Reinforcing Strength in Our School Community

Brent Elementary 2015-2016

Brave Empathetic Active Responsible
Having a Cohesive Community Helps Students - and Everyone - Feel Safe and Happy at School

Having open dialogue about expectations - and communicating clearly about what we need - supports cohesion.
Students in schools with a strong sense of community are more likely:

• to be academically motivated (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000);

• to act ethically and altruistically (Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997);

• to develop social and emotional competencies (Solomon et al., 2000);

• and to avoid a number of problem behaviors, including drug use and violence (Resnick et al., 1997).
And Anecdotally:
We’re All in This Together

Teachers and Staff

Students

Families
Student Satisfaction: 96%

Kids mostly report feeling safe and happy

- It’s safe because people care and are looking out for us.
- I think my school is the Following because there are teachers EVERYWHERE YOU GO.
- This school is pretty good already, I can’t think of any improvements.

But they also report some tension and unfairness

- Don’t give some students special things and other students not.
- I don’t feel calm because people talk so loud. Some kids act rudely.
- Make sure every kid gets enough attention. Not just the really really smart kid or the struggling kids but the kids in the middle.
Classroom and School-Wide Rules

• Each class uses a gradual, democratic process to draft, discuss, and agree on classroom rules that will meet everyone’s needs and keep everyone safe.

• Having ownership over the rules helps them to be meaningful to students.

• This is much like the norm-setting process that many adult organizations use to establish shared expectations.

• This year, a group of classroom delegates is also translating the classroom rules into school-wide rules for Brent’s common spaces.

Helpful for families!
Book Buddy Classes

• Each class has a book buddy class!
• Book Buddy gatherings promote community, foster a love of reading, and provide opportunities for meaningful exchange
• A wide age range is lovely, but not required
• Book Buddies gather for reading and other activities periodically each month
Community Meetings

• All-School Meetings provide a way to build community by gathering the whole school together in a morning-meeting like structure

• Community meetings provide an opportunity for students to meet and share with others outside their grade
Community Meetings

• This has been a goal at Brent for years! 😊

• At Brent, we will prepare to hold our first all-school community meeting in December

• Eventually, families will be invited to join in!
Class Names & Banners

The Goals:

* By collectively creating a class name, students have a voice in identifying and sharing their class’ personality, interests, and/or learning goals.

* Students become more invested in their classroom community, and help to foster school spirit.
Class Names & Banners
bravery
The quality that allows someone to do things that are frightening; having courage in the face of fear.
How Bravery is Useful at School

Intellectual bravery is needed to push through challenges and approach new learning.

Social bravery is needed to make new friends, to reach across differences and make connections.

Moral bravery is needed to make true-to-yourself choices in the face of peer pressure, and to stand up for what’s right.

“If you are not brave then you will never try new things.”
– Amelia Solomon
The righteous struggle to try to understand what another is feeling by taking their perspective.

From the Greek word “epatheia” meaning passion.
How Empathy is Useful at School

• When we try to take another’s perspective, we are more likely to act in ways that are supportive and unifying.

• When we approach a problem from an empathetic stance, we are more likely to reach a solution that will work for all.
empathy

- teachers
- student
- student
- family
How Can Community-Building Work Be Supported From Home?

• Model approaching problems from an empathetic stance.
• Ask not only about your student, but about your students’ community at the end of the day.
• Encourage students to try new things, take intellectual risks, and not fear mistakes.
• Reach out to one another in a spirit of positivity.