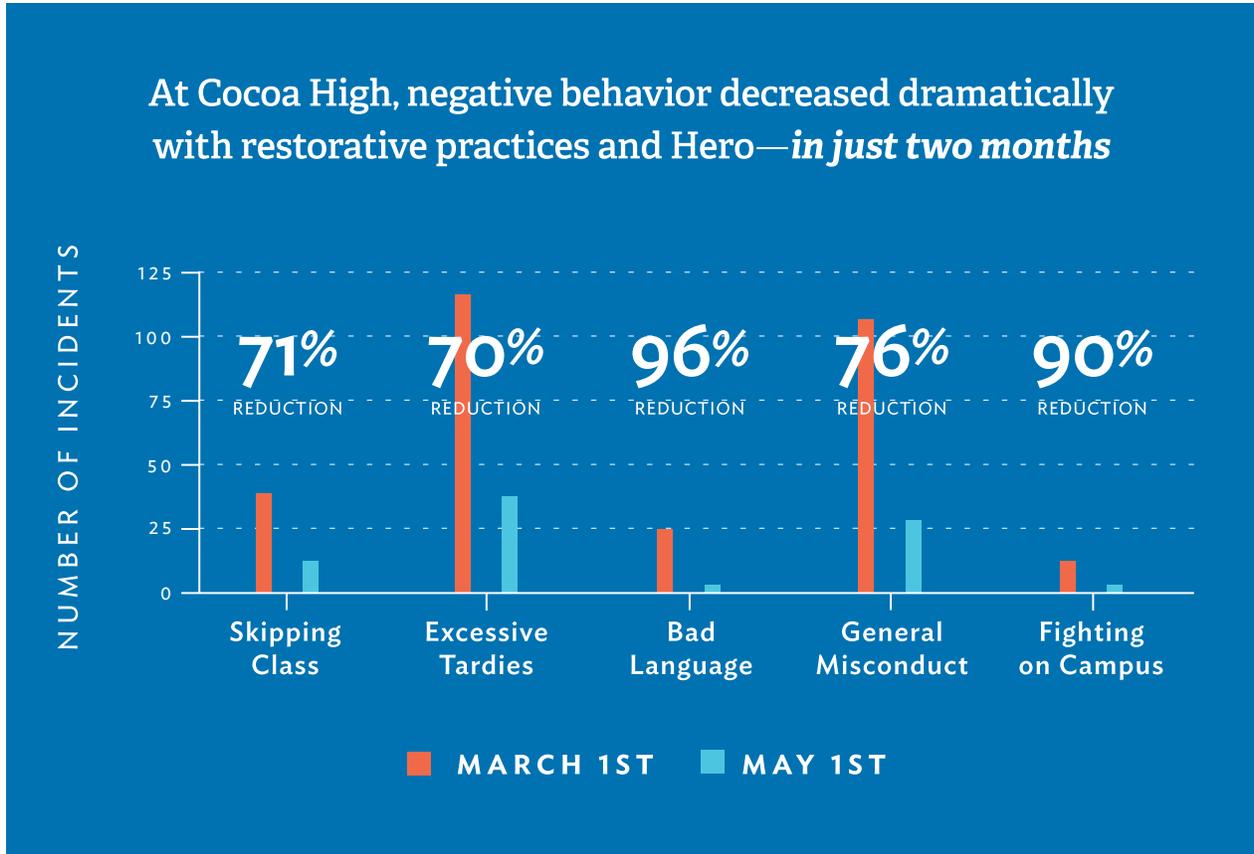
## CURBING NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

Cocoa High uses restorative practices to work with students on behavior issues and to reduce suspension rates. There are two social workers on campus who review referrals in Hero regularly and meet with students who have multiple referrals or who have come back from suspension. This enables the social workers and guidance counselors on-staff to build a relationship with students and help them get back on track.

An academic component is paired with this mandatory meeting. The student is required to discuss their behavior in a writing prompt, in which the student reflects upon the incident and how they’ll change their behavior in the future. Students are no longer

held in in-school suspensions for too long and the amount of time served for out-of-school suspensions has been lowered to cut back on lost instructional time. Ms. Benjamin explains that Hero has helped make discipline at Cocoa High more consistent.

**TO SAY THE RESULTS ARE IMPRESSIVE WOULD BE AN UNDERSTATEMENT**



Cocoa High has shown almost unbelievable improvement in a very short amount of time. Excessive tardies have gone from 118 a month to 35, a **70% reduction**. Skipping class has gone from 42 incidents a month to 12, a **71% reduction**. General misconduct has gone from 109 incidents a month to 26, a **76% reduction**. Fighting has gone from 11 incidents per month to just one, a **90% reduction**. And inappropriate (bad) language has gone from 25 incidents per month to just one, a **96% reduction**.

**In just two months, Cocoa High has almost completely**

eradicated their negative behaviors, proving the tremendous success of an immediate, digital referral system and alternative forms of redirecting behavior through restorative practices.

### HOPES FOR NEXT SCHOOL YEAR—AND BEYOND

Next year, Ms. Benjamin plans continue using Hero's incident manager to track referrals. She's also planning on rolling out a positive behavior program and will be doing some serious school wide training on classroom management that's geared towards cultural relevance.

In five years, Ms. Benjamin envisions that Cocoa High would be academically successful. Graduation rates would increase and discipline would decrease to the point of minimal occurrences of dispositions or infractions. The school culture would be one of respect and team work.

*With such amazing results in such a short amount of time, we think that she's well on her way, and look forward to helping Cocoa High transform their school culture.*