

Camelback High School Now





## **Camelback High School Today:**

### **What are the Students Saying?**

Earlier in this report, the principal was quoted as saying, “the product is important and the students are the product.” To clearly understand the change at Camelback High School, the “products” (the students) were engaged in interviews and a survey was developed to reach a larger number of students. In addition, over thirty students, from freshmen to seniors, were interviewed and well over a hundred were surveyed on specific matters related to Camelback High School. A larger survey was conducted by the school and those results were shared as well. What are the students saying about their experience at Camelback High School? What is their perception of Camelback High School?

During the on-campus interviews with students in different settings, the overwhelming feedback was that they were “having a great experience at Camelback High School.” The students exhibited and voiced school pride. They also said that they “would recommend Camelback High School to a family member or friend.” The students indicated that the “culture” had changed at Camelback High School for the best. Below are some direct quotes from the students that shed light on their perception of Camelback High School.

- “People are great and teachers are great.”
- “We have a great principal who knows us and shows us love.”
- “Staff is concerned and they show it.”
- “I like the school so much.”
- “Students are valued at Camelback High School.”
- “There is a great student support network.”
- “We have teachers who engage the students.”
- “I bring my little brother to Camelback High School programs because I want him to see what is going on so that he will decide to come to Camelback High School.”
- “Camelback High School gives every student the opportunity to thrive and flourish.”

- “Camelback High School gives every student the opportunity to get involved.”
- “There are so many classes and organizations at Camelback High School. Any student can start a club.”
- “I feel safe at Camelback High School.”
- “There is lots of supplemental help such as peer tutoring.”
- “I get support from the staff and counselors.”
- “We get recognition for our success.”
- “We are inspired and motivated at Camelback High School.”
- “I spend a lot of time at Camelback High School.”
- “Camelback High School is very diverse.”
- “We are given the opportunity to participate in state, regional and national competitions.”
- “I am taking AP courses.”
- “DECA has really helped me.”
- “We have had no fights on campus this year.”

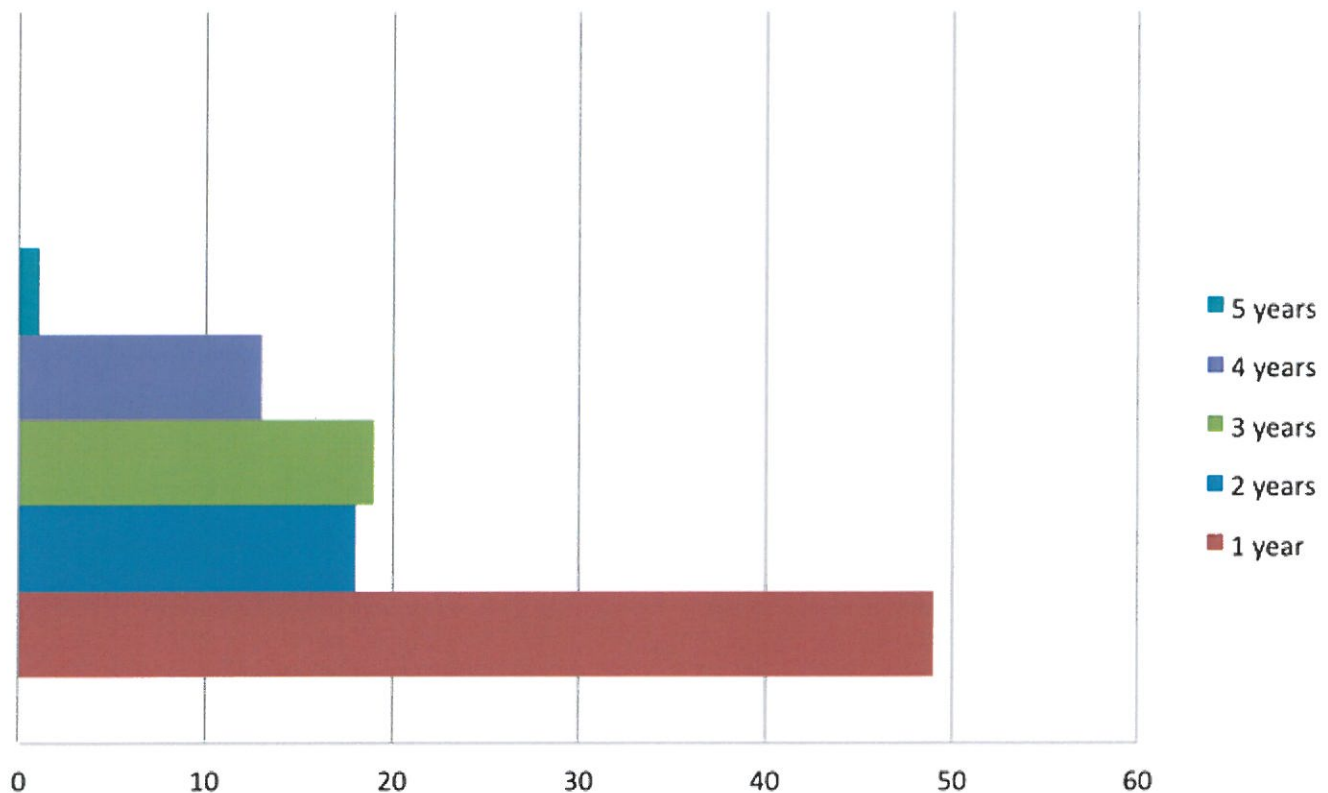
The feedback from the student interviews corroborate what faculty, staff, and community leaders said.

