

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION YEAR IN REVIEW



DOWNINGTOWN AREA  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

2023/2024



# MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

Over the past 12 years, the cultural diversity of the student population in Downingtown Area School District (DASD) has more than doubled. DASD has answered the call and has provided more programming, events, support and initiatives that allow all of our students to shine, be recognized and show up as their authentic selves.

Creating a positive, inclusive and diversity-driven district takes time, patience and skill. In DASD, teachers, staff and students work together to create an environment where individuals can successfully pursue their academic goals and dreams without the interference of negative experiences caused by microaggressions (subtle actions/words that express prejudiced attitudes toward others) and bigotry (obstinate or intolerant devotion to one's own opinions and prejudices). The administration, teachers and staff play a key role in creating and modeling an inclusive environment. All DASD employees must foster a sustained and long-term commitment to change and progress that recognizes diversity and multiculturalism (the inclusion of multiple ethnic groups).

Recognizing that a truly inclusive environment is vital to the wellness and success of all students, teachers and staff, DASD has worked to better serve our diverse population by focusing on improving equity and inclusion, district-wide. To be completely inclusive, all individuals within the district must feel safe to express ideas, dreams and dialogues. Hate, disrespect, intimidation and intolerance have no place in our district or in our community. There must be equal access to and opportunity for everyone to contribute fully.

We acknowledge that many individuals have complex identities in which their experiences have been based, including gender, race, color, creed, orientation and ability, and we must respect these differences. At DASD, we work to ensure that every student is encouraged to succeed and provided the means to reach their highest potential. By focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion and how they directly relate to overall student mental health and wellness, we will address structural and procedural barriers to full inclusion within the district.

We have completed our three-year DEI plan and look forward to continuing this work through our strategic plan and portrait of a graduate.

Sincerely,

Justin Brown



Justin is a well-known author, speaker and diversity instructor in the field of education. Previously, Brown worked in student affairs at West Chester University. He earned his M.A. in Student Affairs from Indiana University of PA, where he created the Diversity Awareness Program (D.A.P.), a program dedicated to educating institutions about the importance of diversity.

**Justin Brown, M.A.**  
**Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**



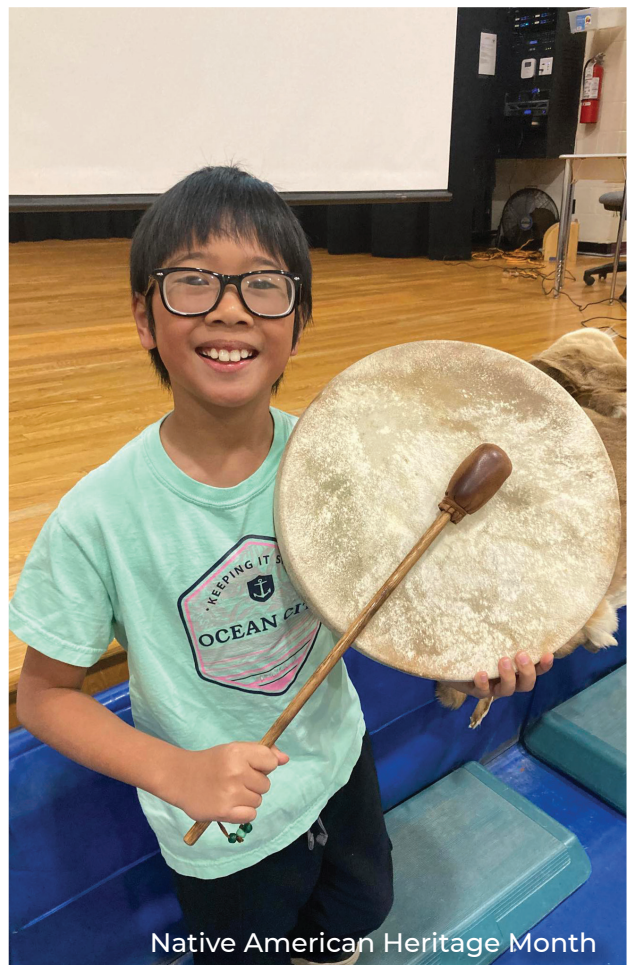
# INTRODUCTION

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

**DASD** teachers, staff and students are **committed** to creating an environment where individuals can **successfully pursue their academic goals and dreams** without the interference of negative experiences caused by microaggressions and bigotry.



