



Jewish Family Community Engagement

WISSAHICKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

JANUARY 13, 2026

Introductions

Welcome!

Jason Holtzman, Chief of Jewish Community Relations Council
Samuel Thomas, Director of Jewish Community Relations Council
Gulienne Rollins, Education Manager and Facilitator
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia



Amy Ginsburg, Board President
Mwenyewe Dawan, Superintendent
Sean Gardiner, Assistant Superintendent
Keziah La Torre, Director of Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Who's in the Room?

Parents and Caregivers

Community Members

Faith Leaders

Anti-Defamation League

WSD Staff and Administrators

WSD Board Members



Agenda

Welcome & Community Norms

Lower Gwynedd Elementary Principal Update

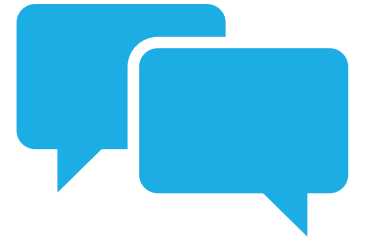
MS Mural and HS Language & Culture Fair Update

Interactive Q & A: MS Mural and HS Language & Culture Fair Update

Professional Learning and Student Engagement

Open Forum: Voices of the WSD Jewish Community

Small Group Goal-Setting: Transforming Insight into Action



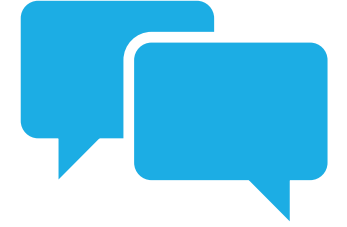
Community Norms

- Context of Respect
- Respect the clock.
- Please speak from your own experience.
- Listen for understanding.



LOWER GWYNEDD ELEMENTARY

PRINCIPAL UPDATE



Lower Gwynedd Elementary Principal Update

MS MURAL UPDATE

Background of MS Mural

Concerns Raised

What was the initial thought behind the mural project in 2021?

- Started in 2021
- Finished in Spring 2023
- **INTENT:** Showcase positive representation of Asian Americans during a time of anti-Asian sentiment to foster awareness and belonging.

Concerns raised in 2025

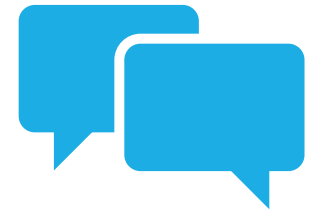
- Linda Sarsour being antisemitic.
- No formalized process to evaluate murals for appropriateness.
- **IMPACT:** Displaying Linda Sarsour's image resulted in some Jewish students feeling unsafe and unwelcome, with daily exposure to the mural causing distress and negatively impacting their sense of belonging.



MS Mural Update

Response Team: Dr. Dawan, Dr. Gardiner, Ms. La Torre, Dr. Blair, and Dr. Nikolov

- Investigated concerns immediately
- Responded to parents/caregivers' emails and calls
- Informed the middle school staff of the concerns with the mural
- Sent letter to Middle School families following investigation
- Met with former middle school Asian Student Association (ASA) members, mural contributors
- Contacted the parents of the Asian Student Association (ASA) members, mural contributors
- Student Engagement with members of Asian Student Association (ASA), Jewish Student Union (JSU), and Muslim Student Association (MSA)



MS Mural Update

Response Team: Dr. Dawan, Dr. Gardiner, Ms. La Torre, Dr. Blair, and Dr. Nikolov



- Engaged external Jewish advocacy organizations
- Spoke with local Rabbis
- Response Team explored possible options based on information gathered from research, administrative conversations, and discussions with multiple stakeholders, including the student engagement
- Response team made the decision to cover Linda Sarsour and associated images and quote. Recently the image was removed completely.
- Administration developed a formalized approval process for Student, Staff, or Community mural projects

MS Mural and Mural Review Update



**Wissahickon School District
Mural Proposal Form**

Step #1: Mural Proposal Form - Completed by Person/Group Proposing the Mural

Name: _____ Circle: Student Staff

Group Name (if applicable): _____

Grade (if applicable): _____

School (if applicable): _____

Email: _____

Project Title: _____

Proposed Wall Location (Building/Room/Surface): _____

Dimensions (H x W): _____

Materials (paint type, VOC rating, panels vs. direct wall): _____

Timeline (start/end dates): _____

Supervision Plan (adult sponsor present during work): _____

Step #2: Mural Description - Completed by Person/Group Proposing the Mural

1. What message do you want your mural to communicate to the school community?

2. How does your mural reflect the values of inclusion, belonging, and respect for all? (if applicable)

3. Are you including any individuals (historical, cultural, or activist figures) in your mural? If yes, please explain who they are, why they are included, and how their presence supports the mural's message and aligns with Wissahickon's values.