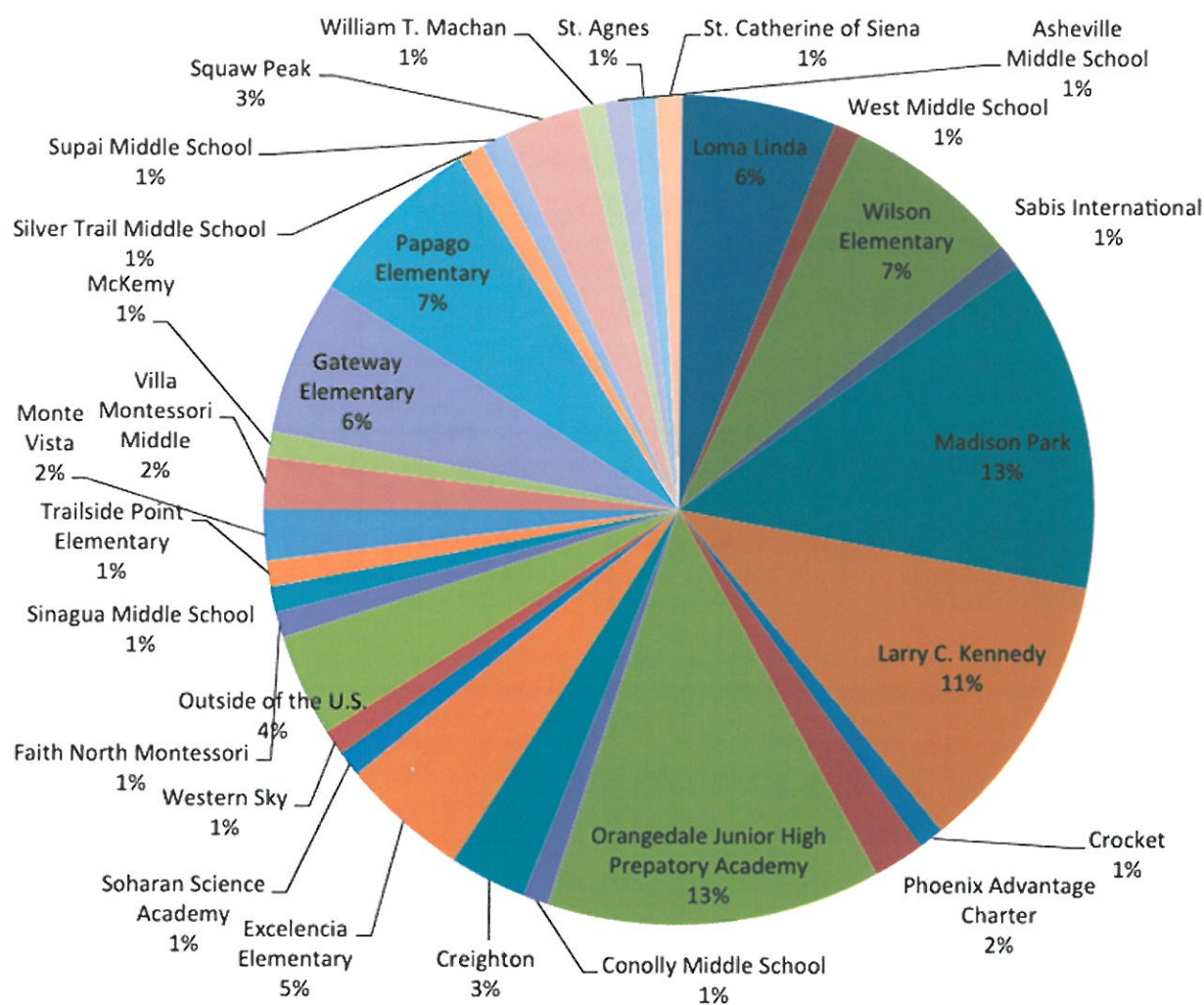
However, to further validate the change at Camelback High School, over 100 students were surveyed as to their perception and experiences of the school.

