

Report on CMA's High Attrition Rate during 2017-2019

By CMA Board Members Randy Cubero and David Couch

Introduction:

The methodology used was a 6 question survey sent out via email to approximately 160 parent(s) that represented 207 students not returning to CMA. The following were the 6 questions asked of the parents:

- 1) What were their main reasons for leaving CMA
- 2) What was their opinion of the CMA Teachers
- 3) What was their opinion of the CMA Administrators
- 4) What were their most positive experiences at CMA
- 5) What were their most negative experiences at CMA
- 6) Finally, if they could make one significant change to CMA, what would it be!!

In the final tally there were 8 returned responses with the following breakout:

One mildly positive response (+)

One "Not Applicable" response (o)

Six negative responses that were further broken down into

One mildly negative (-)

Three moderately negative (--)

Two exceedingly negative (---)

Answers to the six questions provided by the 8 parents are listed below:

1. The main reasons for leaving CMA (# of different parents):
 - a. toxic environment similar to a reform school (3)
 - b. no transportation available as promised (2)
 - c. faculty changeover (5)
 - d. berating by teachers/bullying by other children (5)
 - e. theft of student's belongings
 - f. added expense for uniforms & fees
 - g. no additional help/services provided as advertised (3)
 - h. lack of communications with parents
 - i. no STEM education as promised
2. The opinions of the Teachers:
 - a. 1st grade teachers were all excellent
 - b. ½ day Kinder teacher seemed overwhelmed with children
 - c. some teachers were confrontational with parents
 - d. teachers appeared to be overly worried about being fired
 - e. Loved the 4th grade teachers
3. The opinions of the Administrators:
 - a. no negatives (2)
 - b. appeared secretive/dishonest
 - c. appeared to be in battle with teachers

- d. front office indiscreet yelling at children (2)
 - e. rude, did not like or trust them
4. Most positive experiences:
- a. being able to walk to and from school
 - b. technology classes and class dances
 - c. nothing positive
 - d. small class sizes
 - e. nothing except child made great friends at CMA
5. Most negative experiences:
- a. had none
 - b. the whole experience was negative
 - c. yelling teachers
 - d. lunch taken away from child
 - e. promises never fulfilled
 - f. chaotic pick-up times
 - g. no evaluation for SPED (speech therapy)
 - h. few adults available to supervise & monitor children at CMA
6. One suggested change that should be made:
- a. no recommendations
 - b. better communications (2)
 - c. safer environment with better education
 - d. get to know students better & have them trust teachers/administrators
 - e. hire good teachers
 - f. keep your promises
 - g. provide more student help and services

Final summary:

Reliability, credibility and accuracy were all weakened by the very low response rate by parents to the survey (8/160). However, in focusing on the reasons for leaving CMA the following general conclusions might be legitimate:

1. CMA appears to have a problem with children being bullied by students or berated by teachers/administrators as there should be zero tolerance for these types of interactions with children. Any mention of them occurring at the CMA should be cause for concern. Moreover there was mention of bullying and inappropriate behavior in the CMA restrooms by older children harassing younger ones.
2. CMA appears to have a problem with the high rate of faculty changeover as it is viewed by the parents as a sign of instability, internal discord or an overall weakening of the quality of education provided to their children.

3. CMA appears to have a problem with being viewed as a military reform school where some parents believe the school advocates that children need to be disciplined and corrected in public as an example to other children.

4. CMA appears to have a problem with effective communications with parents, especially for some parents who believe CMA is not living up to its promises nor its advertisements, such as for teaching STEM, providing transportation, evaluating for SPED and simply continuously assisting students in a kind and respectful manner.

Suggestions based on the four conclusions in the summary:

1. Review, revise and strictly enforce the bullying policy at the school with a zero tolerance for perpetrators. Ensure that teachers are discreet in correcting misbehavior on the part of younger students without having overt displays of berating or yelling at children. In addition, some type of monitoring restrooms or segregating restrooms need to be considered for the safety and wellbeing of the younger students.

2. Provide an anonymous “climate survey” to teachers and administrators to gage their discontent with current policies and procedures. Have open discussions with teachers to understand their problems and work toward addressing their concerns. Teachers are the most influential level of adults who interact directly with the CMA students. Observe teachers in the classroom frequently as a normal matter of maintaining a high quality of education at CMA.

3. Colorado “Military” Academy (K-12) should be military in structure, organization and training only at the High School level (9th through 12th grade). At the lower levels, K-8, the students should be taught lessons and values that are precursors to a good military JrROTC program such as treating everyone with respect, behaving in accordance with the “Golden Rule.” CMA younger students need to learn and commit to CMA’s core values of truthfulness, honesty and being unselfish. Teachers and Administrators need to be evaluating each student constantly relative to these core values. Teachers and Administrators need immediately to correct observed behavior that is inconsistent with these core values and praise students immediately for their actions and behavior that are consistent with these core values.

4. Similar to the “climate survey” that was suggested above for the CMA teachers, one should also be developed for the CMA parents to gage the parents’ discontent with current CMA policies and procedures. Open quarterly meetings with parents are also an excellent forum for parents to air their concerns about the school. Consider parent-teacher committees to resolve some of the pertinent issues that may surface from the climate surveys and attempt to build a volunteer group of parents that can be called upon to assist in some of the initiatives that might be considered from these climate surveys.