**Wissahickon School District
Mural Proposal Form**

Step #3: Sketch of Mural - Completed by Person/Group Proposing the Mural

Required with Submission

☐ Sketch/Storyboard ☐ Materials List

Sketch of Mural

List of Materials:

**Wissahickon School District
Mural Proposal Form**

Step #4: Process to Evaluate Proposed Mural - Boxes checked by the Principal/Designer

☐ Request to Create a Mural in a School - Principal/Designer provides the Wissahickon School District Mural Proposal Form.

☐ WSD Mural Proposal Form is completed by the proposing individual or group and handed in to the Principal/Designer.

☐ Principal/Designer reviews page 1 (Step #1, Step #2, and Step #3) as part of the Principal preliminary review - check box at the bottom of page 1 to verify all supporting materials are attached prior to moving to Step #4.

☐ Review of the Mural - Step #4 completed as a group at the same time (meet virtually or in person to discuss)

☐ 4-Member Review Team comprised of: (1) Principal/Designer, (2) one Teacher representative, (3) Director of Equity and Cultural Belongingness or Director of Teaching and Learning, and (4) Director of Facilities/Design.

☐ Step #4, all members of the team sign off on page 4 and check the box for either Approved or Denied (may submit with revisions).

☐ The Principal/Designer scans the form and keeps it in digital form at the school level.

☐ Mural is Approved or Denied

☐ If the mural is approved, the proposing individual or group collaborates with the appropriate people using the start and finish date identified in Step #1.

☐ If the mural is denied, the proposing individual or group can resubmit the mural with revisions. The 4-member review team will reconvene and discuss the revisions to determine if it is approved.

**Wissahickon School District
Mural Proposal Form**

Step #5: Completed by the Review Team

MUST ALL BE YES FOR THE MURAL TO BE APPROVED

Criterion	Yes	No	Notes
A. Educational Alignment & Inclusion			
Aligns with district mission and values promotes inclusion, equity, and educational purpose.	☐	☐	
Celebrates diversity and represents multiple perspectives.	☐	☐	
Age-appropriate for all grade levels.	☐	☐	
B. Content Restrictions			
Complies with nondiscrimination policies; no hate speech, harassment, or discriminatory imagery.	☐	☐	
No political advocacy (candidates, parties, legislation) or lobbying messages.	☐	☐	
No religious imagery.	☐	☐	
No commercial advertising, logos, branding, or sponsorship recognition outside of District-affiliated organizations or clubs.	☐	☐	
Avoids graphic violence or other inappropriate themes.	☐	☐	

**Wissahickon School District
Mural Proposal Form**

Step #6: Signatures of Review Team

Criterion	Yes	No	Notes
C. Documentation & Intellectual Property			
If depicting real individuals, proposer's research demonstrates alignment with district values and nondiscrimination policies; sources are provided.	☐	☐	
Tags only original or properly licensed imagery; permissions are documented.	☐	☐	
Materials list, timeline, and supervision plan are complete and submitted with this proposal.	☐	☐	

Signature of Review Team

Principal or Designer

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Director of Equity and Cultural Responsiveness or Director of Teaching and Learning

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Representative

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Additional Representative (if applicable)

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Faculty Sponsor/Advisee (if applicable)

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Director of Facilities or Designer

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

☐ Mural Approved

☐ Mural Denied (may resubmit with revisions)

**Wissahickon School District
Mural Proposal Form**

Return to Advisor/Individual if Resubmission Needs to Occur

Resubmit to Principal or Designer

Name: _____ Circle: Student Staff

Group Name (if applicable): _____

Project Title: _____

The following items do not all line with the mural expectations and must be resolved:

- A. Educational Alignment & Inclusion: Met/Not Met
- B. Content Restrictions: Met/Not Met
- C. Documentation & Intellectual Property: Met/Not Met

What needs to be resolved (from the Not Met categories only):

Date resubmission must occur before: _____

Changes made to the mural: _____

Revised Sketch of Mural - Circle any changes that were made

HS CULTURE & LANGUAGE FAIR UPDATE

Background of Culture & Language Fair

Concerns Raised

What is the purpose of the Fair?