DVCEE High School Conference



Native American Heritage Month



Native American Heritage Month

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Chester County is the ancestral home of the Lenape people, who occupied this land for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. As more and more European settlers began encroaching on their land, the Lenape people were systematically, and in many cases, forcefully removed. Eventually, most were driven as far west as Oklahoma, where they merged with the Cherokee Nation. Learn more about the Lenape people at [Lenape-nation.org](http://Lenape-nation.org). We are privileged to live and work on the land we now occupy and wish to acknowledge the Lenape people and their land.



## DASD DEI Mission

Our mission is to ensure DASD provides a culture of inclusivity and empathy, fostering educational equity that can grow, flourish and reach beyond the DASD community.

## DASD DEI Vision

Downingtown Area School District will ensure a culture of inclusivity and educational equity. We will strive to take an empathetic approach within our district while creating an environment and culture that investigates core issues and recognizes all cultures and backgrounds.

In order to foster a positive environment, the Downingtown Area School District will not tolerate bigotry, bullying, gender-inequities, homophobia, misogyny, racism, transphobia or xenophobia (**fear/hatred toward people from foreign countries**). Hate has no place in the district or in our community. We encourage upstanding citizens to support our “Good Neighbor” community.

Core values are delivered through the district’s instructional vision via rigor, engagement and agency.

- Academic Rigor - Students are challenged to take risks, to think critically and to reflect through application and problem solving that foster deeper understanding and individual growth
- Student Engagement - Students are actively invested in relevant and intentional instructional experiences that inspire them to apply and extend their learning
- Student Agency - Students are empowered, through voice and choice, to take ownership of their learning with guidance, support and accountability

01

### EVALUATION

Continuously evaluate our personal commitment and development in the areas of equity, cultural awareness and integrity

02

### ELIMINATION

Eliminate educational inequities by providing equitable access to services, school resources and learning opportunities

03

### ELEVATION

Elevate our community-wide mutual respect for others and active partnership through open communication, collaboration and actions



# INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



## K-6 INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

We want Downingtown Area School District to be an inclusive and diverse place for learning where all students and staff are accepted.

Kindness begins with me. I will / I will learn to:

- Take responsibility for my choices and actions.
- Show respect to everyone with my words, actions and body language.
- Use kind words.
- Accept and include people who are different from me.
- Treat others the way they want to be treated.
- Use safe language (not scary or threatening).
- Use empathy to imagine how others feel.
- Be an active listener.

## 7-12 INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

DASD has a commitment to respect one another. We will hold ourselves to the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. We commit to creating a safe, equitable and inclusive learning environment for all that is built on a diverse foundation of self and mutual respect. We will cultivate a civil environment that is free from physical, psychological or emotional harm to others and ourselves.

Inclusivity begins with me:

- I am responsible for my actions and choices.
- I will show courtesy and respect in my language, demeanor and actions.
- I will actively listen, not just hearing, but listening with understanding to hear other points of view.
- I will acknowledge everyone's individual differences by demonstrating empathy and patience.
- I will refrain from insulting or using disrespectful, dismissive or humiliating language and actions.
- I will be an upstander and not a bystander.
- I will celebrate the worth and dignity of everyone, regardless of status.



DEI and the state of DASD's mental health and well-being are directly connected. Best-practice diversity and inclusion programs recognize mental health and well-being as a diversity issue.



## Student Wellness

Students spend a significant portion of their time in school making choices related to academics and personal interactions. Positive mental and emotional well-being plays a significant role in supporting student learning, academic success and overall health and wellness. Schools that are inclusive and foster the whole child are better able to meet the wellness and academic needs of all students. Effective school-wide strategies that align wellness, inclusion, diversity and equity empower all students to meet their individual and unique goals.



