Warren Township Schools

For Immediate Release

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**Start With Hello**

Throughout the week of February 4, 2019, students in each of the Warren Township Schools participated in “Start with Hello” week. Sandy Hook Promise, a national non-profit organization based out of Newtown, Connecticut created this program in an effort to protect children and reduce social isolation.

“Start with Hello” is a program that teaches children and teens how to be more socially inclusive and connected to each other. The program follows three simple steps - if you SEE someone alone, REACH OUT and help, START WITH HELLO. The program provides tools for students, teachers and school leaders to break the ice, break down barriers and get to know one another.

Students and staff at Woodland School, Mt. Horeb School, Central School and Angelo L. Tomaso School began their week with a simple exercise of wearing name tags for “Say Hey” day. The purpose of this activity was to encourage students to simply say hello to one another. Students and staff happily greeted each other throughout the day, creating a chain reaction of smiling faces.

On Tuesday, elementary students and staff were encouraged to wear neon colors as a reminder to brighten someone’s day. In addition to the fluorescent reminder, students were asked to fill out pledge cards. The central question of the pledge card being “why do I start with hello?” Cards were filled with responses like, “I start with hello to make people feel included” and “I start with hello to let the person know that I care about them.”

Mid-week, students at Warren Middle School (WMS) viewed a special presentation given by the WMS School Counselors on simple ways to reach out to someone who might need help. School Counselors helped students think about where social isolation can be found, what social isolation might look like and what can be done to help someone who is feeling alone. On the same day, students throughout the district participated in an ice breaker activity during their lunch periods. Small pieces of paper with varying topics were spread out on the lunch tables in each school to prompt conversation. The lunch rooms were filled with smiles and laughter as students, teachers and visitors learned new and interesting facts about each other.

On Thursday, positive messages were displayed throughout each of the five Warren Township Schools for everyone to enjoy and on Friday, students were encouraged to “Disconnect to Connect.” School Counselors asked students to stay off of their electronic devices to connect with those around them.

Warren Township Schools are among as many as 15,000 schools nationwide that have participated in “Start with Hello Week.” Director of Special Services, Mrs. Candie Hengemuhle stated “‘Start with Hello Week’ was a district-wide initiative this year to highlight the importance of our students connecting with all of their peers and promoting an inclusive culture in our schools. Our students learned they have the power to make a difference in the life of others, simply by saying hello, making a connection and, thereby planting the seeds to eliminate social isolation in their schools.”

Picture 1: Mt. Horeb students, Thelma Ikejibeh and Preicel Nunez smiling on “Say Hey” day.

Picture 2: Mt. Horeb students, Alessio Cakirdas, Anishka Suhas, Isabelle Lafkowitz and James Carter pose for a picture on “Say Hey” day.

Picture 3: Central students, Kenneth Howard & Allie Fahs showing off their bright colors!

Picture 4: Central School Nurse, Sharon Carroll and School Counselor Alyssa Pech showing off their bright colors!

Picture 5: Angelo L. Tomaso student, Jacob Tesche sporting his name tag and a smile.

Picture 6: Central student, Emily Slepokura showing her pledge card.

Picture 7: Angelo L. Tomaso students, Tegan Buzzerio and Madison Berez all smiles during “Say Hey” day.

Picture 8: Woodland students Charlotte Ohlson and Yuliana Cespedes engaged during the ice breaker activity.

Picture 9: Woodland students Ethan Rajan and Gustavo Russo - learning new facts about each other during the ice breaker activity

Picture 10: WMS School Counselors, Midge Johnson and Melanie Maida sharing tips on how to be considerate of someone who might need help and how to eliminate social isolation.

Picture 11: Central students, Celina Bhatt & James Anderson on Say Hey Day.





