- **Started in 2019 – Four World Language Courses**
 - French, German, Japanese, and Spanish Language Booths
- **2024 - Seven Affinity Groups Added**
 - Asian Student Association, Black Student Union, Hispanic/Latine Association, Indian Culture Association, Italian Culture Club, Jewish Student Union and Muslim Student Association
 - Each student group showcases their cultures and languages by independently designing activities and displays, many of which include games, food samples, cultural artifacts or clothing, and opportunities for interaction.
 - **INTENT:** The event provides opportunities for students to learn, engage, and celebrate cultures.

Concerns raised in 2025

- A specific display from one of the Affinity groups.
- No guidelines from the School District to ensure appropriateness and consistency of the displays.
- **IMPACT:** The inclusion of cultural items that have been widely politicized and known to be politically charged caused some Jewish students to feel marginalized and unsafe, which eroded their trust in the school's commitment to inclusivity.



Culture and Language Fair Update

Response Team: Dr. Dawan, Dr. Gardiner, Ms. La Torre, and Dr. Blair



- Investigated concerns immediately
- Responded to parents/caregivers' emails and calls
- Sent letter to School District families following investigation
- Met with Muslim Student Association (MSA) advisor and officers
- Met with Jewish Student Union (JSU) advisors and officers
- Student Engagement with members of Muslim Student Association (MSA) and Jewish Student Union (JSU)

Culture and Language Fair Update

Response Team: Dr. Dawan, Dr. Gardiner, Ms. La Torre, and Dr. Blair



- Engaged external Jewish advocacy organizations
- Spoke with local Rabbis
- Consulted with District solicitors
- Response Team explored possible options based on information gathered from research, administrative conversations, and discussions with multiple stakeholders
- Administration developed Guidelines for Club Advisors: Student Displays at School Sponsored Events

Guidelines for Club Advisors: Student Displays at School Sponsored Events



Wissahickon School District

Guidelines for Club Advisors:

Student Displays at School Sponsored Events

Purpose:

- Help advisors support student groups in preparing thoughtful, complete, and engaging displays.
- This is **guidance only**, focusing on **format, clarity, educational purpose, and safety**, not content approval or censorship.
- Advisors** – please check off the boxes for each question as you work with the student group.

Advisor Role

- Advisors **do not approve or disapprove viewpoints**.
- Advisors **support students** in meeting event guidelines.
- Any **concerns** about controversial items should be **raised to administration**, not handled by the advisor.
- Advisors support **open and honest conversations** about differing viewpoints by facilitating discussions **without providing their own opinions**.
- Advisors **ask thought-provoking questions** about the **inclusion of symbols, items, or visuals** to generate thoughtful discussions to discern the **intent and impact** of including these in a display.

Sample Advisor Script: "My role isn't to tell you what to display, but to help you think about how your booth clearly represents your group, is safe, and fits the event expectations. Let's make sure you have multiple elements, context, and awareness of how your display may be perceived."



Wissahickon School District

Guidelines for Club Advisors:

Student Displays at School Sponsored Events

1. Alignment With Group Purpose (Identity and Purpose)

- Group's Mission or Focus
 - How does this display connect to your group's purpose?
 - What do you want people to **understand about your group**?
 - If someone visited your booth without you there, how would they describe the purpose of your club by looking at your booth without any explanation?

2. Categories & Clarity (Intention, Education and Explanation)

- Cultural Identity & Origins (geographic or historical roots, languages, and identity)
 - How do the items or pictures chosen represent your group?
- Traditions & Customs (holidays, celebrations, and shared practices)
 - How do the items or pictures chosen represent your group?
- Foods (traditional foods and their cultural significance)
 - How do the items or pictures chosen represent your group?
- Arts, Music & Dance (artistic expression)
 - How do the items or pictures chosen represent your group?
- Clothing & Adornment (traditional and contemporary attire)
 - How do the items or pictures chosen represent your group?
- Items Chosen – **Intent**
 - Have you provided a **clear explanation of the intent of each item**? This could be cultural, religious, identity, or a shared interest.
 - For each item, what might someone unfamiliar with this item think it means?
- Items Chosen - **Education**
 - If someone walked by for 30 seconds, what would they learn?



Wissahickon School District

Guidelines for Club Advisors:

Student Displays at School Sponsored Events

3. Consider Perception, Empathy, and Impact (Multiple Viewpoints)

- Perception, Empathy, and Impact Considerations
 - How can we honor our culture while ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all students?
 - Are students prepared to explain the cultural meaning while acknowledging different perspectives?
 - Does the display include a focus on history, traditions, language, or **contributions from individuals**? Could any of these be misunderstood, triggering, or harmful to others?
 - Are there **individual** symbols, items, or visuals in your display that have **multiple meanings or associations**, including political or historical ones?
 - Does the **combination** of any of the items, visuals, or symbols have a **different meaning** when put together compared to individually looking at them?
- Safety Considerations
 - Could someone **feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or targeted by this display**?
 - Could any symbol, item, visual or activity be **misunderstood, triggering, or harmful** to others?
 - Are students comfortable with their booth being displayed alongside other groups?