## Staff Wellness

Promoting overall wellness and addressing diversity, equity and inclusion is critical to creating an inclusive school culture that supports the overall well-being of staff. School-level equity teams focused on strategies to foster inclusive working environments support positive mental and emotional well-being. Inclusive working environments promote positive school climate and coping strategies to address the everyday challenges, both in the classroom and in the community.



## Community Wellness

School communities committed to meeting the academic and wellness needs of their students must recognize and design opportunities where positive mental health and emotional well-being can be fully integrated with diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Doing so raises awareness, promotes positive attitudes and encourages behaviors essential for student success, both in and outside of school. A diverse and inclusive learning environment promotes the well-being of the entire school community.

# CULTURAL EQUITY TASK FORCE

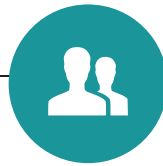
YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



Relationships are the foundation for institutional work.



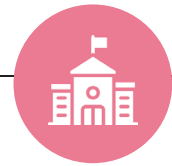
**Director of Diversity,  
Equity and Inclusion**



**Cultural Equity  
Taskforce  
Leadership Team**



**Cultural Equity  
Taskforce Team**



**Building Equity  
Teams**

The purpose of the DASD Cultural Equity Task Force (CETF) is to ensure equity for students, staff and families by eliminating bias and inequities in our classrooms and in our schools. The CETF supports enacting policies, procedures and practices that are both culturally responsive and culturally sustaining.

## The CETF adheres to the following responsibilities



- Actively identify and eliminate all forms of bias, discrimination and inequity within the district
- Review policies, procedures and practices to ensure equity across all levels
- Seek stakeholder input and engagement to better support needs of the school community
- Use data and trends to improve services
- Respond directly to incidents within the district that affect equity in the DASD community
- Propose events, initiatives and programs to enhance district climate and culture
- Ensure all diversity events, initiatives and programs fit the district's mission and goals
- Attend regular CETF meetings and subcommittee meetings



# SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARIES

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

Subcommittee work completed July 2023 - June 2024

## 01 | POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Lead with fairness, equity and inclusion into all of the policies, programs, operations and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Met to go over additional policies that need to be added. None were discovered.</li></ul>

## 02 | OBSERVABLE MESSAGING

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Discover and share materials and programming across our DASD buildings that promote the ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Distributed the “We Stay Connected” DASD posters to all 16 schools</li></ul>

## 03 | STUDENT SUCCESS

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Provide opportunities that promote a greater understanding of student identities, multiculturalism and inclusion within our school district, and to work toward eliminating inequalities, inspire and prepare our students for higher levels of personal and social responsibility, and post-secondary success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continued two cohorts of Level Up students (East &amp; West) Created leadership and learning opportunities through 4 student conferences Sankofa Conference</li><li>2 DVCEE Conferences for Students</li><li>Student Belonging Conference</li><li>Student Leadership Conference (DVCEE)</li></ul>

## 04 | BOOK LITERARY SERIES

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To be representative of our school communities and provide inclusivity and belonging to our student bodies</li><li>To offer resources, support and a sense of community that is responsive to specific needs and cultural considerations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Selected “Inclusion on Purpose” to read in all Central Office Departments</li><li>Conducted “Inclusion on Purpose” tour of all Trestle Departments to ensure we are creating spaces of belongingness</li></ul>

# SUBCOMMITTEE SUMMARIES

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

Subcommittee work completed July 2023 - June 2024


## 05 | RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Create an employment destination for diverse viewpoints, talents and perspectives of the community who we serve, both academically and professionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DVCEE Recruitment Fair</li><li>• Increased Recruitment Materials on Social Networks</li><li>• Collaboration with HR to add to our district recruitment and retention efforts</li></ul>

## 06 | DIVERSITY CALENDAR

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Provide training, knowledge and resources focusing on cultivating abilities of equity literacy to individuals and institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updated diversity calendar</li><li>• Implemented district calendar on Microsoft Outlook</li></ul>

