



Pin Ceremony

Community Leadership Academy, Charter School Institute

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Community Leadership Academy (CLA) has developed a unique and innovative family engagement activity that leverages existing school structures—such as uniforms, character education, and weekly academic assessments—to celebrate student success. This initiative is anchored by the Pin Ceremony, held every Wednesday morning right after drop-off.

The program is built on three core components: weekly academic assessments, character education, and uniform traditions. Students wear ties with their uniforms each Wednesday, and pins are awarded to symbolize their achievements. The pins fall into two main categories: Character Pins, nominated by teachers each month, and Academic Pins, earned based on progress monitoring data.

The Principal leads this effort with a sharp focus on data and celebration. Each Monday, she reviews academic progress, prepares certificates, and coordinates with staff to sign them, all before the weekly Pin Ceremony. Parents are encouraged to attend, and many do, filling the gym with energy and excitement as students receive recognition for their hard work.

The pin program is highly structured, with clear academic targets for each grade level. For example, during the May 5th ceremony, reading pins were awarded based on word counts tracked through the Accelerated Program, book reviews, and quizzes. Specific milestones (e.g., 1,000 words in 1st grade, 10,000 in 2nd grade, up to 1 million words by 3rd grade) are celebrated with unique pins. CLA recently introduced a limited-edition pin for a math challenge, sparking even greater enthusiasm among students. According to one school leader, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth celebrating.” The students not only know the significance of each pin they earn but also take pride in explaining them to teachers and family members.

Community Leadership Academy has maintained a performance school rating for thirteen consecutive years within an underserved community. The Pin Ceremony contributes to this success by instilling pride, motivation, and a sense of achievement in students. Parents and students alike celebrate the weekly milestones, reinforcing a culture of growth and perseverance. Observers note the students’ deep understanding of their achievements, with many eagerly sharing the stories behind their pins and the goals they are currently striving to reach. CLA’s pin program has become a cornerstone of its positive school culture, demonstrating the power of celebration and community involvement in academic success.