The population sample consisted of freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. It was reported that almost half of the students had only attended Camelback High School for one year; however the sample population attended the school for a range of one to five years. These students came to Camelback High School from mostly middle schools. The most frequented responses of previous schools attended included Orangedale

Junior High Prep Academy, Madison Park Middle School and Larry C. Kennedy School. However, it is worth mentioning that Camelback High School has addressed the challenge of melting students from different sections of town and different ethnic backgrounds into “one school.” Some of the students have come from foreign refugee camps and upon entry spoke little or no English. Yet, when they graduate, not only are they fluent in English, they are honor students. The school has embraced and included all of the students no matter where they have come from. This is a remarkable outcome!

## How long have you been at Camelback High School?



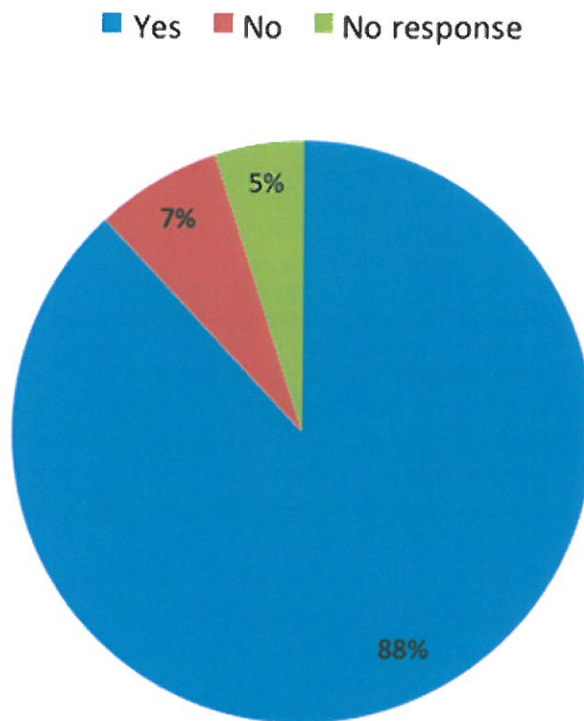


One main conclusion from the data collected is that the students seem to be satisfied overall with their experiences at Camelback High School. Questions four and seven provided the basis for this observation. Question four asks about the likeability of Camelback High School and if there are things that they would like to see changed at Camelback. The responses show that 96.67% of students like the atmosphere and activities at Camelback High School. Question seven asked about the impact that the programs at Camelback High School had on the students. The results revealed that there is a 98.59% positive impact from the students' perspective. As far as safety is concerned, 88% of the students felt that safety has improved at the school during their time at Camelback High. According to the information received from the surveys, the students attributed the increased sense safety to less fights on campus, more security presence and measures being taken, less gang presence on



campus and the actions taken and compassion given by the principal, Dr. Gestson. The aforementioned results show “improvement” when compared to the information and data that were collected from the faculty, staff, and Social Venture Partners regarding the state of the school prior to 2009.

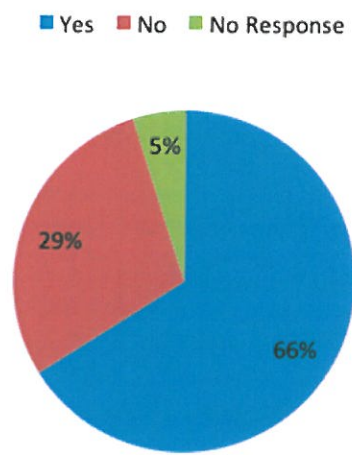
## Do you feel safety has improved at Camelback High School during your time there?



