

# Trusted Adult Identification Day: How One School Used One Day Each Year to Strengthen Their Community



We can learn so much about what change is possible in our schools when we ask other educators: “How did you do it? How did you re-establish boundaries, or implement new ways to connect and support youth in your care?”

At One Trusted Adult (OTA), we regularly hear from educators who are bringing the ideas, language, and ethos of trusted adult relationships into their communities in thoughtful, practical ways. Recently, we heard from Kelly Goodrich, Director of Student Wellness at Christchurch School in Virginia, whose story stood out—not because it relied on a big budget or a complex program, but because it was grounded in intention, clarity, and relationships.

Kelly and her colleagues have implemented what they now call Trusted Adult Identification Day, a practice that has become deeply embedded in their school culture over the past five years. We spoke with Kelly about how it began, what it looks like in practice, and why she believes this work should be a basic requirement in school communities everywhere.

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## A Conversation with Kelly Goodrich, Director of Student Wellness at Christchurch School

***OTA: We like the sounds of “Trusted Adult Identification Day,” Tell us about how it came to be at your school. What does it actually look like?***

Kelly: For the past few years, we’ve been doing “Trusted Adult Identification Day” during one of our weekly all-school Community Engagement Meetings. We intentionally schedule it in November, after students have had time to settle in, get to know the adults on campus, and build some real connections.



*Kelly Goodrich, Director of Student Wellness at Christchurch School*

# Trusted Adult Identification Day at Christchurch School:

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The structure itself is simple. We gather the community together, introduce the purpose of the day, and show OTA's "[Why You Need A Trusted Adult](#)" video. Then students are given time—about 20 minutes—to write thank-you notes to the adult or adults they are choosing as their trusted adults on campus.

In the first year, we only asked students to identify one adult. But after listening to student feedback, we changed that. Now, they can identify as many trusted adults as they want. That shift alone made a huge difference. It reinforced the message that this is about, as Dr. Raney says, "building their bench" of trusted adults.

We collect the notes at the end, and I document which students identified which adults. That helps us track patterns and also notice students who didn't identify anyone yet, which becomes an important point of care and follow-up.

**OTA: You have a powerful way of framing this day for students each year during the all school meeting. Can you share part of how you introduce Trusted Adult Identification Day?**

Kelly: Absolutely. I always preface the day with a lesson on mentors and trusted adults—how they can overlap, but aren't always the same. Then I say:

*"Look around at the adults in the room. Your teachers, advisors, coaches, dorm parents, and wonderful support staff are here because we want to be your trusted adults.*

*Some of us have advanced degrees, have written books, had fancy high-paying jobs, traveled the world, invented new technology, built, designed, discovered... The adults around you now could do anything they wanted. And they are. We are. This is it. This is what we choose. We choose to be here, living into our core values and character strengths, with each of you. We choose you.*

*This video you're about to watch asks you to come halfway. To choose your trusted adult on campus—and to thank them. Remember, this person may not be your trusted adult forever, but they are right now. And it matters to name that."*

That piece—helping students understand that adults are choosing to be there, and then inviting them to come the other 50% of the way—feels essential. It reinforces mutual responsibility and dignity on both sides.

# Trusted Adult Identification Day at Christchurch School:

A Conversation with Kelly Goodrich, Director of Student Wellness

**OTA: How did you spearhead this work, and what kind of support or resources did you need to implement it?**

Kelly: This work actually began years ago, when I was a school nurse and teaching Life Skills to ninth graders. I had read the first edition of *One Trusted Adult*, and it was—no exaggeration—the most dog-eared, underlined book on my shelf. It was the first time I felt like I had language for something I intuitively knew mattered.

I brought the book to our administrators and said, “This should be part of what we’re teaching.” We piloted it with ninth graders first in Life Skills—they really took to the idea of identifying their Trusted Adults on campus, and loved the process of writing a brief thank you note to that adult. With that foundation laid, we took it a step further, asking students to tell us what worries they felt were most pressing for their age, instead of assuming we knew. Then we asked what they wanted from the adults in their lives: listening, understanding, not fixing everything. That experience was incredibly moving for the faculty.

From there, expanding it school-wide felt like a natural next step. We already had a weekly Community Engagement meeting built into the schedule, so we used that structure.

Before the school year starts, I also meet with faculty to introduce the framework and normalize any initial pushback.

Some teachers worried, “Does this mean more advisees?” And the answer was no. If a student chooses you, you’re already doing the work. This isn’t something extra—it’s naming what you’re already doing.



# Trusted Adult Identification Day at Christchurch School:

## A Conversation with Kelly Goodrich, Director of Student Wellness

### ***OTA: Many educators worry about time. How much time does this actually take, and why is it worth it?***

Kelly: The day itself takes one meeting—about 40 minutes total. The prep is minimal: index cards, envelopes, and a little coordination. Returning students even help pass materials out during our assembly. It takes me a few hours later to catalog the notes and pass them back out to the adults on campus.

