

'CONVERSATION TOWARD A BRIGHTER FUTURE': East Alton-Wood River High School's 'Every Action and Word Equals Respect' project

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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.

The East Alton Wood River High School Every Action & Word = Respect Project, in its second year, is off to an outstanding start. The goal of this project is to improve the level of Respect among all school community stakeholders. We believe that by doing so, barriers between social, racial, and economic groups will begin to narrow.

Our project began by raising awareness to the importance of “RESPECT” for self and others.

We created t-shirt promoting our theme, (EAWR) Every Action & Word = Respect. These four letters include our school’s initials (East Alton Wood River). A Respect Box is available for students to complete a card **Recognizing Students and Staff for Acts of Respect**. Respect cards are drawn twice a month with the winners receiving a **Respect T-Shirts**. Two days each month are designated where all students wear their shirts. The Respect initiative challenges our students to do acts of kindness. It is amazing that we are visually seeing acts of respect growing among our students and staff by the increased number of people wearing the t-shirts. All of the Respect cards submitted are displayed on a bulletin board for others to read. This is how we will measure the growth of respect at EAWR High School.



Our leadership team is creating banners to display around the school with the motto Every Action & Word = Respect. The theme will be incorporated into daily announcements and at sporting events.

In September of 2016, our team kicked-off the other pillars of **Dignity, Understanding, and Forgiveness**. With a Kick Off Week that included one of the four pillars and a theme for the entire day. These themes include, donut disrespect (respect), selfie-respect (dignity-self respect), shoe drive (understanding-someone else's life in their shoes), and Bee Forgiving (forgiving-balloons with letter saying an apology- "Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting"). The four pillars will also serve as the character education words of the month for September, October, November, and December.

In terms of evaluating the project we are going to:

1. Survey the same students at the end of the year and look for growth in terms of the responses.
2. Evaluate the number of cards submitted 2nd semester and shirts awarded to students for showing respect.

The project is creating a positive culture in our school community which emphasizes positive and respectful relationships among students, teachers, and school administrators.



Highlights of Every Action & Word=Respect

Student Appreciation Day - EAWR's Student Leadership Team hosted Kick-off activity for the new school year.

- Students wear blue shirts to represent respect.
- Team Members sidewalk chalked positive messages for students.

- Donuts and water served at breakfast.
- Every student receives an advisory snack.
- Students allowed to eat outside.
- “Donut” disrespect day.
- Selfie Respect day #EAWRespect.
- Walk a mile in someone else’s shoes (Over 100 pairs of shoes collected for donation).
- “Bee” Forgiving day, students wrote down transgressions that they wanted to forgive.