## 07 | COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND EVENTS

PURPOSE	2023/24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<p>Gather parents and guardians with diverse perspectives, skills and experiences to provide a forum for their voices and ideas, moving toward a more inclusive and culturally responsive district</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promoted scheduled programming to gain participation from the community</li><li>• Partnered with:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eagles Autism Foundation- 4 in-school programs</li><li>• 4 DASD DEI Murals installed in our schools.</li><li>• Holocaust Awareness Museum &amp; Education Center (3 sessions)</li><li>• Ruby Bridges Foundation - in-school program at all elementary and middle schools</li><li>• Continued programming with The Well</li><li>• Local police departments - 4th annual Making Connections food drive</li><li>• Collaborated with Philadelphia Eagles Sustainability Department at STEM Academy</li></ul></li></ul>

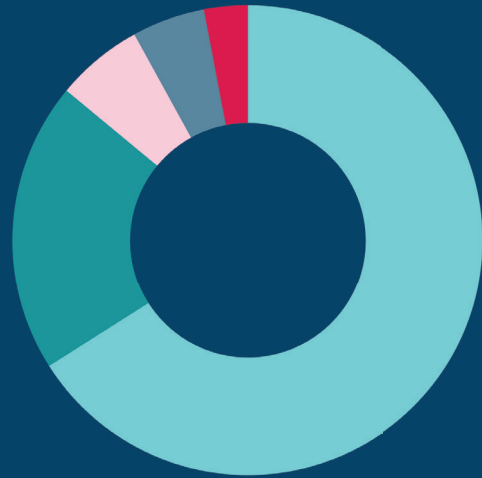




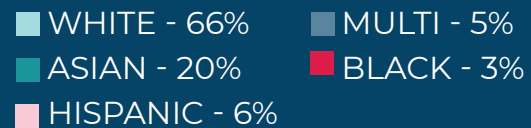
# DEI BY THE NUMBERS

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

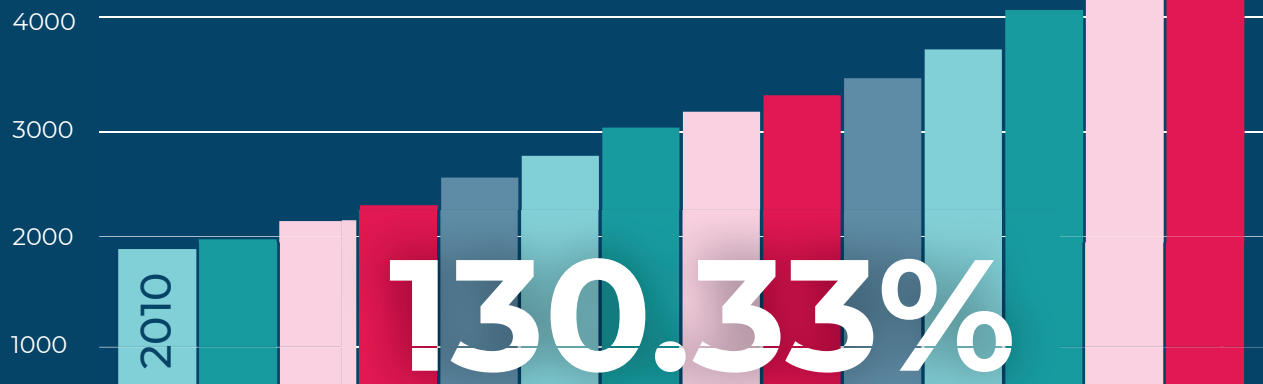
## WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?



