



## Colorado Charter Schools Annual Conference

February 25-27, 2026  
Denver Marriott Tech Center



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# (31) Beyond Compensation: Fostering a Culture where Teachers Thrive and Stay

Diana Simpson, Principal  
Ben Franklin Academy

Evergreen A  
February 26, 2026 | 8:30 – 9:30 AM  
Schools & Leadership



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We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public charter schools across Colorado.



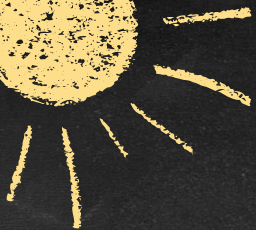
**Be a part of the action.**





# Beyond Compensation: Fostering a Culture where Teachers Thrive and Stay

$$E=MC^2$$

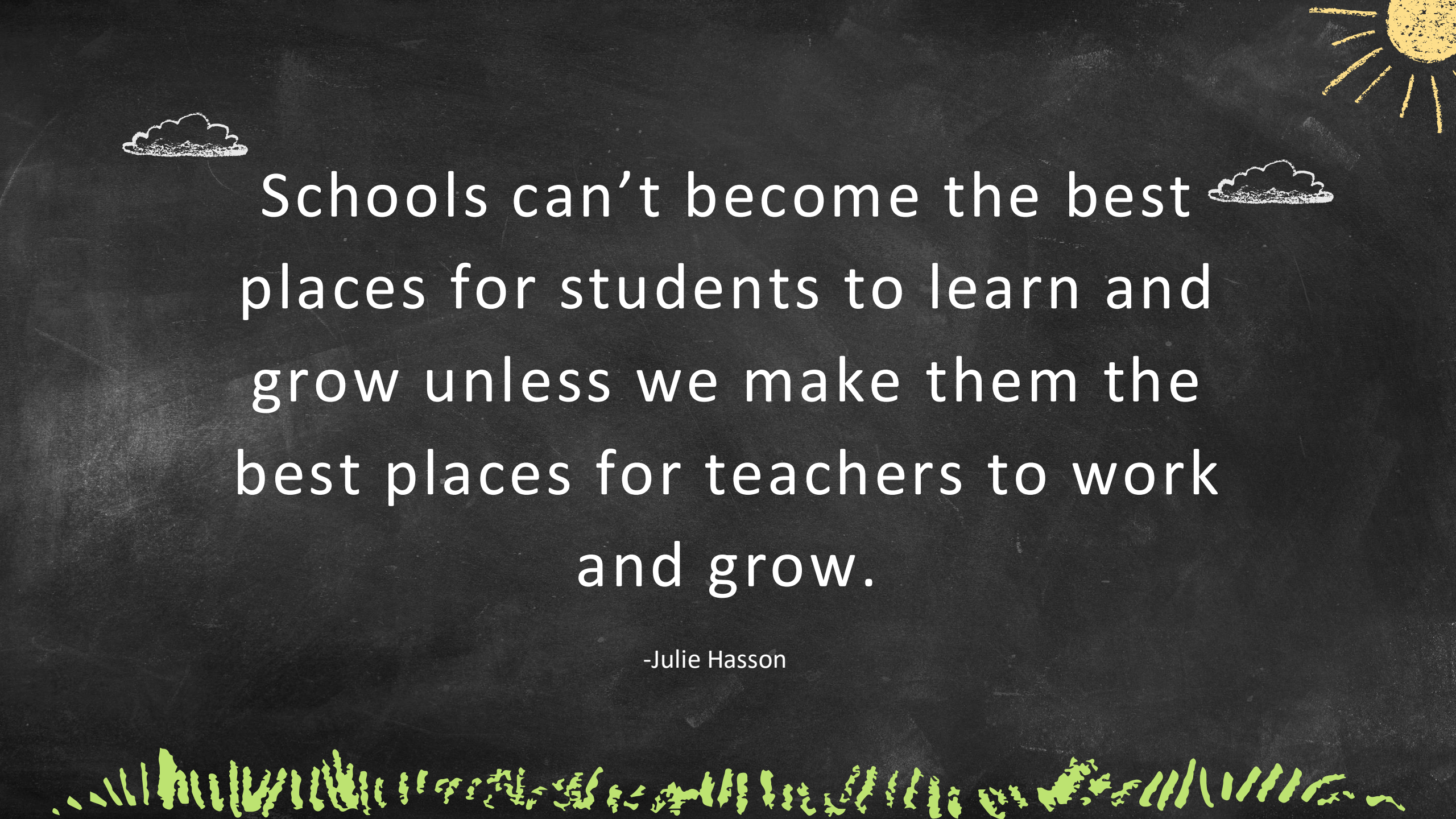


# Key Learning Objectives

$$E=MC^2$$

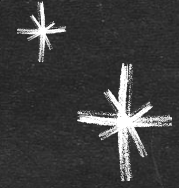


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1. Discuss the connection between a healthy school culture and improved teacher retention and reduced burnout.
  2. Share a several no-cost or low-cost strategies to improve staff culture.
  3. Understand why including students and all staff members (not just teachers) is essential for a truly positive environment.



