

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

# CAZENOVIA CSD



# CREATING A CULTURE OF *Care*

## EMPATHY IN ACTION

| Pause                                | Interrupt   | Question   | Educate                                    | Echo   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
|                                      |   |  |  |  |
| Try saying<br>"Let me take a moment" | Try saying<br>"Please stop. That's not kind."<br>"I don't think that's nice." | Try saying<br>"Why did you say that?"<br>"How do you think that makes someone feel?" | Try saying<br>"What could we say instead?" | Try saying<br>"Thank you, _____, for using kind words!"<br>"I agree with _____, we should use kind words." |

## WELLNESS WEEK

Held on Friday, June 6, Wellness Week's Laker Day was designed to support both physical and mental wellness through a variety of engaging and uplifting activities. The event featured backyard games, a climbing rock wall, delicious ice cream provided by Skippy's, reading sessions with therapy dogs, and a visit from Skanda, a local animal sanctuary. These thoughtfully planned activities aimed to foster joy and build connections within the school community. At Cazenovia Middle School, students are appreciated every day—but especially on Laker Day.

All faculty and staff were trained in the Empathy in Action workshop in March, and in turn, a team of teachers facilitated this workshop to all 9-12<sup>th</sup> graders the week of May 19-22 (the same workshop that all 8th grade students engaged in back in November). This Empathy in Action experience focused on learning more about each other & about different ways to respond to difficult situations through the PIQEE approach. We would love for you to have this strategy (outlined above) to talk about with your child(ren) and help them to practice using it as well.

### Here's what students had to say about the workshop:

"I think the empathy training was great because it allowed us to think and talk about our school, which is one thing we can actively do when talking about improving the schools atmosphere"

### I valued...

- Learning about other people.
- The kindness and openness shown by the teacher and other students.
- The judgement free zone that was created.

### I learned...

- Many things about my peers to help us understand each other better.
- It takes action from each individual in order to change the atmosphere of the school.

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <b>Mindful Monday</b><br>Wear Comfy Clothes   | <b>Fact of the Day:</b> Mindfulness isn't just meditating. Try this while walking: What are 3 things you see? 2 things you feel? 1 thing you can smell? This is mindfulness!  |
|  | <b>Tie Dye Tuesday</b><br>Wear Tie Dye to represent all the feelings we have!   | <b>Fact of the Day:</b> Psychologist Robert Plutchik's theory suggests that humans can feel around 34,000 unique emotions.  |
|  | <b>Wellness Wednesday</b><br>Wear Green for Mental Health Awareness Month   | <b>Fact of the Day:</b> Good nutrition & movement can significantly affect our mental health. A well-balanced diet can help us think clearly and feel more alert. It can also improve concentration and attention span. |
|  | <b>Thankful Thursday</b><br>Write a quick note of appreciation to someone in the building and add it to our Gratitude Wall. | <b>Fact of the Day:</b> Research shows that regularly writing down things you're thankful for activates the brain's reward system, reduces stress, and improves sleep and mood—even weeks later.                        |
|  | <b>Laker Day / Student Appreciation Day</b><br>Wear Laker gear!   | <b>Fact of the Day:</b> Practicing gratitude can support: emotional regulation, improved mood, increased connections, and protection from the negative effects of stress.   |

# CREATING A CULTURE OF *Care*

## FEATURED STUDENT CLUB: SANCTUARY CLUB

Sanctuary Club was founded about six years ago by a seventh-grader who saw the need for a space where all students can be their authentic selves, free of judgement and without fear of negative talk or bullying.

Sanctuary Club is recognized as a GSA club: a student-led "Gay Straight Alliance" or "Genders and Sexualities Alliance" group. The aim of GSAs nationwide is to foster schools that are safe and affirming for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Mrs. Wendy Everard and Mr. Jayson Pritchard are co-advisors of the club, and as Mr. Pritchard says with admiration: "The students are the driving force of this club, stepping up as a small but mighty group."

