



'CONVERSATION TOWARD A BRIGHTER FUTURE': Lincoln and Liberty Middle School

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The following article is presented as part of the Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities' "Conversations Toward A Brighter Future" discussion series.

The articles are prepared by the participants of the discussion in their own words.



EDWARDSVILLE - The Liberty & Lincoln Middle Schools projects are off to a positive start.

Our focus is appreciation and support for all 1700 students. We do not want any student to feel disenfranchised and alienated based upon their club selections, sports participation, interests, and hobbies. Our project will focus on education, promotion, team building, and acceptance of individual choices leading to a more positive school environment.

Students will achieve these goals through the use of videos, social media, inter-club team building activities, school-wide environmental improvements, and a kindness campaign. Evaluation of success will be measured through student survey and interview.

Student leaders will incorporate the four core values of respect, dignity, understanding, and forgiveness to enhance student culture. Videos, social media, inter-club team building activities, school-wide environmental improvements, and a kindness campaign will be developed to target areas needing improvement.

Students will focus on developing a greater understanding of school-wide events and activities through the use of videos. Weekly videos will be created focusing on school activities, specifically clubs, sports, or groups identified as underrepresented.

These videos will help highlight accomplishments as well as promote upcoming events to increase student support. Through this, students hope to increase respect between clubs and individuals. These videos will be posted on a student created YouTube channel and will be available to view during activity period.

In addition to videos, social media will play a large role in helping students develop a greater understanding of upcoming school activities and events. Student leaders have identified Twitter and Instagram as two highly consumed social media formats. Information regarding activities will be tweeted out to students interested in receiving the information. Also, pictures of clubs and sports will be posted on Instagram to help celebrate success.

Inter-club and inter-sport team building activities will also be created to help develop greater respect between groups of students. Clubs and sports will participate in a campaign to promote each other's activities. Each club and sport will be paired with another club or sport to provide support and encouragement.

The paired groups will be given a monetary budget used to promote their "sister" group and increase respect among activities. Clubs and sports will be paired based upon seasonal availability and the ability to provide adequate attention. Suggested ideas are school wide posters, gift items for the club members, and attendance of events. This activity will be monitored by coaches and team captains.

In addition to inter-club activities, student leaders will host spirit assemblies and create environmental improvements that have a positive impact. These assemblies will enhance school spirit by focusing on all club and group accomplishments and also give an outlet to inform the student body of important upcoming activities.



In addition, these assemblies would focus on promoting social accomplishments and highlight acts of student kindness. Furthermore, hallways of each school would be decorated to reflect seasonal interests and student accomplishments. This sense of school spirit will help create a more unified student body.

To increase understanding and respect for student interests that do not have official school clubs or sponsors, a plan has been created to promote these activities. A bi-weekly opportunity will be created after school to showcase student hobbies or interests.

Students wanting to showcase a talent or hobby would be identified, and a list of possible activities and interests would be collected for showcase. Possible topics would include: computer coding, cooking, sports, foreign language, culture, poetry, arts, etc.

Using this collection, students interested in expanding their knowledge regarding these topics could sign-up for a “mystery day” that showcases some of the selected ideas. The topic for the day would remain a mystery until student attendance to peak curiosity and promote a sense of interest. This greater understanding of diversified student interest will lead to a greater respect between peers.

Also, a kindness campaign will be created to boost self-esteem. Students will be identified each week as targets of the campaign. Friends and teachers will be asked to write positive comments on notecards regarding these selected individuals. After the collection and review of notecards, they will be placed in an envelope and delivered to

the targeted students. The goal of this project is to include all students by the end of the year (approximately 20 per week).

Students involved in our G.O. Leadership program at each building would be in charge of student selection, monitoring, and delivery of the positive comments. Furthermore, 1 or 2 students will be selected to be showcased in the weekly videos created to enhance student awareness of this activity.

These students will have positive comments read from friends and classmates and will be highlighted in a similar fashion as the notecard campaign. The goal is for these acts of kindness to spread and to combat everyday negativity that students may experience.



Finally, student videos will be produced targeting common struggles and difficulties students may face. These video will feature content gained from anonymous student questionnaires regarding what they see as obstacles and how they attempt to overcome these road blocks. The goals of these videos are to showcase similarities and common struggles to help students develop a greater understanding of the student body leading to more respect.

We will utilize teacher help to promote these videos and also post them on student created social media sites to increase media consumption. In addition, we will incorporate these videos at our assemblies as part of our current anti-bullying campaign. This would allow access to the content by all students. These videos will specifically focus on the four core pillars of understanding, respect, dignity, and forgiveness.

Using social media, videos, inter-school team building, and a kindness campaign our students hope to create a more positive culture for all Lincoln and Liberty students.

Track success of program by:

1. Number of views/subscribers to our YouTube page. Keep pushing it so we see increased traffic.
2. Track number of students who participate in our programs.
3. Track the number of discipline reports related to bullying or harassment on a monthly basis to see if we are decreasing/holding steady/increasing reported incidents.

Liberty Middle School students are working on a project to improve school culture utilizing the core values of respect, dignity, understanding, and forgiveness. Our focus will be to improve understanding and respect within our schools, ultimately leading to an increase of self-esteem and acceptance.

Panther Welcome

New students to Liberty came for student-led tours of the building, student presentations, and culminated with fun activities to foster confidence about being a Panther on the first day of school. The **Four Pillars** were discussed with new students, who were challenged to develop and implement activities for middle school students that centered around respect, dignity, understanding, and forgiveness.

New Student Activities

New students were invited to attend a New Student Welcome during first quarter Activity periods, by grade level, as another opportunity for social bonding. The second quarter event will allow new students to invite a friend to attend to the gathering. The goal is to extend friendship opportunities so the “new” students are now full members of the school community. The third quarter activity will afford the opportunity to invite peers that may benefit from an additional opportunity for structured social interaction.

Kindness Campaign

Students identified by their peers will receive a handwritten note giving them encouragement, acknowledging effort and/or extending an opportunity for friendship.

Liberty Videos

Grade level videos to be shared with parents during Parent/Teacher Conferences, the development of a YouTube channel for Liberty MS, a pep rally, and a fundraising

collaboration between Liberty MS and Goshen Elementary School to raise monies to donate to the Madison County United Way Community Christmas Program.



Project INC (Inspiring Note Cards)

Lincoln Middle School students received a colorful note card and were encouraged write a positive message about life at Lincoln School. These messages were turned into collages and displayed around the school.

Wildcat Welcome

Welcome orientation was expanded to include incoming 6th graders prior to the start of school. The orientation included new student campus tours and playing school related games.

New Student Breakfast

New student breakfast improvements were made to include introducing students new to District 7 to the people that are here to support them (SRO, Secretaries, APs, Related Service Personnel) early on in the First Quarter so they have a friendly face to ask questions. 8th grade leaders led them through fun activities to go along with the introductions.

Lincoln's YouTube Channel

- Online presence highlighting clubs, teams, teachers, students and to show the lighter side to life at Lincoln.
- Real-time promotions of concerts, ball games, fling, or other activities students will have access through social media such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook accounts to help spread the word of the positive activities that take place at Lincoln.