



The Central Bucks Schools will provide all students with the academic and problem-solving skills essential for personal development, responsible citizenship, and life-long learning.

December 21, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

As a teacher for the past 16 years in Central Bucks School District, I would like to share information about an initiative which has been one of the most powerful in my teaching career. In 2018 my principal, Tim Donovan, approached me and asked if I would be one of two teachers who would assist with the Anti-Defamation League training as part of a preventative strategy for our High School. I was hesitant since I was already involved in many food insecurity activities, and I wasn't sure how I would have the time for one more initiative. The training ended up being one of the best experiences of my life and I often reflect on how powerful it was for me as well as the students who joined me on the training. As a result of the ADL training, we formed a group called West Ambassadors, and it was our goal to continue to share the messages from ADL in the classrooms. We started with a small group of students our first year and as we moved into the 2019-20 school year. Although the pandemic hit us in March 2020, we felt strongly about our purpose and we found a way to host a virtual Diversity Panel, moderated by a professor from Penn State. As we entered into the 2020-21 school year, we decided that we need more structure around our group, and we changed the name to West United and created a [mission statement](#) to guide us as we grew. We applied for status to the No Place for Hate organization, and we hosted a Unity Day, with the help of [Thom Stecher and Associates](#). Once again, we managed to do this through our hybrid setting, having half of our students in the building and the other half that participated from home. The Unity Day was such a productive event that we signed up for two more in the 2021-22 school year. Unity Day is now known as Student Voice Day, but the purpose is the same: to provide a voice for all students in our school so that each student feels connected. What I learned along the way, based on the research from Dr. Karen Osterman from Hofstra University, is that the more we learn about others, the less likely we are to do harm to others. It is this message which propels me forward with my work. As a teacher, I chose this profession as a second career since I want to make this world a better place. I can't think of a better way to achieve my mission than through helping students learn more about each other and our mission at West United.

Over the past four years, I am so proud of the work that the students have done. With the support of our principals, Lyndell Davis, Frank Pustay, and Justin Rubenstein, and most importantly my counterpart, Alison Stone, our students have been able to complete the following initiatives.

1. Diversity Panel moderated by Penn State professor – this event elevated 6 different voices from our school and helped to discuss issues facing teens in our community.
2. Student Voice Day (Unity Day) – 5 events completed with a 6th occurring in April 2023. This full day event has proven to be not only a fun event, but a productive one since we walk about with a plan of how to make our community better for all students. It is the work from SVD that helps to provide West United with initiatives to work on throughout the school year.

3. Mentoring program – we have partnered with Lenape Middle School to educate younger students about kindness and acceptance and train their student leaders to run their own Student Voice Day.
4. Food and culture - we partnered with a local organization called Bucks Embrace to promote/attend their events which focus on learning about culture through food. We spend time eating food from various cultures and learning the story behind the owner and the power of food as it relates to culture.
5. Art and culture – we had art students prepare artwork that we linked to quotes about acceptance and kindness towards others; these pieces were highlighted in our Canvas Announcements on Tuesdays.
6. World Kindness Day Event – we purchased 500 Kind Bars handed them out and asked students to “Pay it Forward” in an effort to create a positive ripple effect. We highlighted some of the stories on our Friday news show and created a visual display with a bulletin board highlighting how one small act of kindness can lead to a better community for all.
7. Social Media /Instagram promotion
 1. @cb_west_united – used to celebrate holidays, events, or student initiatives.
 2. @humansofcbw –highlighting stories of West students to learn more about each other.

The following initiatives grew from SVD to combat mental health issues facing all of our teens at West:

1. Agenda Books – purchased and provided to students in an effort to reduce schoolwork anxiety.
2. Student Services – we renamed our Guidance department to Student Services so that we can create a more welcoming environment for all students.
3. Brain Breaks for students – we continue to create ideas to share with teachers for a more interactive school environment. Teachers are also helping to create a playbook for break/SEL ideas for other teachers to use. This is a collaborative effort among students and teachers.

As I review the list of activities that have come together since 2018, I feel strongly that I want the students commended in this journey. I feel so strongly that I feel as if it worth repeating. The students are why we have been able accomplish all that we have to date. They have been able to push through some of the most difficult situations to achieve our goals. I am forever in awe of their grit and determination, and I am so hopeful for our future. They will change our world for the better. I also reflect on the challenges that they have been able to navigate including Covid and virtual learning, funding issues, and our current political environment in a swing state. These challenges fueled the students to work harder towards our mission. In fact, two students, [Amanda](#) and [Claire](#), prepared testimonials so that we can continue to share our message with anyone who wants to learn more about our work.

If you have any questions about our programs or initiatives, please don't hesitate to contact me at 215-534-1203. I would be happy to share more about these amazing students and programs which I am thankful that I have an opportunity to work with each year.

Sincerely,



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