

# From the Principal



Dear WHS Families,

I certainly hope that Spring Break proved to be restful and rejuvenating for everyone! As we settle back into our daily routines, I am reminded of how truly special our school is and how we strive to build a strong sense of community here at WHS. You know that you are an important piece of that puzzle as we teach our children to make good choices and spread goodness by being a *bucket filler*, which is a concept we adopted about eight years ago when we first introduced our school community to the work of author, Carol McCloud.

As a character-based school, we have instituted many other initiatives that reinforce good values. Some rich examples of how we have consistently tried to influence and shape behavior have been through our annual school-wide thematic units. Each year, we have taken the topic and have examined the moral messages that were embedded in each of our character, book, or author studies.

Another important part of our lexicon is found in the discussions surrounding the components of our R-E-S-P-E-C-T acronym, which are norms that the faculty adopted with me over a decade ago. This behavioral code outlines our schools' expectations as we teach students to show respect for **R**ules, **E**veryone, **S**chool, **P**roperty, **E**nvironment, **C**ommunity, & **T**eamwork.

We also utilize the Kelso-the-Frog conflict resolution wheel, which is prominently displayed on posters in all rooms. Our guidance counselor, Mrs. Debbie DeBaro, regularly refers to it when she counsels students or facilitates mediation discussions between children.

In the fall, we decided to examine our practices, approaches, and beliefs with regard to building social and emotional skills in our school population. We convened a committee of staff members and I have been meeting with them several times a month as we outline a broad and comprehensive plan for social and emotional learning at Whitehouse School. You will learn more about our plan as time passes and we unfold more aspects of it. This committee is being co-chaired with me by Mr. Anthony Tumolo and Mrs. Alisa Swider. Other staff members who have devoted their time and talent to this panel include Mrs. Debbie DeBaro, Miss Jessica Marczyk, and Mrs. Jennifer Heppner. Jack Heppner has also assumed the role of student representative during our meetings!

As a school, we have placed a high value on specific social and emotional skills. We were so committed to these tenets that several years ago, we merged them with our *bucket filler* initiative and had them painted on the walls of our *Reflection Ramp* by a professional artist through a Home School Association grant (*honesty, loyalty, friendliness, responsibility, helpfulness, thoughtfulness, kindness, fairness, caring, & trustworthiness*). Now, we want to enhance these efforts by helping students begin to set goals, self-assess, and become more involved in their own social and emotional development.

WHITEHOUSE NEWS

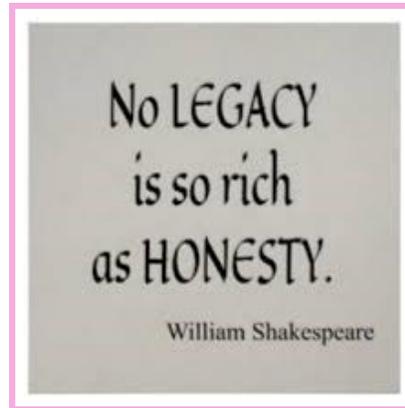
"Home of the Cubs!"

Please join us as we help students evaluate themselves more formally. This month's character trait is *honesty*. We are sending home a handout that contains on one side an *honesty* puzzle in the form of a bucket, courtesy of Mrs. Jennifer Heppner! The other side lists our definition of *honesty* and offers some indicators or examples of how children can demonstrate *honest* behavior. Please communicate with your child this month as he/she tracks and reflects upon his/her individual efforts with the concept of *honesty*. When your child returns the sheet to school at the end of the month, each puzzle piece that is colored will represent an act of *honesty* on his/her part. We ask that you then provide a score and a signature (Please see the bottom of the puzzle sheet that was sent through backpack mail.) We will also be monitoring our progress as a school!

We are excited to be partnering with you in this focused manner and hope that our monthly character buckets serve as the impetus for many more worthwhile conversations both in school and in your home as we work together to reinforce the same teachings!

Warmly,

Ann T. DeRosa, Ed.D.



### **Districts Strategic Planning Goals 2015-2016**

- Enhance students' social, global and intellectual engagement.
- Create a vibrant learning environment for students and staff.
- Create a culture of collaborative partnerships in and around our community.
- Ensure institutional and financial sustainability in the face of economic and demographic challenges.



### **Mission Statement**

Dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, Readington Township Schools will nurture and challenge all students in a safe and innovative learning community. By encouraging respect and responsibility, students will become self-directed life-long learners who reach their greatest potential. It is the expectation of this school district that all pupils achieve the Common Core Curriculum Standards at all levels.