

Contact: **Barb Milosch, (859) 244-2719**

Date: November 16, 2022

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

A Day with New York Times Bestselling Author and School Psychologist Michael Thompson

A Day with New York Times Bestselling Author and School Psychologist Michael Thompson Sayre School was honored to welcome Michael Thompson, Ph.D., to campus on Wednesday, November 16, 2022. Dr. Thompson is a clinical psychologist with expertise in child and family psychology for over 35 years. He has authored nine books on child development, friendships, parent-teacher relationships, and school leadership. An international speaker, Dr. Thompson visits 50 schools a year to lead workshops for teachers, administrators, parents, and students. We were fortunate to have secured his time to dig deeper into the overarching themes of his books.

While spending the day with students, Dr. Thompson delivered age-appropriate information to grades 4-8 and 9-12. Dr. Thompson engaged the fourth- through eighth-grade students on the meaning of friendships and what it means to be popular. Students were attentive and honest, sharing information regarding their experience with friendships, popularity, and parent involvement. "Watching the students confidently discuss their understanding of friendship and sharing their thoughts was inspiring," said Interim Head of Lower School and Sayre parent Jacki Neistat. "Dr. Thompson was able to connect with the kids, and they, in turn, trusted him with their vulnerabilities."

Dr. Thompson met with the high school students, assuring them that everything will be ok no matter the pressure they felt about grades, athletics, college choices, and more. He inquired about students' sleeping habits, parent involvement in college decisions, and how their feelings would change if their dream schools did not materialize. He encouraged students to keep everything in perspective and make the most of their choices.

Meeting with the faculty and staff, Dr. Thompson focused on effectively partnering with parents. He encouraged staff to define and grow the parent-school partnership in a student-centered manner. When we do so, we can collectively create a learning environment where students feel encouraged, supported, and safe. "I really enjoyed Dr. Thompson's visit to our community. As both a faculty member and a Sayre parent, I came away reassured that we can all put trust in each other because our school community is composed of good people doing our very best to help kids realize their potential to be confident, kind, and content." – Adam Samples, Upper School Math Teacher and Current Parent

Dr. Thompson met with over 60 parents, recapping the student sessions and expanding them to the parent perspective. He asked parents to foster friendships and model inclusion. For example, when moving to a new location, adults can create intergenerational friendships with families to encourage children to bond with each other as the adults get to know one another. Or, when hosting a birthday party, parents can role model for kids how to be inclusive either by including everyone

or limiting the guest list to a few special friends. Addressing a parent's concern about how much is too much monitoring of devices, he suggested finding a balance between trusting your children and allowing them to assert their freedom and define boundaries. Perhaps informing your children of spot-checking devices and then slowly weaning yourself from the need to monitor them could be a way to handle the situation while building trust. Recognize that just 15% of children may struggle with friendships to the point that it requires external intervention, so as long as your child has at least one intimate connection, you need not worry.

"Dr. Thompson delivered an incredible message about childhood friendships and the importance of belonging," said Lower School parent and local elementary school principal Leigh Ann McLaughlin. "He gave parents several pointers of when and when not to intervene in their child's day-to-day struggles and validated many of the parents' concerns regarding child development."

Our Mission:

Sayre School provides an innovative and inclusive learning environment that empowers students to achieve academic excellence, embrace challenge, and cultivate integrity in order to lead purposeful lives in an ever-changing world.