4. Student Interaction & Conduct

- Interacting with Participants
 - How will you make the experience fun at your booth while engaging participants in a respectful way?
 - What does **respectful engagement** look like at this event?
 - How will you respond to questions, disagreements, or challenging questions?



Wissahickon School District

Guidelines for Club Advisors:

Student Displays at School Sponsored Events

5. Display Structure & Completeness (Physical Design)

- Physical Design
 - Is the display entirely within the assigned booth space?
 - Are items safe and securely displayed?
- Items Chosen
 - Ideally, you will have multiple items to represent your student group. Does the booth include **three or more display items** (e.g., symbols, images, informational texts, artifacts, food)?
- Layout or Placement of Items
 - Where will the items or visuals be **displayed** or used in your booth?
 - What is the **size of the items or visuals** that will be displayed or used in your booth?
 - Are you offering a prize to play an activity?



Wissahickon School District

Guidelines for Club Advisors:

Student Displays at School Sponsored Events

Name of Club: _____

This sketch must be submitted to the Principal at least 10 days prior to the event. Advisors must attend a meeting with the Principal and other club advisors to review each sketch.

Note: A walkthrough of the student displays will occur 30 minutes prior to the school event occurring to compare the accepted sketch to the display.

Sketch of Display

Brief Description of categories:

- Cultural Identity & Origins (geographic or historical roots, languages, and identity): _____
- Traditions & Customs (holidays, celebrations, and shared practices): _____
- Foods (traditional foods and their cultural significance): _____
- Arts, Music & Dance (artistic expression): _____
- Clothing & Adornment (traditional and contemporary attire): _____

Reviewed by Advisor (Name): _____

Reviewed by Administrator (Name - Principal or Designee): _____



Interactive Question & Answer

Clarifying Questions

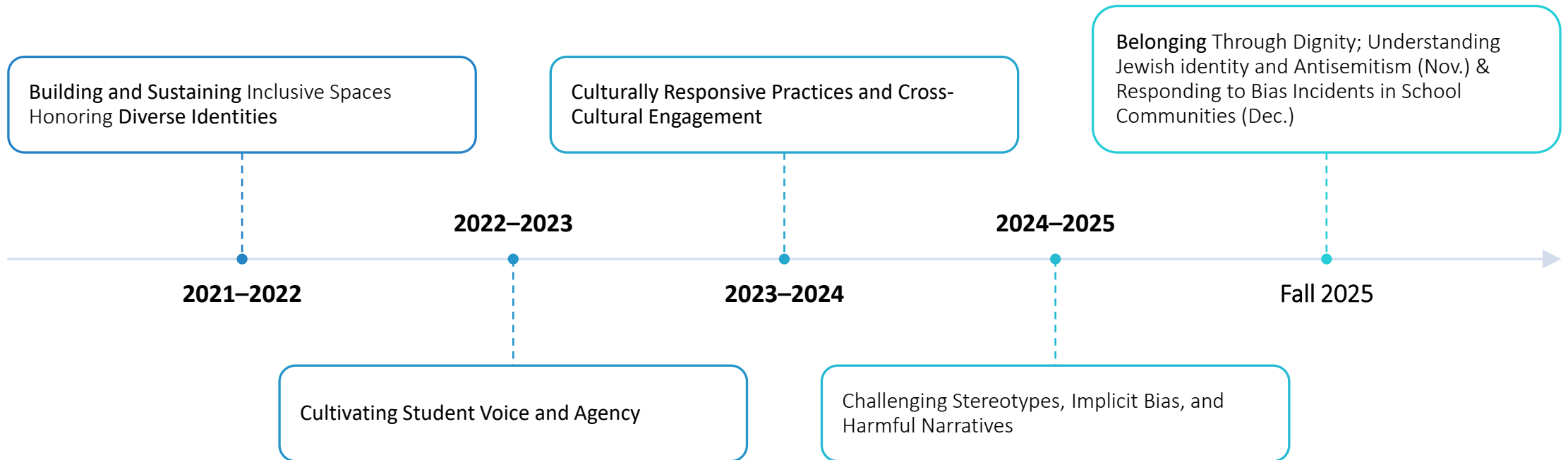


Professional Learning and Student Engagement



Professional Learning: 2021 – Present

Leadership Team's Learning Session Themes



Professional Learning: Looking Ahead



In addition to the ongoing district and school-based professional development, a portion of the professional development days will be dedicated to training on the topics below.



