



“The Quote”

web: www.westirondequoit.org

March 2022

Dake students' song: 'Differences Are Beautiful'

The culminating project for a section of Lindsay Porter's eighth-grade English class was for students to create an original piece of social commentary or analyze a social commentary from an author. The assignment followed classwork that included students reading texts together and individually, then dissecting and discussing the author's social message and what societal factors may have impacted that message.

“We were just expecting to write a song for a class and thought it'd be fun,” says student, Elisa Pacyga.

Elisa and classmate Abigail Summerlin produced what their teacher calls “a masterpiece.” The powerful song, “Differences Are Beautiful,” is about kindness, equality and loving oneself. It's also a reflection of what the girls have learned through life, from their families and in class with Porter and Dake music teacher, Marc Falco. It's 2 minutes and 49 seconds long and a look at the world through Elisa and Abi's eyes.

“Their analysis is beautiful because it's all about how their identities

impacted what they created and the message they wanted to send to the world,” Porter says.

It's a by-product of West Irondequoit's work with Dr. Jevon Hunter, a SUNY Buffalo professor with experience in Culturally Relevant



Left to right: Eighth-grade classmates and friends, Elisa Pacyga and Abigail Summerlin.

Education. He has served as a district consultant over the past 18 months. Porter is one of the teachers who has been impacted by Hunter. “One of the biggest things I am taking away from my work with Dr. Hunter is the importance of identity and curriculum being culturally relevant to (students),” Porter told the West Irondequoit Board of Education during a special presentation at its Feb. 3rd study session. “We are analyzing texts: Who is the author? What is the author's race and various identities, coming up with the determination: Are these texts culturally relevant for eighth-graders at Dake?”

The ultimate goal is to answer this question: Is our English curriculum culturally relevant and inclusive? “Part of that work is,” Porter says,

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A Message from the Superintendent



I recently read an article in the *Wall Street Journal* about the importance of having a mantra. A mantra is a statement of purpose or what some call “the why” of an organization or person. The gist of the article was that by having an emotionally compelling mantra, one that connects directly to your heart, you're much more likely to weather unforeseen challenges that might otherwise knock you off-kilter.

The statements “All Means All” and “Each Child Belongs To All Of Us” are often heard and seen in communications around the district. Both convey the essence of our collective mantra that we're all in for every child. That love is what binds us and keeps us moving forward.

Last fall, we kicked off a plan to move us forward in that service. That Strategic Plan is called “Choosing to Rise.” Centered on the pillars of Curriculum, Instruction, Implementation Systems, and Well-being of Self and Community, our five-year plan is off to a great start. The stories in this edition and highlights across our social media showcase how this plan pushes us toward improved alignment and refinement of practice. Thanks to a unified effort, we're challenging ourselves to stay sharp and keep our eye on the prize, our children.

As we move forward together, please continue to ask questions and we'll share feedback. Discussion helps us reconsider, affirm and adjust to make the best decisions for all.

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BUDGET VOTE DETAILS ON BACK COVER!

New roles and a new Transportation Director

The West Irondequoit CSD has welcomed one new employee to District Office and two others have shifted roles. Here is more on each.



Kathy Blair – Director of Transportation

Ms. Blair arrives with extensive experience in the transportation field after working for Monroe One BOCES for 24 years. She replaces Ms. Mary Jo Nugent. A lifelong Irondequoit resident, Ms. Blair has worked as an Assistant Transportation Director for BOCES since 2017.




Jenna Lustig – Secretary to the Superintendent / District Clerk

Mrs. Lustig shifts from her role as secretary to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to work more closely with Superintendent, Aaron Johnson, and our Board of Education. She replaces Mrs. Patty Kelly, who retired after 12 years serving the district. Mrs. Lustig has worked in West Irondequoit for 2½ years.



Kelly Santora – Director of Data, Assessments & Interventions

Mrs. Santora has been Principal of Listwood and Southlawn elementary schools for the past 3½ years. She was appointed to this new position in mid-February, and to ensure a smooth end to this school year will continue to lead Listwood/Southlawn before starting her new role July 1, 2022. 

Superintendent's Message *Continued from the cover*

To close, I must celebrate our remarkable staff and their ongoing commitment to all. Thanks to the connections and direction they provide each day, our students continue to progress in their levels of independence, critical thinking, and care for themselves and others. As reflected by the wisdom of baseball great Jackie Robinson, a person's greatest accomplishment is the impact they have on others. When our staff says All Means All, they genuinely mean it.

