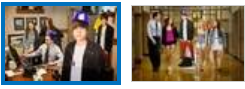


PUBLISHED FRIDAY, JULY 5, 2013 AT 12:30 AM / UPDATED AT 11:23 AM



BYRNN ANDERSON / THE WORLD-HERALD

Central High School Principal Keith Bigsby watches a video with Kaylee Land, 14, left, and Samantha Nocita, 15, about Justin Bieber and graduation back in May.

### Omaha City News

By [Jonathon Braden](#) / World-Herald staff writer

News Alerts +1 Like 5 Share

Saturday night, thousands of Beliebers will spend priceless moments with their hero, Justin Bieber.

Students at Omaha Central High, though, have been hanging with “Justin” for years.

They have seen him in the hallways, at Central basketball games and on their classroom televisions.

Bieber — actually a cardboard version of the pop star — has shown Central students how to always be on time and how to pursue their passions in life.

“WWJD?” their principal, Keith Bigsby, often asked the students. “What Would Justin Do?”

#### Related news

- Bieber fan donates concert tickets to another

Search



Approaching Obama scandal could bring shame to the White House not seen since President Clinton.



Myrtle Beach on sale. Save with room rates from \$69 per night & package specials at select resorts.



New Rule in Texas: If you pay for car insurance you better read this...

Advertisement

- Latest Popular Recommended

KANEKO names new executive director - 2:49 pm

Auditioning for 'Les Misérables' at Omaha Community Playhouse ... with 350 others - 2:48 pm

Annie, an employee keeps showing her butt crack! - 10:32 am

Omaha architect transforms woodland house into 'laboratory' - 9:39 am

Le Mars, Iowa, country fest seeking arts and crafts vendors, especially from Nebraska - 1:06 am

What to Watch: 'Bull Durham' - 1:23 pm

John Rosemond: Keeping kids safe from the dangers of technology - 1:26 pm

Little library marks a cool new chapter for neighborhood near Elmwood Park - 1:24 pm

Kenneth and its forms have Scots origins - 1:22 pm

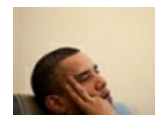
How to: Friendship bracelets - 6:08 pm



Approaching Obama scandal could bring shame to the White House not seen since President Clinton.



Pastor says he turned his father's \$40,000 retirement into \$396,000 by flipping this 'Obama blunder'



The End of Obama? Approaching scandal could change the White House Administration overnight...

Advertisement

Bieber's life at Central, while followed with laughter these days, began with serious intentions a couple of years ago. Bigsby and other administrators wanted to get students and teachers to stop thinking about an Omaha school shooting.

"We needed something to take their minds off of it," said Kelly Means, the school's business, marketing and IT department chairwoman. "It was consuming them."

It was January 2011, and a Millard South High School student had fatally shot the school's assistant principal and wounded the school's principal before killing himself. Schools across the metro area were reviewing security procedures and examining what they could do to prevent another shooting.

At Central, Bigsby said, students and teachers worried aloud: "How could this happen? What would we do if it happened here?"

Bigsby, sitting in his office, pondered what he and administrators could do to change the discussion. Near his desk, he noticed a gift that a student had given him years earlier: a Bieber calendar.

Bieber, the self-made Canadian youth turned global pop star, could distract the minds of teenage boys and girls.

In February, Bigsby and administrators conducted a hall sweep — a walk through the halls to tell kids to get to class. If students were tardy, they later had to stare at a calendar picture of Bieber and write five pages about what he was thinking.

Weeks later, a cardboard cutout of Bieber — red pants, black leather jacket — accompanied Bigsby on a hall sweep.

Students reacted with a "Huh?"

"Everyone was just kind of confused," said Jessica Vorthmann, who graduated from Central in May. "What is Dr. Bigsby doing?"

But after awhile, Vorthmann said, Bieber became a part of students' regular conversations. Just as they talked about break-ups and weekend plans, they talked about Bieber and what administrators were thinking of next.

Students wondered if Bieber's inclusion in Bigsby's morning announcement indicated there would be a hall sweep later that day. They also included Bieber in their regular lives, bringing him to football and basketball games.

Administrators continued the act as well.

They walked around the school, pointing to bracelets with four letters, "WWJD".

Justin would be on time, they said, he would make sure he got his homework done.

They played his song "Baby" over the intercom and at basketball games.