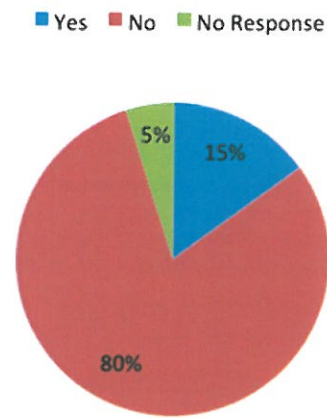
In regards to the activity and programs at Camelback High School, students reported that at least 69.47% of the students are involved in clubs, sports, or organizations at Camelback. This number is influenced by the large number of freshmen in the survey. The number involved in clubs and other activities is much higher for those students in their second, third and fourth year at Camelback High School. Those activities include all of the sports programs offered, the foreign language clubs, the academics based clubs, TV Media and Anime clubs and a few others. However, while 69.47% of students are involved in clubs, sports, or organizations at Camelback, only 15.79% of those students are involved in programs or clubs sponsored by external partners of the school. This is an area that could be improved to create a greater impact and an economy of scale. The

clubs and programs that external groups sponsored and students recognized included were the community dinner series, Upward Bound, ACE, DECA Club, peer tutoring, step team, and the computer program. It is possible that many of the students surveyed are unaware that the peer tutoring program is a program sponsored by an external group.

Are you involved in any clubs, sports, or organizations at Camelback High School?



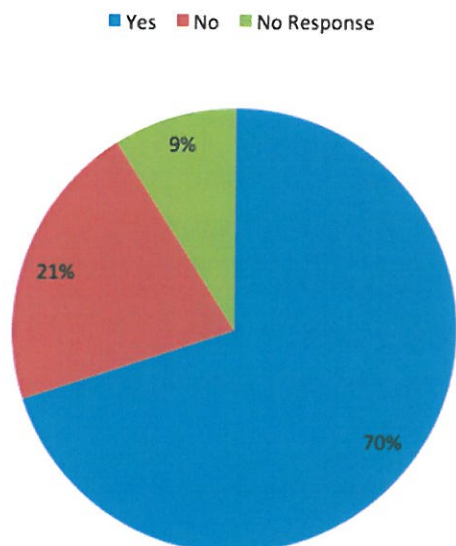
Are you Involved in any programs or clubs that are sponsored by external partners at Camelback High School?



The data also showed that students felt that there were aspects of all of the clubs and programs that had great positive impacts on them. Some of those positive impacts include leadership skills, team building and family bonding, tutoring, help with speaking the English language better, discipline, community service, camaraderie, better communication skills and better time management/responsibility just to name a few. The majority of the students felt that their needs were being met through existing clubs and organizations. However, they were aware that they could start new clubs and organizations to meet unmet needs.

The school has embraced and included all of the students, no matter where they come from.

## Are your interests and needs being met with the existing programs and clubs?



Overall, the data reveals that the atmosphere of Camelback High School has changed in comparison to that of the school prior to 2009 in several different aspects of the school, including safety and the overall experience at the school. Given that students have the opportunities to create new clubs and organizations, an increase in satisfaction is possible.

A parallel survey was conducted at Camelback High School and 500 students were part of that study. The students were queried on variables related to change and their perception of the school. Some of the highlights of that feedback are as follows:

- 88% said that there is at least one adult who knows them and cares about them
- 89% said they agree (or strongly agree) that they feel loved at Camelback High School
- 58% said that their Advisory feels like a family away from home
- 93% said that their teachers care how much they learn
- 81% said that students have a voice in making school rules and decisions
- 91% said that teachers demonstrate concern and respect for different cultures

This information further corroborates the findings discussed elsewhere in this report. The students' perception of Camelback High School has significantly changed. The results of the survey further support that the fact that when you change the culture and create a safe environment for learning, students are more engaged and will focus more on academics. Actually, 41% of the students surveyed indicated that they were taking AP or an



