

WHEN EVERY STUDENT'S STORY MATTERS:

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH IDENTITY

On October 6th, TAF@Saghalie Middle School's 392 students completed a transformative "Who Am I" Cultural Identity Portrait project demonstrating the power of inclusive education. Through collaboration between the Technology Access Foundation (TAF) and Federal Way Public Schools (FWPS), students explored:

"How can getting to know each other's stories help our school become a place where everyone feels welcome and included?"



Jennifer, 7th grade



Graham, 6th grade

STUDENTS AS CULTURAL AMBASSADORS

Over a month, students created artistic portraits showcasing "Where I Come From" and "Who I Am Today." Jennifer, sharing her Tongan heritage, explained "This part is really special to me because it makes me feel safe." Graham, with Mexican and English roots, discovered connections: "It was really fun and cool to learn about what my culture had to offer." Reehana's traditional Samoan and Tongan patterns sparked



Reehana, 7th grade

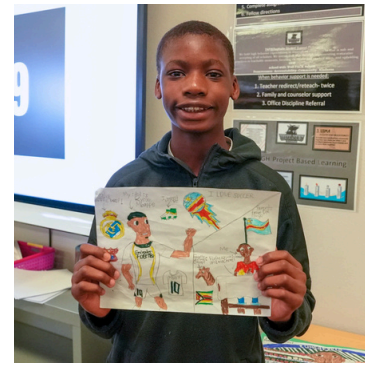
conversations about cultural meaning, helping her feel "more open to other people about my culture," giving her confidence to explain her heritage authentically.

LEARNING THAT TRANSFORMS

Students engaged in meaningful work developing critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural competence while meeting Washington State's Social-Emotional Learning Standards. Students demonstrated self-advocacy as evidenced by Jennifer's expectations: "to feel safe and happy at school, I need teachers to help and communicate with me."

CREATING GENUINE SAFETY AND BELONGING

Most powerfully, the project revealed how TAF@Saghalie creates authentic safety. Noble, from Zimbabwe with Congolese parents, shared: “I think what I learned is [what] a better learning community would be like... they have rules here on like, no racism and it makes me feel real safe. ‘Cause like at my old elementary school, there's a huge problem with that.” Students celebrated

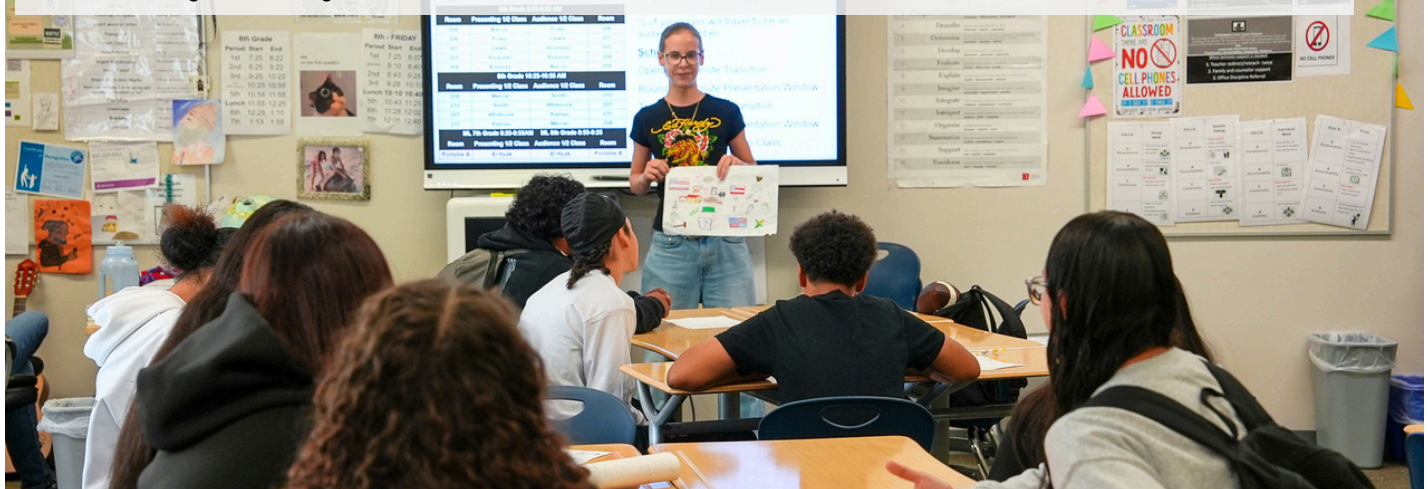


Noble, 6th grade

support systems like Mrs. Sassao, the counselor who “hosted a Pacific Islander club” for cultural sharing. One student confidently stated that “TAF@Saghalie has many safe spaces for all of us.”

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

The project fostered genuine cross-cultural curiosity. Graham emphasized that “it's very important to listen to each other... It's very important to learn about other people so that they can be your friends.”



Daniel, 8th grade, presenting in Wolk Pack (advisory) class

A SCHOOL WHERE EVERY CHILD BELONGS

Graham's advice about completing the project captures the school's spirit: “Don't be afraid. It's going to be so much fun... just be yourself, show your colors, show your culture.” Noble encouraged future students: “TAF@Saghalie is here for you.”

This project is an approach that sees each child as a whole person with valuable experiences to share. The **TAF-FWPS** partnership creates a learning environment where students develop essential skills while feeling genuinely safe, valued, and celebrated for who they are.

[CLICK HERE OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PROJECT](#)

MEET THE STUDENTS