Aaron R. Johnson, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Quote Notes

FOOD SERVICE APPLICATION
Although the USDA has announced that all breakfasts and lunches will be free to all students for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year, we are advising all parents to fill out a free and reduced application anyway. If you are approved, the benefit will carry over for the first month and a half of the 2022-2023 school year. Free and Reduced applications can be found at westirondequoit.org under "Food Services," West Irondequoit District Office, 321 List Ave., and also in the Main Office of all schools.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION
The deadline to register a child for the 2022-23 school year is April 1st. Our orientations were held in March. Letters with information were mailed home and emailed to families with eligible children. Students are eligible for our full-day kindergarten program in September 2022 if they will be 5 years of age on or before Dec. 1, 2022. Registration is accepted by emailing completed forms and supporting documentation to registrar@westiron.monroe.edu or by mailing them to 321 List Avenue, Rochester, NY 14617. Questions? Call the registrar's office at 336-6743.

'TUCK EVERLASTING' AT IHS ON MARCH 24-27
This year's Irondequoit High School spring musical is "Tuck Everlasting," a classic story that happens to also be a book read by sixth-graders in our district. It's family-oriented and filled with humor and sentimentality and accompanied by a beautiful (and foot-pounding) folk-meets-Broadway musical score. IHS students are excited to share their performance with the community. They hope to see you in IHS Auditorium March 24-27! Show times are below.

Buy tickets in advance at:
www.ShowTix4U.com!

- Thursday-Saturday, March 24-26 at 7 p.m.
- Sunday, March 27, 2 p.m.



**WEST IRONDEQUOIT
VOTED BEST
PUBLIC SCHOOL**
Congratulations!



Black History Month around the district

West Irondequoit students engaged in a variety of learning experiences during Black History Month to expand and deepen their knowledge of contributions and achievements of Black Americans.

Through our approach to ensuring that daily instruction is inclusive and diverse, we have begun the process of revising our curriculum. In addition, we continue to identify student centered, authentic experiences during our heritage months that celebrate each culture, perspective, and voice. Here are some highlights from our celebrations of Black History Month:

K-12 Librarians created displays in the building libraries, featuring novels, non-fiction books, and poetry by black authors.

At the 7-12 level this February, students engaged with texts written by black authors, as well as texts featuring current and historical black figures; classes used such texts to have deeper discussions about culture, race, and racism in our world today. The IHS Black Student Union organized daily announcements on the IHS Morning Show to highlight quotes from black figures throughout history, and the IHS Mosaics Club is planning a day of racial healing for March.

Rogers sixth-grade Humanities classes studied Harlem Renaissance literature and music. Additionally, many 6th graders researched three west African kingdoms – Ghana, Mali and Songhai – building their

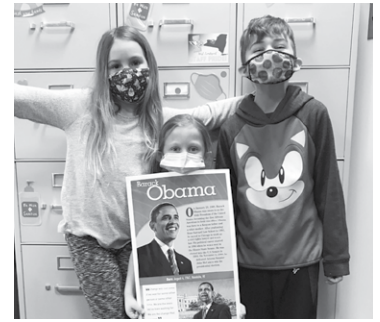
awareness and understanding of the rich cultures, technological achievements, and complex government structures established in these kingdoms.

“They were complex civilizations that made significant contributions to the entire Mediterranean world at that time,” says Ms. Claire Hamilton, a fifth- and sixth-grade Teacher On Special Assignment.

Briarwood School second-graders shared details about black American leaders such as President Barack Obama (see picture), during daily morning announcements.

At Colebrook, Teacher Leader Ms. Jennifer Bonfanti led an “Agents of Change” unit that spotlighted activism, social justice and the power of voice – all from the perspective of elementary students. Children read stories and held discussions that highlighted those themes. The entire school contributed to posters, sharing how they can use their voice for change.

Listwood second-graders learned about different music each week and held a “community” meeting at the end of February to share what they liked and learned. 📺



“Differences Are Beautiful” *Continued from the cover*

“that you have to understand yourself and your culture before you can even get to know other people’s and learn about (their) identities and cultures.”

The self-reflection isn’t lost on Elisa, 14, and Abi, 13, strong students with a love for music. The classmates and friends have collaborated on a few songs. “Differences Are Beautiful” took about two weeks to write. They recorded it on a basic recording/mixing digital program at Elisa’s house. For inspiration, the girls credit being part of Falco’s “Sound Crowd” music club. “(Elisa) wrote the first verse and kind of set the tone,” Abi says.