### 2023/24 DEMOGRAPHICS



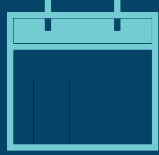
### DASD STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



13-YEAR INCREASE IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF STUDENT POPULATION

# DEI BY THE NUMBERS

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



## 4,000+

### COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPANTS

- COMMUNITY CULTURE FEST
- YOM HASHOAH- HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL EVENT
- A NIGHT OF REMEMBRANCE WITH PETER STERN
- SUPPORTING GRIEVING STUDENTS WITH KATE LANNAN
- THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY WITH PHILADELPHIA EAGLES BRANDON GRAHAM
- OVERCOMING ADVERSITY WITH PHILADELPHIA EAGLES SYDNEY BROWN
- A NIGHT WITH THE LENAPE COMMUNITY- ADAM DEPAUL
- BULLYING PREVENTION WITH APRIL HERNANDEZ CASTILLO
- PROJECT WARMTH WITH MISS PA-MIRANDA MOORE AND COMEDIAN TOPP FLIGHT
- INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE WITH 321 COFFEE
- ANXIETY & UNMET NEEDS WITH BRANDON MAHAN
- CHILD CENTERED DATA DRIVEN WITH CORNELIUS MINOR
- BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY
- NIGHT OF REMEMBRANCE WITH RUTH KAPP HARTZ

## 232

CULTURAL EQUITY  
TASK FORCE  
MEMBERS

## 16

BUILDING  
EQUITY  
TEAMS



[WWW.DASD.ORG/DIVERSITY](http://WWW.DASD.ORG/DIVERSITY)



# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



## INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

This year at DASD, parent volunteers partnered with the DEI department to create "Indian Heritage Month" activities across all elementary, middle and high schools.

At every DASD school, a day was devoted to allow students the opportunity to experience Indian culture. Community members provided stations for students to learn about and experience the sports, music, language, food, arts and entertainment of India.

DASD stands with the individuals in our community and aims to celebrate the successes and contributions within this country and abroad.





# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

## BRANDON GRAHAM

On Monday March 4th, students and staff were treated to a special visit from Philadelphia Eagles Defensive End, Brandon Graham

The program, designed to emphasize the significance of community, teamwork and resilience, turned out to be not just informative but incredibly fun.

This program supports DASD's commitment to promoting belongingness and inclusion in DASD schools.



## PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

DASD's elementary schools competed in a 2 week coin-collecting challenge raising \$7,738.45 for the Eagles Autism Foundation. The top two winning schools, Bradford Heights Elementary School and Shamona Creek Elementary School, earned visits from the Eagles mascot Swoop, the Eagles Cheerleaders, Miss Pennsylvania's Teen 2023 Lizzie Shacklett and Eagles cornerback Zech McPhearson along with Kylie Kelce.





# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

## CULTURAL CONNECTIONS CLUB K-5



DASD's Cultural Connections Clubs include volunteer students in grades 4 and 5.

Meeting themes and ideas are generated by students and include:

- Cultural item show-and-tell
- What's Unique about Me
- Share/teach an activity from your family/culture
- Food Sharing Party (pre-Covid)
- Book Talks (teacher-supervised literature sharing)
- Highs and Lows of the past week (authentic sharing/discussion)
- Self Portraits





# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



Downingtown Track & Field Day



Mural painted by Parker Dewey

## MAKING CONNECTIONS



### LAW ENFORCEMENT SYMPOSIUM

Making Connections joined students from across the county for the Chester County District Attorney's Student and Law Enforcement Symposium on April 18. The symposium featured an overview of the criminal justice system, a panel discussion, role-play scenarios and small group discussions.

**Making Connections** is a collaborative program between African American high school students and local police departments. The purpose of the group is to build trust, rapport and stronger foundations through meaningful conversations and events.



### FOOD DRIVE

In its fourth annual food drive, Making Connections, Love a Canine and community members donated non-perishable food and personal care items to the Lionville Elementary Food Pantry.



# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

## CULTURE FEST



On September 21, DASD hosted its second Annual Culture Fest. Families from across the community came to learn about and celebrate the diversity in our school district.

This event was sponsored by Downingtown Community Education Foundation in partnership with the DASD Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiative. The evening festivities featured local musicians and performers, games and activities for students of all ages, and food trucks featuring cuisine from around the world.

Entertainment was provided from a number of talented student musicians, singers and dancers who represented a number of different countries. Food was available for purchase from a variety of food trucks featuring cuisine from around the world.



