

Some of our FCCLA student leaders recommended that we have R5 Productions come to visit our school and talk with our students. Funding for this event was a problem for us. Kathleen Loeffelbein worked with the Optimists and they provided full funding for the event! The Optimists are a great partner with our school district. I can't thank them enough for providing the financial support we needed to bring R5 to our students. Mike Donahue was our R5 Productions speaker. His message was truly one of hope. Two themes emerged from the assembly. First, using drugs and alcohol to mask what is going on in your life will never help. It only leads to more despair. Mike talked to students about focusing on their dreams and reinventing their "normal" (especially if their normal is destructive). Finally, he challenged the students to walk in the shoes of others. I loved that he used this analogy! We always talk to the students about this. We tell them that they don't know the home lives and situations of their classmates. You never want to make things worse for students. So instead, extend kindnesses, show empathy, be supportive, or at least just don't hurt them with your words or actions. Mike really touched on that. He showed shoes from real students and told their stories. It was very powerful. The students cheered for each other, their teachers, their peers, and their community support. It was an amazing morning. Later, I told the students that I felt very blessed to be "living my dream" which is being with them every day. Mike Donahue stayed from 11:00 a.m. (close of the assembly) till 2:30 p.m. to personally talk to students who wished to visit with him privately.

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