Understanding Jewish Identity and Antisemitism

•Elementary, Secondary Math, Specialists, Student Services

January 2026

February 2026

Understanding Jewish Identity and Antisemitism:
Building Awareness for Classroom Practice

May 2026

Understanding Jewish Identity and Antisemitism

•Secondary ELA, Social Studies, K-12 Encore/Elective Departments

2026-2027

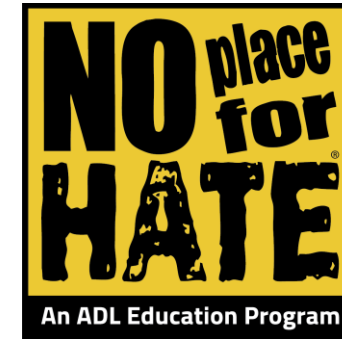
Ongoing Training: From Awareness
to Action: Advancing Belonging Through Identity-
Conscious and Dignity-Centered Practices

Student Engagement



No Place for Hate School-Based Initiatives – 2023 - Present

- 2023 – 2024 and 2024 – 2025: All Six WSD Schools were designated No Place for Hate schools by meeting specified criteria from the ADL.
- Through school-wide, discussion-based and active-learning activities, students and staff learn new ways to challenge bias and bullying.
- Submitted collaborative projects that exemplify the intentional work at each building to foster respect, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding.
- Continuing this work during the 2025 – 2026 school year and future years.



Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

- Exploring Partnership: Spring, 2026 and 2026 – 2027 School Year.
- Determining what it will look like to work with students to explore and understand the interconnected issues of bias, discrimination, prejudice, and cultural awareness; antisemitism; identity-based incidents; and to foster critical thinking and empathy.



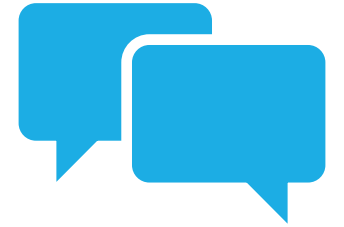
— 125 YEARS —
Jewish Federation
of Greater Philadelphia

Open Forum: Voices of the Jewish Community

Open Forum: Voices of the Jewish Community

Community Norms

- Stay engaged.
- Experience discomfort.
- Speak your truth.
- Make space. Take space.
- Expect and accept non-closure.
- What is learned here is shared with others.



QR Code for Additional Insights

Additional Insights



SAFE SAY
SOMETHING

SEE IT. REPORT IT.



MOBILE APP



1-844-SAF2SAY



SAFE2SAYPA.ORG



Questions or Concerns?

Parents/Guardians often wonder where to turn with a question or a concern regarding their child or other school issues. Starting "too high up the ladder" often requires information backtracking and can leave valuable allies out of the loop.

Here are some handy guidelines to use:

Classroom problem?

- 1 Start with your **child's teacher**. They are in the best position to address classroom-related issues. If the problem is outside the teacher's area of expertise or control, the teacher will refer you to the right person.

Classroom Teacher

Not able to resolve your problem with the teacher?

- 2 Go next to the **school principal or supervisor** who usually will be able to resolve your problem or refer you to the right person.

School Principal or Supervisor

Issue or inquiry is not being resolved at the building level or isn't a building level issue?

- 3 You might be referred to a member of the Wissahickon School District administration. You may also consult our list of **administrative departments** to determine whom would be the most appropriate person to contact, depending on the nature of your inquiry.

Administrative Departments

Buildings & Grounds
Business
Communications
Curriculum & Instruction
Food Services
Health Services
Human Resources
Student Services
Technology
Transportation

Still cannot resolve your problem through the above channels?

- 4 Contact the **Superintendent's Office**

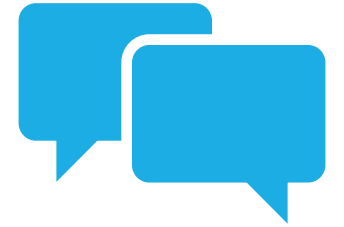
Superintendent's Office

Small Group Goal-Setting: Transforming Insight into Action

Small Group Goal-Setting

Transforming Insight into Action

- What concerns, fears, or unanswered questions still exist?
- What is one concrete step, large or small, that we could collectively commit to after tonight to strengthen safety, belonging, and accountability?
- What would meaningful communication or transparency look like moving forward?
- Drawing from your experiences or perspectives, what actions could the School District take to prevent harm and respond more effectively if incidents arise in the future?



Thank you!

HAVE A WONDERFUL EVENING!