Each December, the Sanctuary Club hosts a bake sale to raise money for club events. For instance, each June, Sanctuary Club hosts a table at Cazenovia Pride Fest, spreading joy and handing out rainbow swag and educational pamphlets. In return, this year Cazenovia Pride will recognize the contributions of a graduating senior for their work as an LGBTQ student or ally, awarding them with a small scholarship. Moreover, this past February, Sanctuary Club hosted a Self-Love Campaign at the school, with the aim of affirming all students' uniqueness and worth. The campaign aligned with the group's embrace of stances like Michelle Obama's: "You have to surround yourself with people who uplift you" and to always "lead by example with hope, never fear."

Sanctuary Club has always focused on cultivating a safe space, yet also, depending on the students who lead the club, its aims expand. Over the past couple of years, the group has also been committed to community education, not only about issues related to the LGBTQ+ community, but also intersectionality, commemorating different heritage months and raising awareness about issues related to other groups.

Although recent budget cuts have led to a loss of funding for many of the most recently founded student groups, Sanctuary Club remains dedicated to its aims of creating a safe and thriving space and of celebrating difference. The club truly understands, as Mr. Pritchard notes, that "we are all different and that's a good thing. And yet even though we are all different, we are all the same – we **all** want to be ourselves and to pursue happiness."

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICES STAFF HIGHLIGHT: KRISTA BROWN

Krista Brown brings a unique approach to her work as a Teaching Assistant at Burton Street Elementary, weaving an artist's skills and sensibilities with a commitment to Restorative Practices. Having pursued a BA in Art Education, with a concentration in Ceramics, creativity is at the heart of who Brown is, and restorative practices, she states, have always been part of her pedagogy.

There are five R's to Restorative Practice: relationship, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration. These pillars animate teacher and student relationships in all five of Burton Street's second grade classrooms, anchoring classroom expectations and norms. Students' voices shape the ways they each – collectively and individually – aspire to have "a listening body in the classroom, a safe body at recess, and a conscientious body in the cafeteria and specials."

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# CREATING A CULTURE OF *Care*

## STAFF HIGHLIGHT: KRISTA BROWN, *continued*

For Brown, restorative practices demand a creative synthesis of intellectual, social, and affective learning, with the potential to positively impact students' mental health and well as their capacity for conflict resolution. Whether she is facilitating learning among groups of students or working in situations of 1:1 support, Brown models respectful relationship building and the use of I-driven affective statements, which students are also asked to model when they have disagreements. Students come to understand their communities are strengthened not only through the choices they make, but also by being responsible for those choices.



Krista Brown, Second Grade Teaching Assistant at Burton Street

Restorative practices, Brown believes, have the potential to positively change school culture. She notes that for those of us who grew up in past decades, shame or punitive measures were often used to correct behavior, but today restorative practices offer a more demanding solution that is anything but permissive. As Brown reflects, students are "held accountable for the behaviors and are asked to reflect and help create the solution. Restorative practices allow for conflict to be a learning opportunity with growth and connections."

Restorative practices shape not only Brown's teaching assistant work at Burton Street, but also her courses at the CazArts Barn in the summer and the relationships in her life. "So much of our world and work life depends on relationship building, which is at the heart of restorative practices."

## CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT DAYS TO KNOW

- 6/2-6/3 - Jewish Shavuot
- 6/7-6/10 - Islamic: Eid al-Adha
- 6/12- Loving Day
- 6/18 - International Day of Countering Hate Speech
- 6/19 - Juneteenth
- 7/14 - LGBTQ+: International Non-Binary People's Day
- 8/9 - International Day of the World's Indigenous People
- 8/26 - Women's Equality Day

## HOW TO REPORT:

[Visit our district website](#)  
[Dignity for All Students](#)

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**Are there school events, classroom approaches, or other items that contribute to CCSD's Culture of Care that you'd like to suggest for future newsletters?**

[Submit ideas here!](#)

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

*for students and community members*

Be on the lookout next year for our next series of community wide dialogues

To learn more about community-wide dialogues, read [this article](#) from our district site.