

# MAKING WAVES AT DCS



## Weekly “Game Changer” Lessons Teach Beacon 1<sup>st</sup> Graders That Everyone Can Make a Difference

*Student Put Learning into Practice with Humane Society Donation Drive*



Along the wall of Maggie Scheurer’s 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom hangs a long line of pictures. Some faces are immediately recognizable (Michelle Obama, Taylor Swift, LeBron James) and others, maybe not so much (Jessica Long, Mae Jemison). However, all these faces have one thing in common: they belong to people considered to be “game changers.” These extraordinary humans are part of a weekly lesson plan created by Scheurer to inspire her students and teach them they all can be game changers.

Scheurer records a lesson focusing on one of these noteworthy people each week for Beacon 1<sup>st</sup> grade classrooms to watch and discuss, intentionally spotlighting women, people of color, and people of different ages to demonstrate the diversity of the wider world. Students learn about

the person’s life and how they have made the world a better place. One week they hear about the inspiring achievements of Sonia Sotomayor as the first female Hispanic Supreme Court Justice, the next about Jessica Long as a world record-breaking Paralympic swimmer. Another week, the lesson is how LeVar Burton has spent the majority of his career promoting childhood literacy, followed by LeBron James’s foundation of the I PROMISE School which serves at-risk students in his hometown of Akron, Ohio. For their end-of-year project, students will choose their own game changer to research and present to their families.

Students had the opportunity this year to interview a very special game changer who teaches in their own building. Beacon’s Mandarin/World Cultures teacher Emily Xu spearheaded a movement which removed t-shirts featuring anti-Chinese slogans from Amazon. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese people faced racism for “starting the pandemic” and vendors were selling t-shirts with anti-Chinese phrases on them via Amazon. Xu spoke out against these racist slogans and began a campaign on WeChat (a Chinese app similar to Facebook) calling for Amazon to remove the t-shirts. The movement grew to such large proportions that Amazon responded by removing the shirts from their online stores! Talking with someone in their own school who made such a big difference in the world showed students that with perseverance, anyone can make an impact.

With these lessons in mind, Scheurer’s 1<sup>st</sup> graders were recently inspired to “make a difference” outside of their school building. Through a partnership with a local service/therapy dog breeder, they learned that the Humane Society of Huron Valley needed certain items for their rescued animals. Moved to help these animals as service/therapy dogs help people, students organized a donation drive for the needed items.

To ask fellow Beacon students and their families to donate items, groups of students [recorded commercials](#) detailing what was needed and why. After the items were collected, and knowing her students were eager to be hands-on in the delivery, Scheurer organized them into a fire brigade line to load the items from the building to her car. The Humane Society hosted a virtual field trip for students to personally thank them and show how their donations will make a difference to rescued animals.

Through the Game Changer lessons, students are continuously discussing how they themselves can make a difference in their world. “The kids are very engaged and we have great conversations about the people we learn about,” Scheurer says. The goal of the lesson is to show students they are all game changers and to do what is right, not what is easy (a poster in her classroom is a prominent reminder of this message). “We encourage them to speak up for themselves and others, but in a safe way.”