

# Proven ideas from Jostens Renaissance



*One of the most powerful aspects of Jostens Renaissance is the collection of great ideas that are shared by schools like yours. Here are a few of the best ideas Jostens Renaissance schools have recently shared. For more ideas like this and a wealth of other Jostens Renaissance resources, contact your Jostens representative or visit [Jostens.com/edserv](http://Jostens.com/edserv).*

## Passport to Success: Anything's Possible!

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Shocking data often serves a purpose, jarring us into motion to make a change or move things up the “priority list” and search for solutions. That is what happened at Oakdale High School when we heard the staggering statistic from Rick DuFour’s book, **Whatever It Takes**. DuFour states that, of the students who drop out of high school, 75% of them make that decision by October of the freshman year. They may “stick around” for four years and enjoy the social offerings at your school, but they are not there for the academics because it does not meet the needs of their plan to drop out. What can you do as an educator with such distressing news?

At OHS, we implemented our first ever “Passport to Success: Anything’s Possible!” Scheduled right after the close of first quarter, freshman got to hear from those in the trenches—students and staff with real life stories to share about “how to do high school right.” Students began in the Main Gym for a short opening and then traveled with their “passport” to four stations. One stop was in the theater to hear from seven high profile students who shared how they have overcome obstacles to be successful in school. One young man, a star football player, told how he has had to “go it alone” since his father died when he was twelve. A cheerleader challenged the students, asking them if they thought it was hard to get out of bed in the morning. She shared that, because of her juvenile arthritis, she knows what it is like to not be able to get out of bed in the morning.

She talked about the pain she feels every day but pushes herself to be a successful student and cheerleader. Our star quarterback shared how he is not able to accept offers from colleges that are currently recruiting him because he did not take college prep classes or get the required grades.

Another station allowed students to hear from select, positive staff members who shared tips on how to do well in school. Students were divided into four small groups so about thirty went to one of four classrooms. Popular teachers shared a “Top Ten” powerpoint on the do’s and don’ts of being successful in school. Another stop was in the small gym where students saw a skit between the Vice Principal (playing the role of a student) and a highly visible senior (playing the role of the VP) who has battled cancer and is a star athlete. The skit was concluded with this young man telling his story, his personal triumph over cancer while maintaining his college prep status.

Another station included a short motivational video and students got to try on the famous Oakdale High School red Jostens graduation gown and sign their name on a gown as their commitment to graduate in 2011 with their class.

Although it is too early to measure the effectiveness of this program, quarterly follow up will be done with students by checking their progress and awarding prizes to students who are being successful, moving toward earning passing grades and those who have excellent attendance. Teachers submit names of freshman students who are working to be successful in school and drawings are held throughout the quarter for movie passes, gift cards, and iPods.



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## RWHS Art Contest

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Each spring we hold an art contest in which all students at RWHS are eligible to enter and win. All entries must be the original work of the student which is not copied from a published photograph, magazine or book illustration, album cover or any other artwork. If selected as a winner, the student agrees to give the piece to the school's permanent art collection, which is on display in our cafeteria. Each year we choose three winners, and each winner receives \$50 cash. If the winning piece needs to be framed, we have a local gallery frame it for us before adding it to our collection.

The head of our Art Department is very involved with this project. Since she basically promotes and organizes the entire event, it does not take much time or effort from our Renaissance group. Also, she recruits a couple community members to help with the judging of the art work. It is a great way to involve a department that receives very little recognition, and it allows students to show off their talents. Last year we had 27 students submit a piece for the contest (our school has around 900–950 kids grades 9–12).

We are also in the process of introducing an industrial tech. contest in which students will be able to submit pieces crafted in woods/metals classes. This is another group of students who often feel disconnected to school. Every year these students put out amazing projects with little or no recognition for their effort. We are in the process of working out the details with the head of the Industrial Technology Department. This contest will be separate from the art contest already in place.

## Public Display of Affection Thank You Wall

Submitted by: Charlotte Lacey  
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Our “Thank You” wall actually happened by accident at Davies Middle School. Last spring a banner was placed on the wall that simply said “THANK YOU” and it was our intention to list the teachers and staff members who had contributed to our Renaissance support. To our surprise, note cards starting appearing under the banner...“thank you’s” written to students

from students, to teachers from teachers, etc....it was such a success that this year we decided to move the THANK YOU WALL to the foyer of our building, a more visible place than it was last year. It is now one of the first things you see when you walk into the building and it is on a wall that is much longer than the wall we had started on last year.

Anyone can write a “Thank You” (teachers, students, administration, staff)...it has become such a touching and effective VTW. It's an idea that can be started at any time—no matter if you are at the elementary, middle school or high school level. Everyone loves to see their name on the wall as well as receive “public affection” and feel appreciated.

## Knights of the Round Table

Submitted by: Cheri Godek  
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At Ocoee High School, we do many things to improve the atmosphere of our school. Each month, our Renaissance advisor sends out an email to the entire staff asking for nominations for the Knights of the Round Table for that month. This is an opportunity for any staff member to nominate students for any reason, whether it be for an improvement in behavior or grades, someone helping out with a special cause, a top notch student, someone who is normally shy and participated in class, etc. Any staff member can nominate students for any reason, with the ultimate goal being to recognize all the students who get nominated. When the staff send in names of students, they include a short explanation that will appear on the certificate the student will receive, along with the nominating staff member. All students are invited to a home-cooked lunch in the cafeteria.

The area of the cafeteria where the Knights of the Round Table will eat is decorated and in plain view of everyone. Students receive the certificate and their names are entered into random drawings for gift cards. There is no final winner—all nominated students are the Knights of the Round Table. We do not compare the accomplishments of the students to determine who is the best, but recognize that each student had done their own personal best and that personal accomplishment is what needs to be celebrated.

It is truly amazing what this single nomination, recognition, and celebration can do for a student. It has literally been the turning point in some of our students' high school careers. On average, we have recognized and celebrated 200 students per month.