

March 7, 2013

Dear Columbine Elementary Community Members:

I am writing you on behalf of the Columbine Elementary Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to tell you about a wonderful opportunity with a national nonprofit organization called *Playworks* and to solicit your assistance.

What is *Playworks*?

Playworks' mission is to improve the health and well-being of children by increasing opportunities for physical activity and safe, meaningful play. Since 1997, *Playworks* has worked with thousands of low-income schools throughout the country to build students' social and emotional skills through recess and play and help elementary age children learn to interact more constructively with each other, creating a more positive school climate and learning environment.

I was so excited after contacting this organization last year and felt so strongly that this program was needed at Columbine that I worked with a few PTA members, Principal Medina, and the Boulder Valley School District Grants Coordinator, to apply for a grant to get a full-time *Playworks* Coach at Columbine. Unfortunately the grant was not funded, but our friends at *Playworks* did not forget about Columbine Elementary.

What is the Opportunity?

In January, Principal Medina and I were contacted by *Playworks* and presented an opportunity to get the trainer-led professional development workshops at Columbine. This is an incredible opportunity because *Playworks* currently has grant funding that will pay for the majority of the professional development workshops. A description of the workshop opportunity follows.

Playworks will provide a comprehensive two-day workshop (12 hours) that addresses how to implement a healthy and inclusive recess program. Built on best practices in youth development, as well as a history of evidence-based success from their direct service program, *Playworks* will teach group management, conflict resolution, games facilitation, and other essential skills to help transform Columbine's playgrounds. Following the workshops, a *Playworks* trainer will provide a one-on-one consultation at Columbine. This two-pronged approach equips participants with the skills and support needed to successfully integrate a fun and positive recess.

Why Columbine Needs this Program?

At Columbine, office referral data indicates that the majority of office referrals for teasing, fighting, bullying, and injuries occur during recesses. These disruptive behaviors, originating on the playground, spill over into the classroom and interfere with academic achievement as well as physical and social learning. [Research demonstrates](#) that play is essential to child development and an invaluable tool for improving school climate. A quality recess and playtime also helps children return to the classroom more focused and ready to learn. Principals at schools implementing the *Playworks* program credit it for reducing officer referrals and suspensions, and for making learning time more productive.

What does this Opportunity Cost?

The total cost of the two-day workshop is \$6,000. *Playworks* currently has grant monies that will fund \$5,100 of that cost, which means the Columbine Community would only need **\$900** to get this *Playworks* training program. The training would have to be held on a weekend or on two Saturdays to avoid the expense of paying staff and substitutes. Principal Medina is working with BVSD to allow the staff

attending the training to receive professional development credits. I am confident these details will be resolved.

How Can You Help?

Here is where I am soliciting your assistance to make this wonderful and much needed program happen for Columbine Elementary! Only 9 individual contributions of \$100.00, or 18 contributions of \$50.00, or 36 contributions of \$25.00 will make this incredible opportunity a reality. Please join my family and me and contribute today!

Please make checks payable to Columbine PTA, put check or cash in an envelope, and send to school with your child. You can also drop off envelopes in the PTA mailbox located in the office. Please indicate in the memo area or on a separate note that the donation is for the *Playworks* training program. I will let you know as soon as we reach the goal! Any additional monies raised will be used to better implement the program, for example purchasing playground equipment such as balls, jump ropes, etc. All donations are tax deductible.

Thank you for your time and for making this program a reality! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or ideas about the program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer S. Schwarz". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Jennifer Schwarz
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