Schools can't become the best places for students to learn and grow unless we make them the best places for teachers to work and grow.

-Julie Hasson



# Diana Simpson

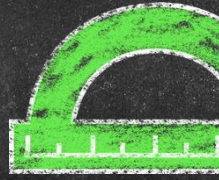
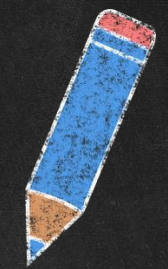
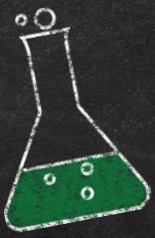
## Principal-Ben Franklin Academy



I have been in education for 29 years. My career has been spent in three Douglas County charter schools. I have been Principal of Ben Franklin Academy for nine years. I believe that creating a positive staff culture is the best way to attract and retain high-quality staff. We work hard and have a lot of fun along the way!

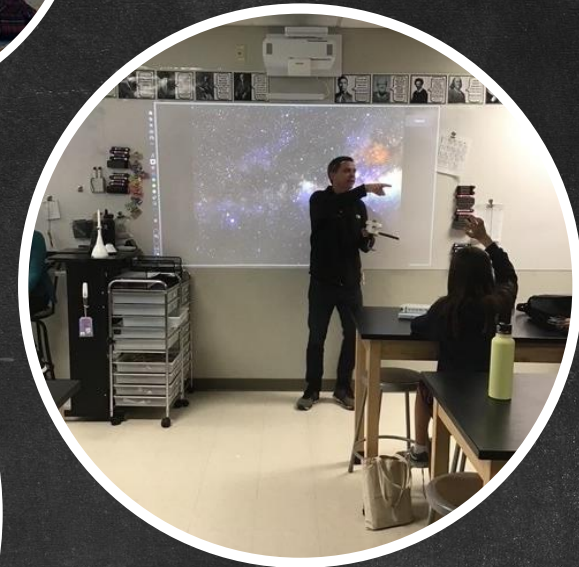


### 80's Day



# About BFA

1. Pre K-8 Charter School
2. Serve around 950 Students
3. Just over 100 staff members
4. Averaged over 95% teacher retention in the last 5 years.
5. No teachers have left in the past three years to teach somewhere else.



# Why is Teacher Retention important?



Positively impacts student achievement



Creates consistent community expectations and experiences

Allows schools to focus on growth vs maintaining the status quo

Saves money and resources

# What do Teachers want (beyond salaries)

01

Respect and  
Autonomy

02

Recognition  
and Praise

03

Fun and Joy

These can all be addressed by building a positive school culture.



# Low Cost, High Impact Strategies



01

Celebrate Small Wins

02

Personalized Appreciation

03

Professional Trust and  
Autonomy

04

Staff Team-Building

05

Gifts of time



# Celebrate Small Wins



## Importance of Acknowledgement

Handwritten notes  
recognizing something you  
have noticed:

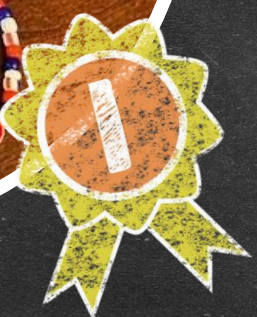
- Thank yous
- Class did great in the hallway
- Great response to a parent
- Enforcement of policies

Staff Shout-outs

- staff meetings
- staff newsletters
- school newsletters/social media

Staff Parking spot or  
other “perk”:

- No carpool for a week
- Late arrival pass
- No recess duty
- Food



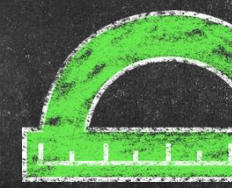
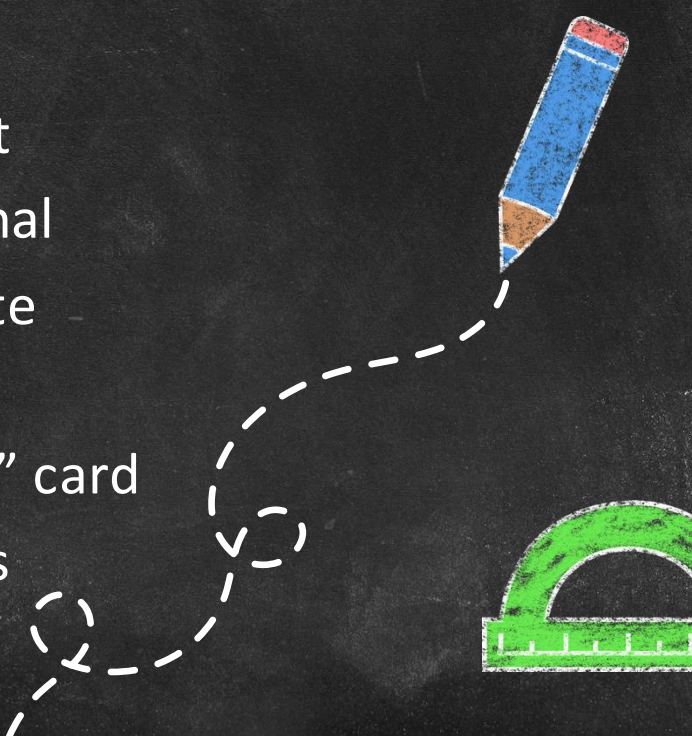
# Personalized Appreciation

Incorporating personal details into recognition.