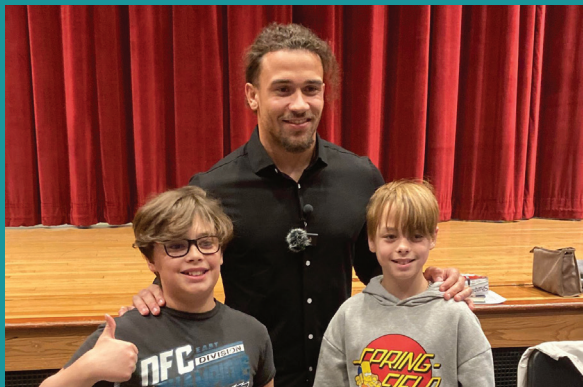


# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024

## ADDITIONAL RECOGNITIONS

- More than 42 district-wide DEI Events/Initiatives (ex: Indian Heritage Month, Multicultural Heritage Night, Themed Celebrations)
- Monthly door decorating to celebrate Black History Month, Autism Acceptance Month, Kindness Month, Unity Day, Women's History Month, etc.
- With the help and support of 115 parent volunteers, Indian Heritage celebrations were held in all 16 DASD schools, resulting in the creation of a booklet to celebrate the event
- Student life, along with faculty advisors and administration, engaging in positive conversations about improving school climate and positive school culture discussions.
- Departmental "Inclusion on Purpose" book conversations to promote inclusive culture



DASD hosted Philadelphia Eagles Safety Sydney Brown for an enlightening session on homelessness awareness as part of Homelessness Awareness Week in October 2023. Brown's life story is a testament to the incredible resilience and determination that can emerge from challenging circumstances. During the event, Sydney shared his story of overcoming adversity and achieving success against all odds. He engaged with the audience, answered questions and provided valuable insights into his journey.

## BEST BUDDIES

Best Buddies is a program that operates in schools across the United States, including Downingtown Middle School, East and West. The program provides support and inclusion for students with Autism and pairs Autistic students with other students, known as "buddies," who provide social interaction and support. The Best Buddies initiative is to create purposeful and meaningful relationships among members of the group. These buddy families are known to last for years after the students graduate.





# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024





# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



Women in STEM panel



Student Belongingness Conference



District wide Unity Day



Track & Field Day

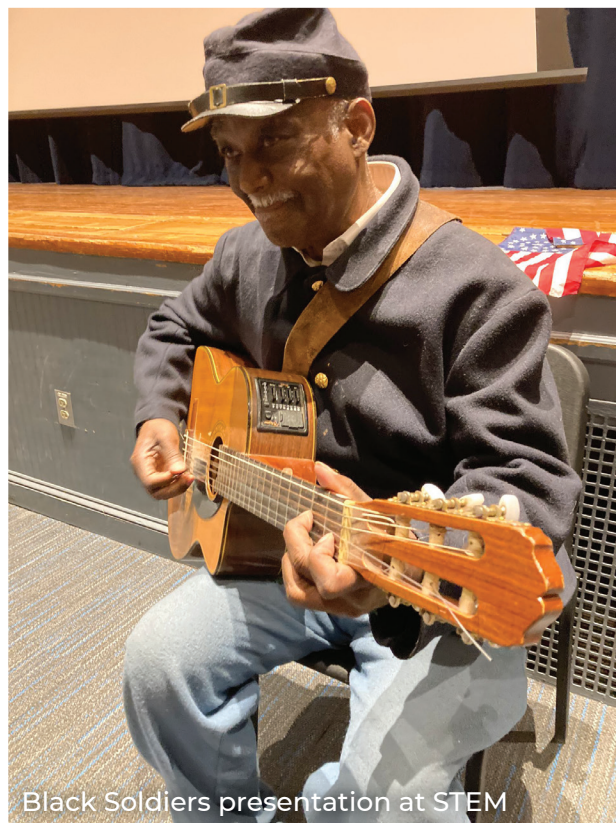


# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



Black History Month Presentations at EW



Black Soldiers presentation at STEM



Holi Festival at LMS



Hispanic Heritage Month at STEM



# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

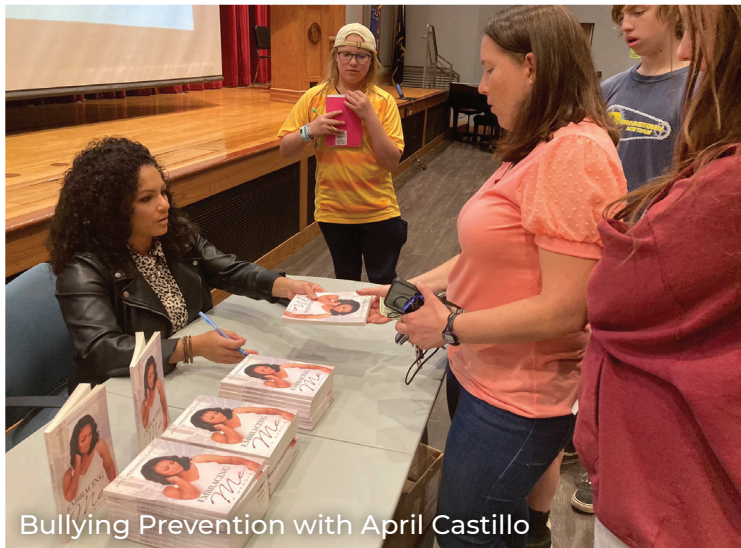
YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



Leadership lunches at DMS



Yom HaShoah Memorial at West



Bullying Prevention with April Castillo



Hispanic Heritage Month Food Exploration



Student Belonging Conference at T/E



Night of Remembrance Holocaust Survivor





# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024



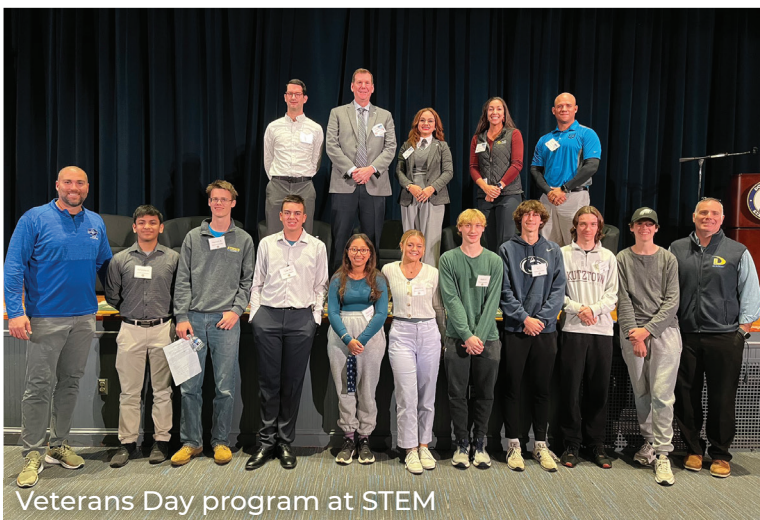
Autism Acceptance with Ben Hartranft at BH



MLK Day project at BC



Hispanic Heritage Month Cuban band at EW



Veterans Day program at STEM



DEI mural DCEF collaboration at LES  
by Autumn Crawford



# DEI IN THE CLASSROOM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023/2024







## ABOUT DASD

Set in the heart of Chester County, Downingtown Area School District is a twenty-first century district with the idealistic warmth and charm of a small town. As a close-knit yet diverse community of over 13,000 students, and as the sixth largest in PA, DASD students are challenged, engaged and inspired through a multitude of academic opportunities, passionate educators and innovative teaching methods. DASD values collaborative learning and critical thinking while remaining focused on student wellness and serving the whole child. Boasting some of the top schools in the state and nation, we are proud of our tradition of excellence.

### Contact

(610) 269-8460  
[WWW.DASD.ORG/DIVERSITY](http://WWW.DASD.ORG/DIVERSITY)

### Address

Downingtown Area School District  
 540 Trestle Place  
 Downingtown, PA 19335