They also used Bieber in videos meant to motivate the students. One such video showed Bieber getting out of class but stopping to chat and snack before arriving late to his next class.

"Justin, you know the expectations here at Central," a teacher says to Bieber in the video. "You can't be late."

Columns 1 / 2

### Kenneth and its forms have Scots origins

Only in modern times can a Jewish guy with two Scottish given names become famous playing a Belgian instrument in an African-American style.



Lifestyle



Peter Walsh's Best De-cluttering Tips



"Cake Boss" Foolproof Brownie Tips



How to Steam Veggies in a Coffee Pot



Michelle Obama Hosts Kids' state Di...



**Smile Sciences**  
Teeth Whitening Kit

**DailyDealOmaha.com**  
Smile Sciences  
For \$29, you'll get the Smile Sciences Teeth Whitening Kit from Smile Sciences - a \$299 value!

**BUY NOW!**

### FROM THE BLOGS »

Jump to a blog: (Select blog) ▾

### SPOTLIGHT »



**We Love Weddings blog**  
WE Love Weddings is about everything Omaha and everything weddings by the editors of Wedding Essentials Magazine.

### WORLD-HERALD ALERTS »

Want to get World-Herald stories sent directly to your home or work computer? Sign up for Omaha.com's News Alerts and you will receive e-mails with the day's top stories.

Email:

- Breaking News
- Daily headlines newsletter
- Big Red Today
- GO - Entertainment news
- Momaha

The next frames show Bieber leaving class, skipping the chatter and chips and arriving to his next period on time. The videos also challenged students to do what Bieber did: become who you want to become.

Growing up in Stratford, Ontario, Canada, Bieber didn't have the backing of Disney and its cadre of executives. He had a computer, instruments and the desire to learn.

"The thinking being, this kid from Canada can do this, what's stopping you?" said Bigsby, who retires August 1.

This past school year, though, students saw less and less of Bieber.

He was often missing from his regular post in Bigsby's office, where he used to stand next to a glittery sign of photos of himself and the words, "BIGSBY <3s BIEBER" (Translation: Bigsby loves Bieber).

Reports of Bieber driving recklessly and drugs being found on his tour bus cooled the school's use of the pop star.

Bieber, the cardboard version, however, made his redemptive return to Central last week.

He still had an English credit to finish, Bigsby said, and the school made special arrangements for its former role model.

Bieber, who reportedly earned \$58 million in the past 12 months, made the Central students proud once more: He was a summer graduate.



Contact the writer: **Jonathon Braden**

[jonathon.braden@owh.com](mailto:jonathon.braden@owh.com) | 402-444-1074 | [Follow @jonathonbraden](#)

Jonathon writes about education, mostly the Omaha Public Schools, Nebraska's largest district.

Copyright ©2013 Omaha World-Herald. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, displayed or redistributed for any purpose without permission from the Omaha World-Herald. To purchase rights to republish this article, please contact [The World-Herald Store](#).

### We Recommend

- Omaha network provider has 1-gig project underway
- Bieber fans storm Westroads ahead of concert
- Woman's seizure before gunshots in ambulance may have been faked
- Woman dead following trench collapse at construction site near Waterloo
- Hunan Garden to close, Petrow's to use space
- Elkhorn boy, 12, is already on fast track

### From Around the Web

- Classic golf mistake amateurs make at the tee box [Square to Square Method](#)
- Learn What Vanessa Williams Discovered About Her Family History by Taking a DNA Test (PHOTO) [Ancestry.com](#)
- 8 College Degrees That Aren't Worth The Money [Salary.com](#)
- Actress' See-Through Polka Dot Dress Is a Red Carpet Disaster (PHOTO) [CafeMom](#)
- Michelle Obama's mixed race heritage proved by DNA. [Ancestry.com](#)
- 5 Dog Breeds That Are Sadly Losing Popularity [Vetstreet](#)

Recommended by



Add a comment...

Facebook social plugin

[Read more related stories](#)

**State Farm**  
Switch to State Farm and you could save up to \$480\* on auto insurance.  
[Get A Quote ▶](#)  
\*Legal



Bieber fan donates concert...

Can't find what you need? [Click here for site map »](#)

# Omaha.com

[Copyright](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Help](#) | [Apps](#)  
©2012 The Omaha World Herald. All rights reserved.

[webmaster@omaha.com](mailto:webmaster@omaha.com)

deliciously new.  
**unwrapped & waiting.**  
[get Bites coupon >](#)