The first time Porter heard the girls sing it in class she “bawled.” Elisa and Abi didn’t realize hushed classmates also were listening. “Third-period class gave them a standing ovation,” Porter says.

Like most children, the girls admit their own families have shaped them. For her part, Elisa says her mother, Trina, helped inspire her. Her mother is Puerto Rican.

“Just stories I’ve heard and personal experiences and my Mom’s experiences and me just wanting to send the message that it doesn’t matter who you are or what you look like,” Elisa says when asked about her mindset. “Other people shouldn’t define you, who you are or how people look at you.” 📺

‘Differences Are Beautiful’

Lyrics by Dake Jr. HS students Elisa Pacyga & Abigail Summerlin

Who are you to say
The skin that someone’s born in isn’t OK
Who are you to say
That people who don’t look like you
Deserve a lower pay

(Chorus) The pain and the hurt
That you cause through your words
Does that make you feel satisfied?
How ‘bout we switch the roles
Take away your control
All your hopes and freedoms denied

What’s it gonna take
For people to wake up and see, the reality
How long do we wait to
Recognize the change
That we need to see
When will you face the truth?
Differences are beautiful

It’s all a highlight reel
So don’t let “picture perfect people”
Define how you feel
It’s all a highlight reel
Tearing people down
But they won’t reveal

(Chorus) The pain and the hurt
That you cause through your words
Does that make you feel satisfied?
How ‘bout we switch the roles
Take away your control
All your trust and feelings aside

You can watch a music video of the girls singing this song on the West Irondequoit CSD YouTube channel via this link: bit.ly/WICSD_YouTube or just search “West Irondequoit CSD” on YouTube.



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Dr. Aaron Johnson

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Mrs. Jenna Lustig, District Clerk

Ms. Lucie Graziano, Student Representative
Mr. Colton Mantha, Student Representative
Ms. Ava Palo, Student Representative

Newsletter Editor
Mr. Jeff DiVeronica

Annual District Vote & Election

Tuesday, May 17, 2022
6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Vote Location:
St. Paul Blvd. Fire Dept.
433 Cooper Rd.

Candidates' Night:
Monday, May 2

Check the district website for details on the location. There are two Board of Education positions up for election this year. Candidates' nominating petitions are due to the district clerk by 5 p.m. April 18, 2022.

Budget Hearing:
Thursday, May 5, 7 p.m.

The Board of Education will hold a Budget Hearing to share details of the proposed budget. Additional presentations may be scheduled. Check the district website (westirondequoit.org) or call 585-336-3067 for updates. We expect there will be opportunities to ask questions at the Budget Hearing.

Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots are available for those who qualify, contact District Clerk Jenna Lustig at 585-336-2983 or jenna_lustig@westiron.monroe.edu.

Questions? Call 585-342-5500

Analyzing and developing the best Instructional Model

There are many layers to our five-year Strategic Plan that kicked off this school year, and one of the critical tasks for Curriculum & Instruction in Year 1 has been to develop a K-12 instructional framework. It must be accessible to all students, staff and families and implemented consistently district-wide. This work is being done in four phases this school year.

1. Gather perception data through faculty meetings and school-based planning teams.
2. Observational data: What practices are used most consistently and with fidelity?
3. Research: What instructional model practices/components are supported most by research?
4. Creation of a K-12 Instructional Model.

Phase 1 was executed September through December. We gathered input from our faculty and charted what they said about our current instructional model. At the elementary level, the most consistently identified components of an instructional model were learning targets, student engagement and feedback. The most common structures to emerge were engage/activate (mini-lesson), guided group (direct) instruction, independent practice/application, and closure. At the secondary level, two models rose to the top as being most closely identified to a current instructional model. The two models were explicit instruction and gradual release.

Phase 2 started last month and continues through March. We are determining what are the practices or structures that are already happening on a regular basis in our classrooms. Leadership staff and select other staff will observe classrooms and note the bright spots already occurring that we want to ensure remain part of the solid daily instruction already happening in in West Irondequoit.

Phases 3 and 4 will be completed in April, May and June. Research from a variety of texts and articles will be analyzed with the perception and observational data collected regarding an instructional model. The end-product will be a K-12 West Irondequoit Instructional Model that is clear, consistent and research-based. 📖