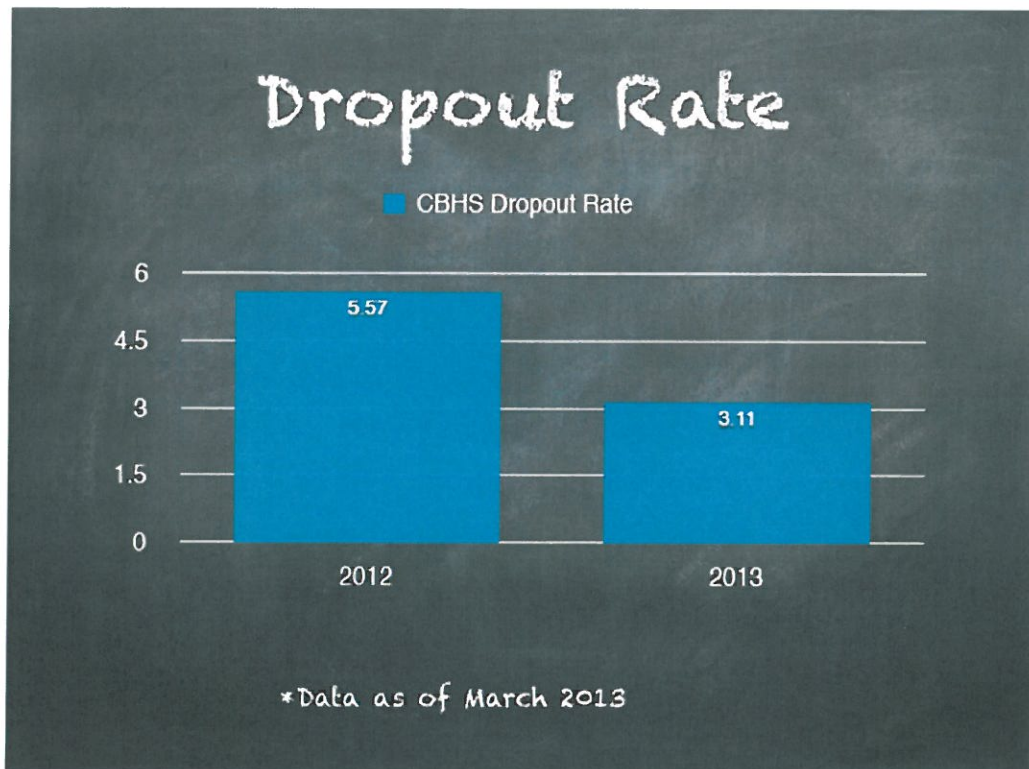
honors course. A key finding is that 96% of the students now feel that “it is cool to be smart” and 85% stated that they look forward to coming to school. The students are more engaged in the community and in the school. This assertion is supported in that two-thirds of the students stated that they participated in a club or sport and 60% indicated that they are finished with their community service requirements. Another 18% said that they are participating in the Success is Mandatory (peer tutoring) program.

The students now feel supported at Camelback High School. In fact, 88% of the students stated that there were at least one adult at the school who knew them and cared about them. Also, 58% stated that Advisory felt like “home away from home.” The revealing change was that 93% of the students felt that their teachers cared about how much they learned and 91% stated that teachers demonstrated concern and respect for different cultures. Also, 81% felt that they had a voice in making rules at the school. These are all positive data to support the transition that has taken place at Camelback High School.

The feedback from the surveys further corroborated the information from the student interviews and interviews with faculty and staff. Surveys are indirect measures and convey what the participants perceive or think. However, when the indirect measures are juxtaposed to direct measures of assessment, the conclusions are the same. Camelback High School is improving on many dimensions.

Information received from the school district show that Camelback High School dropout rates have improved from prior to 2009 when Camelback High School had one of the highest dropout rates in the district. For 2011-12 the rate was 5.57% and for 2012-13 the rate was 3.11%. In 2011-12, ten schools in the district had lower dropout rates than Camelback High School and this was an improvement for Camelback High School. However, only two schools in the district had lower dropout rates than Camelback High School in 2012-13. This is a remarkable achievement.

A key finding is that 96% of the students now feel that “it is cool to be smart” and 85% of the students reported that they now look forward to coming to school.



