

# MONONGALIA COUNTY DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION NEWSLETTER

## “EVERYBODY IS WELCOME HERE”



### Monongalia County celebrates a new school year with the theme “Everybody is Welcome Here”

*Monongalia County Schools is committed to providing a mutually respectful educational environment that is welcoming to all individuals from diverse backgrounds that promotes individual development, intellectual growth, and responsible citizenship.*

This year Monongalia County Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee will celebrate themes through the different months of the year to promote the teaching and observation of different cultures throughout the year.



In September we are starting off with the theme “Everybody is Welcome Here.” The focus of “Everybody is Welcome Here” is to create an environment where all of our students feel welcomed in Monongalia County Schools for who they are as individuals.

The United States of America is made up of different diverse cultures from all over the world and the same can be said for Monongalia County. We have students and families from all over the world. It is important that we are educating and giving students the opportunity to learn about different cultures as well as teaching about their own.

We will spend this month learning about how we are all be part of Monongalia county schools, but we all have our own unique culture that we come from. As a school system we want to show that all cultures and backgrounds are welcomed in our school system.

### September Observations

- Hispanic Heritage Month-Sept. 15-Oct. 15
- Deaf Awareness Week-Last week in Sept.

For questions or more information please contact:

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### WHAT IS MY SCHOOL DOING THIS MONTH

## PARENT CORNER

*The parent corner is optional reading for parents that are looking for additional resources or ideas at home. Monongalia county schools in only providing optional resources and respects everyone's differences.*

The theme, "Everybody is welcome here" teaches our students about acceptance of others.

Acceptance is not something that we should talk or discuss with our kids every once in a while. It is something that should be a part of our daily discussions with our kids.

Having daily discussions can help our children understand and appreciate differences. It will help encourage respect for others and developing a deeper understanding of self.

Penn State University created an inclusivity toolkit to help parents teach their kids about Acceptance. Here is the link ([Inclusivity \(psu.edu\)](https://psu.edu)) Some general tips from the toolkit are:

- **Be a good example-** The first step for effective teaching is being a good example. Demonstrate respect and consideration for all—regardless of their difference. Take moments throughout the day to find teachable moments and conversations with your child.
- **Be available-** Make time for discussion and meaningful dialog with your child. When questions arise, be prepared to put other issues aside and show genuine interest in their thoughts and experiences. Always be available for more discussion. This will communicate that it is okay to notice and discuss anything, so long as it is done with respect.
- **Be prepared-** Whether you are a parent, grandparent, teacher or caregiver of any kind, it is a good idea to think about diversity issues in advance so you are neither surprised, nor embarrassed and can respond to sensitive topics with care and confidence.
- **Be age appropriate-** At an early age, children can be reminded that people are different in many ways. It is rare to find two people who look, sound, or act alike.

"We are all people, and our differences are normal. Look at the children in your school. They are all children, going to school together, but do any of them look like you, or like exactly the same things that you like?"

Discussions of this kind can pave the way for more sensitive topics as they grow and develop.

There are more tips and resources in the toolkit listed above.

### Talking to your teenager

It is usually easier to talk and teach your adolescent child about acceptance. Having these conversations with your teenager can be a little more difficult.

Social pressures can come into play. Teens often form groups or have a group of close friends. These groups are often held together by similar interests.

Teens are more likely to conform to one another and diversity can at times seem threatening. Sometimes it can be hard for teens to formulate their own thoughts outside of their group of friends.

Here are some things that parents can do to help teach acceptance:

- **Help broaden their social circle-** Try and find ways to give your teen opportunities to participate in extra-curricular, community and volunteer activities that may bring them into contact with people outside of their regular group of friends. Not only can this help with opportunities for more diversity, but this can help with the feeling to conform if they have different social groups.
- **Monitor media-** Technology is a big part of our everyday lives and even a bigger part of a teenager's life. While parents generally spend less time overseeing a teens media use, it is still important to occasionally monitor what they are doing and watching.

These days kids are being flooded with different amounts of information through these different media platforms that may be different from your own thoughts and views. Being aware of what your teenager is doing can help with promoting acceptance.

- **Keep talking to your teen-** Having conversations with your teenager is important. Look for daily teaching opportunities to have conversations to get their thoughts and opinions on certain topics.

It is also important to give your thoughts and opinions too as they can have an impact on them.

Remember that they may have different viewpoints than you and that is okay. Don't turn it into an argument. Listen to what they are saying and seeing their perspective. It will help keep the door open for further conversations in the future.

### Preview to next Month

October is "Language is unique all over the world"

This month will focus on the unique languages that are all over the world and in Monongalia County. We will also talk about the benefits of learning a second language and how you can support this at home with your kid(s).

### October Observations

- Down Syndrome Awareness Month
- Global Diversity Awareness Month
- Italian-American Heritage Month
- LGTB History Month
- National German-American Day- Oct. 6th
- National Stop Bullying Day- Second Wednesday in Oct.

*\*Please note that these are not all observations throughout the month. If any were missed that relates to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion it was not intentional\**

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## *What is being done at Westwood Middle School*

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We are so excited to have our Warriors back in the building and happy to welcome out new students to the building. It is so awesome to just be a family again!! We look forward to building lasting relationships and friendships and can't wait to get started with this awesome new year!



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## *Whole school activity will be.*

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Students, through their academic enrichment classes, will spend time working together discussing our September theme "ALL ARE WELCOME HERE".

Students will talk about what it means to be welcome in a new place and how their values and traditions can be a great contribution to the Westwood family. At Westwood, we want to show our new students that this school is a safe and exciting place and also remind our older students that they are still part of an amazing family.

Our activity for this month focuses on how we all fit together and how we can take time to welcome each other back to school. Teachers will spend time discussing with students what it means to feel welcome. They will then make puzzle pieces that will fit together to create many hearts around the halls of the school. These puzzle pieces will include ways that our students feel welcome! We can't wait to share the results!!!



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## Grade Level Activities

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The Westwood Middle School Counseling Department started the school year with a renewed focus on achieving student inclusion and equity in access to resources. This commitment towards guaranteeing the equitable provision of resources began with a concerted effort aimed at ensuring all students attained awareness of, and explicit instructional methods on how to procure, myriad supports, interventions, and resources.

Our counselors met with our students over the course of three days, and across 18 separate class periods, to review with students the

**6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers spent the first few weeks of school getting to know our students. We spent time learning about them and their lives, and welcoming them back to school. We gave our students the opportunities to learn about each other and just reconnect in a school setting. These students were so excited to spend time together and just socialize. It was very nice to see them jump right back into the school setting, but also feel safe to be here. We can't wait to continue to enjoy fun activities with our students and also get back into the swing of learning.**

breadth and range of supports and resources they're entitled to as cherished members of our Westwood family. Our counselors placed particular emphasis on underscoring that all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, or gender identity, were valued and would be supported without reservation. Additionally, an emphasis was placed on a need for students to treat each other equitably and considerately as well, regardless of personal differences, so that we can work together to foster the kind of environment they themselves would feel safe, comfortable, and proud to work and learn in. Our counselors as well as the teachers and staff will continue working diligently to contribute to a range of equity and inclusion initiatives in order to build upon this foundation as the school year progresses.

