



Counselor's Corner

March 2018

Program to Address Feelings of Social Isolation

Social isolation is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, lonely or treated like you are invisible. It is a growing epidemic in the United States and within our schools. Excessive feelings of isolation can be associated with violent and suicidal behavior. In fact, one study reports that chronic loneliness increases our risk of an early death by 14%. Furthermore, young people who are isolated can become victims of bullying, violence and/or depression. As a result, many further pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others.

Loneliness is not the same as depression, though the two often go hand in hand. The first, related to the drive to belong, is motivational. The other, a more general feeling of sadness or hopelessness, is not. A recent study published by the National Academy of Sciences, suggests there is also a parallel effect with health and loneliness. With every positive increase in social relationships, researchers in North Carolina and China saw improvement in specific physiological biomarkers such as blood pressure and body mass index.

At Warren Middle School, the Character Education Committee addresses this issue by creating opportunities and programs to get students involved. Monthly character education sessions address topics such as digital citizenship, bullying, making good choices, community service, ethics, and kindness

As part of the 2018-2019 school year, the Character Education Committee plans to implement Start with Hello Week during the month of February. Thousands of schools and youth organizations from across the United States participated in Sandy Hook Promise's third annual Start With Hello Week. Start With Hello Week brings attention to the growing epidemic of social isolation in our schools and communities and empowers young people to create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their school or youth organization. Start With Hello Week raises awareness and educates students and the community through Start With Hello trainings, advertising, activities, public proclamations, media events, student contests, and school awards.

Activities during the 2018-2019 school year may include:

Greeting everyone as they enter the building with a "hello", giving student club members name tags that say "Hello, my name is..." to hand out to students and staff as they enter the building. Encouraging students to write their names on the name tags and wear them throughout the day.



<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/startwithhelloweek2017>

For further details or information, please contact your child's guidance counselor:

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