What it saves us later is significant.

When a student is struggling, we don't start from scratch asking, "Who are the trusted adults for this child?" We already know. I can pull up the spreadsheet and immediately see who they've identified. That alone changes how quickly and effectively we can support them.

And the data over time has been striking. The students who identify the most trusted adults tend to be the ones who are thriving and well-adjusted. The students who don't identify any? They're often the ones already flagged as struggling.

That alone tells me this time is not optional—it's preventative care.

### ***OTA: What changes have you noticed in the culture of your school since implementing this?***

Kelly: The cultural shift has been profound. One simple example: the lunchroom. Years ago, faculty sat together at two tables in the corner. Now, by choice, adults sit dispersed throughout the space with students. It feels more inclusive, more relational, more human.

Trusted adult language is everywhere now. Teachers will say, "I'm noticing this student struggling—do you know who their trusted adult is?" Or, "When is Trusted Adult Day again?" And I remind them, "You don't have to wait!"

We've also noticed that art and music teachers are frequently identified as trusted adults. That tells us something important about vulnerability, creativity, and where students feel seen. It's also been powerful to see that students identify trusted adults across every role on campus—coaches, advisors, housekeeping, grounds staff. That breadth matters.

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**OTA: Is there a student story that really captures why this work matters?**

Kelly: One student stands out to me this year. A ninth grader who had a strong connection with his advisor early on when the year began, but later seemed to be shutting down. When we noticed he hadn't identified a trusted adult, we checked in.

It turned out he thought choosing someone new meant he was "replacing" a trusted teacher from middle school. Once he understood that he could name many trusted adults—that it wasn't a zero-sum decision—there was visible relief. It allowed him to merge communities instead of feeling like he had to leave one behind.

We've really learned the importance of emphasizing that "One Trusted Adult" is where we begin, it's the baseline, but we're also looking to help students feel an abundance of support throughout their time in our community.

**OTA: Anything else you'd want other schools to know as they consider this work?**

Kelly: I've seen other programs where adults choose students, and that never sat right with me. It can feel exclusionary. This work is different because it centers student agency and choice.

I've shared this approach at conferences and with colleagues across schools, and I genuinely believe this should be a basic requirement for healthy communities. It's a beautiful, intuitive process—and it works.

**Thank you, Kelly, for sharing your story and bringing the One Trusted Adult mission to the Christchurch School!**

**Keep reading for more resources on how to make this kind of impact possible in your community.**

# MAKING IT POSSIBLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

*Kelly's story is a powerful reminder that implementing trusted adult practices doesn't require perfection, a massive initiative, or new funding. It requires clarity, consistency, and a belief that relationships are foundational—not supplemental—to learning and well-being.*

*Stories like this are exactly why the second edition of the "One Trusted Adult" book is needed now. The updated edition includes expanded guidance, new examples from the field, and practical tools to help schools build cultures where every young person can name at least one trusted adult.*

*If you've ever wondered, "Could this really work at our school?"—Kelly's answer is a resounding yes.*

## RESOURCES & NEXT STEPS:

### 1 OPEN UP THE TRUSTED ADULT CONVERSATION WITH YOUR STUDENTS IN THIS FREE LESSON PLAN:

The Trusted Adult Identification Day Kelly describes is anchored by a short, powerful video—and you can access it for free!

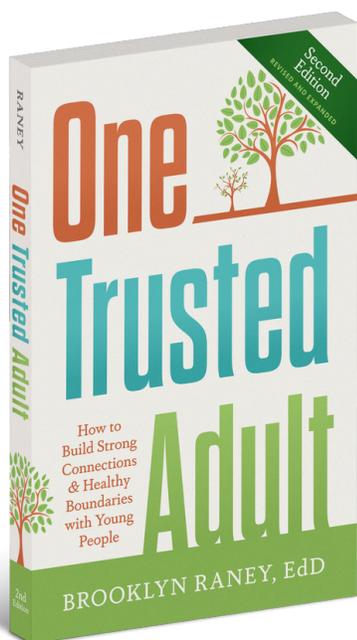
Our **ABCs of Trusted Adults** lesson plan includes:

- The "Why You Need a Trusted Adult" video Kelly references
- Discussion prompts and reflection activities

It's a simple way to introduce trusted adult language and student choice—whether you're just beginning this work or deepening it.



Scan QR code or visit [info.onetrustedadult.com/abcs-of-trusted-adults](http://info.onetrustedadult.com/abcs-of-trusted-adults)



### 2

### BOOK STUDY FOR YOUR TEAM: "ONE TRUSTED ADULT" SECOND EDITION

In this revised edition of *One Trusted Adult*, you'll find:

- A new research-backed framework for building trust and strengthening connection with young people
- Updated strategies for setting boundaries that protect young people while also supporting adults' long-term career sustainability
- A focus on possibility rather than problems, with an emphasis on making care for students visible and intentional
- Practical language to use in daily interactions
- Reflection questions, team-training tools, and concrete strategies for strengthening community

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