



The West Jefferson Hills School District strives to create a safe and supportive learning environment where ALL students feel welcomed and valued. Our core values promote Respect, Integrity and Empathy, and District Administrators have implemented several programs and initiatives to support diversity, equality and inclusion. The summary below is certainly not all inclusive, and we acknowledge that more work must be done.

- Designated as a **Common Sense Media.org** certified school district providing ongoing digital citizenship classes to teach all students responsible and appropriate online behavior and continue to teach lessons to all students every school year.
- **Second Step** social and emotional learning curriculum was established to provide weekly lessons on empathy, respect, positive relationships and anti-bullying for students in grades K-8. DESSA (Devereux Students Strengths Assessment) is administered three times a year to chart progress and provide specific interventions where needed. Second Step serves as a foundational approach to teaching students skills to interact positively with others, communicate effectively, make responsible decisions, handle difficult situations, manage emotions, and resolve problems regardless of ethnicity, social status, economic status, gender, religion, home and community environment, educational background, or personal experience.
- Hired 3 additional **Counselors** to support social-emotional learning and growth
- Enlisted expertise from Donald Sheffield, a former director of diversity outreach at the Pennsylvania State University, to meet with Administrators and student leaders and help formulate a cultural competency plan
- Assisted Thomas Jefferson High School students in forming a **Multicultural Student Union (MSU)**
- Recognized leaders and members of the TJHS MSU for their work during a high school assembly.

- Nominated and recognized one of the student leaders of the MSU for an award and held a ceremony with over 400 students from the high school in which the winner was presented a monetary award from a local radio station.
- Forged relationships with community advocates to spread unity -
  - *Ebtehal Badawi*, community member and artist, donated a painting that hangs in the new Thomas Jefferson High School entitled “Building Bridges” to celebrate diversity and inclusion. Ms. Badawi’s mission is to spread her message of building bridges across all cultures to create unity and celebrate diversity throughout the Pittsburgh region.
  - *NAACP PA President Ken Huston* spoke to members of TJ MSU on the importance of educating and celebrating each other on cultural differences. He encouraged students to be respectful and engage in thoughtful discussions regarding cultural differences, and to strive to be the solution to any issues that they may encounter. At the end of his presentation, Mr. Huston took the time to answer questions, challenged students to be positive leaders in the school and serve others to make our community and our world a better place.
- **Dignity & Respect Campaign** - The “Dignity & Respect Campaign” focuses on introducing staff and students to behaviors that help to create an environment of dignity, respect, and engagement to promote inclusion through behavioral and organizational change. The program started at UPMC, as the founding sponsor, in November 2008 and is now in more than 100 organizations, schools, and communities. Our staff and students work together to explore and implement the Seven Pillars of Dignity and Respect through purposeful discussions and planned events in our school buildings. Before the students started classes last year, Candi Castleberry-Singleton, founder of the Dignity and Respect Campaign and the current Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity for Twitter, Inc., along with program representatives, led members of the administration and select staff through intense certification training. TJHS faculty and staff were trained to begin program implementation during the first days of school. A student committee was chosen from various clubs, activities, and athletic teams. This committee’s role is to create new and effective ways to introduce the student body to the “30 Tips” and the “Seven Pillars” that are the core components of the program.

- Hired Morris Turner as a part-time cultural advisor for PHMS and TJHS to support the implementation of the Dignity & Respect Campaign and educate our students on issues of cultural competency
  - Added Derrick Turner to work three days a week at PHMS to collaborate with our Dignity and Respect Staff Team of Dr. McCauley, Mr. McCabe, Mrs. Taylor and Mr. Como to plan and implement lessons for the students.
  - Taught students the 30 Tips for Dignity and Respect, introduced during grade-level meetings. Follow-up occurred in small group settings. Thirty students were selected as Dignity and Respect Champions as role models for their fellow students. Another 30 students were chosen later in the year. Responsibilities grew to promoting and sharing the 30 Tips.
  - Held follow-up, grade-level meetings in late January and early February to revisit the 30 tips and Jaguar PRIDE expectations. School ended on March 13.
- Modified District Policies to reflect our commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion -
  - Student Code of Conduct clearly outlines disciplinary measures enforced for incidents involving hateful speech, harassment, or bullying due to an individual's race, creed, sex, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
  - Addendum added to address "gangs or hate groups" in Student Code of Conduct
  - Addendum added to Discipline Matrix to address violations of bullying or discrimination involving hateful speech, harassment, or bullying due to a individual's race, creed, sex, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
  - Resolution No. 383-20 will be approved at the July 21, 2020 school board meeting which supports the development of an anti-racist school climate
- Planned and organized a *WJHSD Family Multicultural Night* for April 23, 2020, to celebrate diversity which had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 but will be held during the 2020-2021 school year
- **The Best Buddies** program at TJHS debuted at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year with the intent of rolling out to the entire district in upcoming school years. Best Buddies International is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development, and inclusive living for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

- The **CHILL Project** is a mindfulness-informed and preventative school-based behavioral health program serving students, staff and families within the West Jefferson Hills School District community. Dr. William C. Davies, Program Supervisor for the CHILL Project at AHN, began working with the District to implement the CHILL Project at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year. The CHILL Project is staffed with two dedicated counselors who lead mindfulness training in the CHILL Mindfulness Room and educate students to use mindfulness in all areas of their daily life. All grade-level social studies classes at Pleasant Hills Middle School participated in weekly mindfulness lessons within the CHILL Room to equip students with additional skills to help them navigate stress and anxiety as well as overcome any issues they might be facing at home or at school. The CHILL project expanded to TJHS and JHS during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Issued a joint statement on the district website with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) along with all 42 school districts and five career and technical centers (CTCs) in suburban Allegheny County on Friday, June 5, 2020, reaffirming our organizations' commitment to students and families of all backgrounds, and standing against acts of prejudice and racism
- Conducted district-wide staff training on trauma-informed care and suicide awareness and prevention as well as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; the DEI Training is part of a 14-hour comprehensive district training program developed by Mr. Ron Idoko, Diversity & Multi-Cultural Program Manager of The University of Pittsburgh on the topic of "Diversity Consciousness to Foster Anti-Racist Practices, Culture, and Communities"

The WJHSD will continue to provide programs that reaffirm our commitment to students and families of ALL backgrounds and will not tolerate acts of prejudice, racism or inequality. Although we have accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time, there is still more work to be done. We plan to continue these critical conversations in our schools and community and share our plan for moving forward.