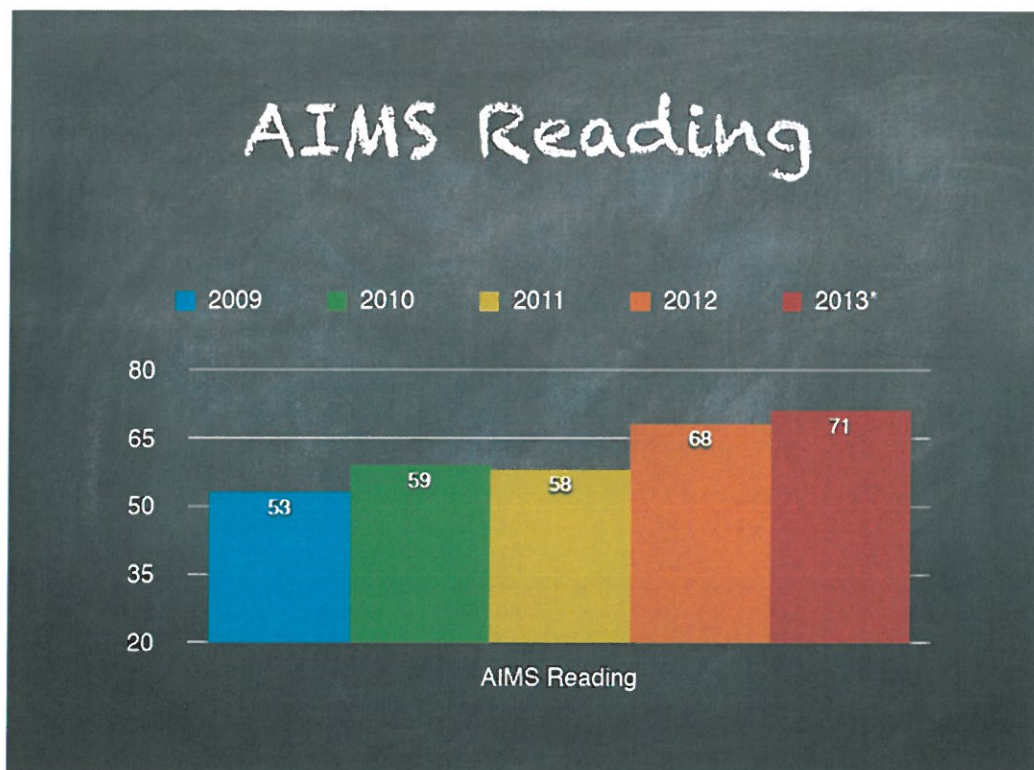
The attendance at Camelback High School continues to improve also. When students are engaged and feel a sense of pride for their school, they are more likely to come to school. The change from prior to 2009 is significant. In 2011 the attendance rate was 90%. That number increased to 94% in 2012. From 2009-2010, the graduation rate was 74%. In 2011-12 the graduation rate was 82%.

Prior to 2009, the amount of college scholarship dollars awarded each year to students was approximately \$100,000.00. During 2010-2011, that amount rose to \$1-\$2 million dollars annually. For 2012, the amount of scholarships awarded to students from Camelback High School rose to \$3 million. By April 2013, the scholarship amount has already reached \$2.5 million and by the end of the school year, the amount should surpass the 2012 dollar amount.

One measure of success for the school district has been student success in the AIMS Reading and Math tests. Since 2009, Camelback High School has shown steady increase in both the AIMS Reading and AIMS Math exam results. The passage rate for AIMS Reading has seen a steady increase since 2009. For 2009 and 2010 the passage rate was 55% and 59% respectively. In 2011, there was a slight decrease (13%) from the previous year, but still a 7% increase from 2009. However, the overall progress is demonstrated by the continued increase in the passage rate from 2012 and 2013 which was 68% and 71% respectively. This shows an overall increase of 16% since 2009. The AIMS scores for Math have seen a similar pattern, even seeing an



overall increase, with a slight decrease in 2011, but rebounding in 2012. The scores were 36% in 2010, 32% in 2011 and 46% in 2012. At the writing of this report, the 2013 scores were not yet released.



Another way of looking at school improvement is to look at negative social interactive factors, for example: “fist fights,” “food fights,” and “unauthorized” fire alarms. At Camelback High School, there were 20+ fist fights in 2009-2010 and 10+ in 2010-2011. However, for 2011-12 there were “0” fist fights during the school year. When looking at the same period and controlling for “food fights” the numbers for 2009-10 were 5+; for 2010-11 the number was 4+; however, the number for 2011-12 was 0 (zero). The same pattern existed for “unauthorized” fire alarms. Those numbers were 3, 6 and 0 (zero) for 2009-10, 2010-11, and 2011-12 respectively.



## 3 F's of High School Climate at Lunch

3 F's	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Fist Fights	20+	10+	0
Food Fights	5+	4	0
Fire Alarms	3	6	0

One should readily see that progress and improvements have been made at Camelback High School since 2009. Camelback High School is trending in the right direction in all areas. When compared to the state of existence prior to 2009, the positive change is indeed remarkable. Whether one references safety, environment, academics, school pride, or engagement of faculty, staff students and community, there is a qualitative and quantitative data to show steady improvement.

The basic premise of the present principal seems to be playing out in a credible manner. The premise is that if you change the culture and focus on the product, which is the students, good things will follow, including increases in academic performance and test scores. The data to date bear this out. The change at Camelback High School is real.