- Values Survey
- Alma Mater Highlight
- Licensure or Professional Development certificate
- Years of service
- New Year Personal "Bingo" card
- Birthday celebrations



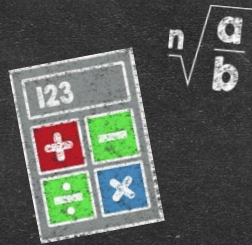
## Values Bracelets



# Professional Trust and Autonomy



Less Micro-  
Managing



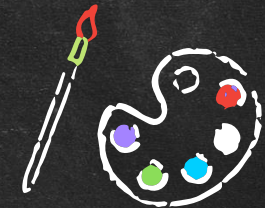
Honor Time



Allow  
Creativity



professional  
development



Seek Input





# Collaborative Decision-Making

Anytime you can give staff the opportunity to provide input or have a say, it is beneficial.

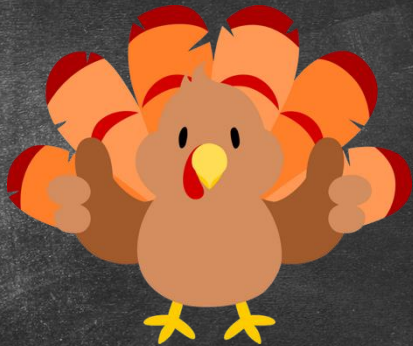
-Builds trust

-Encourages Ownership

Google forms are your friends!

# Staff Team-Building

I asked my staff what some of their favorites activities have been:



Is there a turkey in your pocket?

- snowman
- pumpkin
- shamrock
- bunny



Match Famous Couples

- Celebrity Crush
- Find your group
- Duck hunt
- Bingo

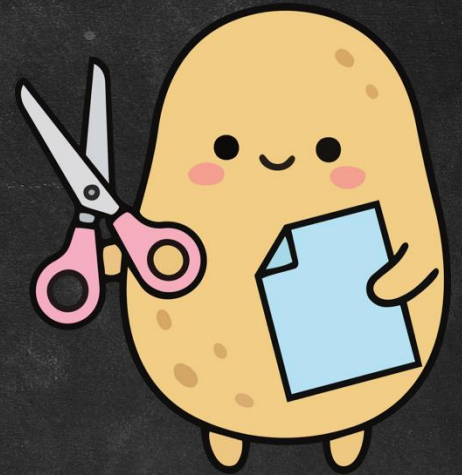


Steps Competition  
CMAS

Teams or individual

Staff lunches/coffee cart

Details for all of these and others can be found at [this link](#)



Rock, Paper, Scissors

- jingle bells
- Mardi Gras beads

# Undercover Staff Spirit Days



Royalty Day



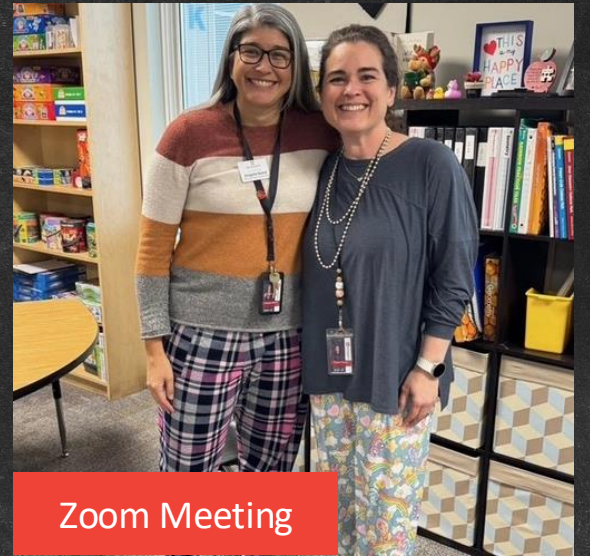
Spy/Ninja Day



Anything but a cup



Alma Mater



Zoom Meeting



## Team Activities

Our staff loves to connect and work with others in the building that they don't see as often. Incorporate games or competitions where teams are mixed from all areas of the building.

Seen here: Crunch Rocket Sports

We've also done scavenger hunts (in and out of the building), bowling, game shows

# Gifts of Time

Time is a premium. There never seems to be enough time to get everything done. How can you give teachers more time?

- Planning days
- Rotate duties
- Class takeover
- Leave early/ Arrive late pass



# Everyone Is Included



It is important that any activities or recognition include all staff members, not just teachers.

It is even more fun when you can include the students.

A culture where everyone is celebrated leads to a building where everyone feels valued!



# Contact Me

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**“  
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feedback  
helps us all  
move forward  
together**



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