STUDENT RELATIONS AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

YEAR IN REVIEW



DOWNINGTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

2025/2026

MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

At the core of every student's experience is the need to feel safe, supported, and genuinely connected. In Downingtown Area School District (DASD), we are committed to creating a culture rooted in kindness, understanding, and belonging—where every student knows they matter. These efforts align directly with our Strategic Plan, especially Goal 1: "Students feel Safe, Connected, and Engaged."

Over the past 13 years, DASD's student population has grown and evolved in remarkable ways. In response, we have expanded programs, events, and student supports that allow every child to feel seen, celebrated, and empowered to be themselves. We believe that when students feel a true sense of connection and care, their confidence, well-being, and academic success naturally follow. Building a positive and welcoming school climate takes time, empathy, and collaboration.

At DASD, our staff and students work together to create a learning environment where everyone can pursue their goals without fear of being marginalized or misunderstood. Acts of disrespect, bias, and exclusion have no place in our classrooms, cafeterias, or hallways. Instead, we strive to build spaces where kindness is practiced, voices are heard, and everyone feels at home. Belonging is more than just being present—it's about being welcomed and valued for who you are. Every member of our school community has a role in helping others feel this sense of connection.

Through relationships, compassion, and responsiveness, our staff leads with heart and intention. When students know they are respected and supported, they are more likely to engage, persevere, and flourish. We also recognize that each student brings their own unique story—shaped by identity, experience, and background. Our role as educators is to honor those stories and ensure that every child has the tools and encouragement they need to grow, lead, and dream big.

We are proud of the progress we've made in fostering a stronger, more connected district. And as we move forward, we remain dedicated to building schools where belonging, safety, and mutual respect are not just ideals—but everyday realities.

Sincerely,
Justin Brown



Justin is an author, speaker, and educator with over 15 years of experience in education. He currently serves as the Director of Student Relations and School Climate at Downingtown Area School District, where he fosters inclusive environments and supports student engagement. Known for his dynamic leadership and communication skills, Justin is committed to helping students build life skills like collaboration, empathy, and self-motivation. His mission is to empower students to overcome challenges and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Justin Brown, M.A.
Director of Student Relations and School Climate

INTRODUCTION

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

DASD teachers, staff and students are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels a true sense of belonging, allowing individuals to pursue their academic goals and dreams without the interference of exclusion or disrespect.



DVCEE Middle School Leadership Summit



Native American Heritage Month at UH



Native American Heritage Month at SM

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. We are privileged to live and work on the land we now occupy and wish to acknowledge the Lenape people and their land.

CORE VALUES

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

DASD SRSC Mission

Our mission is to ensure DASD fosters a culture of kindness, empathy, and respect, creating a supportive environment where every individual feels a sense of belonging. By prioritizing mental health, well-being, and connection, we aim to build a school community where students and staff can grow, flourish, and positively impact those around them, both within and beyond the DASD community.

DASD SRSC Vision

DASD is committed to fostering a culture of kindness, empathy, and respect. We strive to create an environment where every individual feels valued and supported, celebrating the unique qualities and backgrounds that enrich our community. Through understanding and compassion, we aim to address challenges thoughtfully and build a school culture that uplifts and unites all members of our district.

To nurture a positive and supportive environment, DASD is committed to fostering a culture of kindness, respect, and empathy. Bullying or discrimination of any kind has no place in our schools. We strive to build a district where everyone feels valued and included, encouraging students and staff to be compassionate, respectful members of our "Good Neighbor" community. With support, care, and accountability, students are empowered to take an active role in their learning and grow into confident individuals who positively impact their school and community.

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

- Academic Rigor - We challenge students to take thoughtful risks and think critically through problem-solving that promotes growth and meaningful learning
- Student Engagement - Students are immersed in meaningful, intentional learning that extends their understanding and encourages them to consider their impact on the broader community
- Student Agency - We empower students to take ownership of their learning by giving them voice, offering choices, and providing the tools, support, and accountability they need to succeed

01

EVALUATION

Continuously evaluate our commitment to empathy, cultural awareness, and personal growth to foster an environment of understanding

02

ELIMINATION

Actively eliminate barriers to full inclusion, ensure equal access to services, resources, and learning opportunities for all students

03

ELEVATION

Elevate our mutual respect for each other, promote collaboration, and ensure open communication to strengthen our shared community

BELONGINGNESS STATEMENT

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Spread the Word to End the Word

K-6 BELONGINGNESS STATEMENT

We want Downingtown Area School District to be a welcoming and kind 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 BELONGINGNESS 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, welcoming, and kind learning environment for all that is built on a 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.
Belongingness 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.

SRSC & **WELLNESS**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

The state of DASD's mental health and well-being is directly connected to creating an environment that values empathy, understanding, and support.



Student Wellness

Student wellness is essential for academic success and overall health, as positive mental and emotional well-being plays a significant role in supporting students' learning and personal growth. Schools that foster a sense of belonging and support the whole child are better able to meet the academic and wellness needs of all students. Effective school-wide strategies that prioritize wellness and support individual needs empower students to reach their personal goals.



Staff Wellness

Promoting staff wellness is equally important in creating a positive school culture that nurtures the well-being of all staff members. School-level teams focused on fostering inclusive, supportive working environments contribute to positive mental and emotional well-being, helping staff manage the everyday challenges they face in both the classroom and the community.



Community Wellness

In school communities, addressing mental health and wellness is crucial for meeting students' academic and emotional needs. When schools design opportunities to integrate mental health with supportive, inclusive practices, they raise awareness, promote positive attitudes, and encourage behaviors that are essential for student success both inside and outside of school. A nurturing environment where all individuals feel respected and valued promotes the overall well-being of the community.

SCHOOL CLIMATE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT TEAM

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



> Relationships are the foundation for institutional work.

Director of Student Relations and School Climate

School Climate and Student Engagement Leadership Team

School Climate and Student Engagement Team

Building Climate Teams

The purpose of the School Climate and Student Engagement Team (SCSET) is to create a school community where all students, staff, and families feel valued, supported, and respected. By fostering understanding, kindness, and belonging, the task force aims to promote positive relationships and develop policies, procedures, and practices that nurture a welcoming and positive school environment where all students feel they belong.

The SCSET adheres to the following responsibilities

- Foster understanding and eliminate barriers that prevent students or staff from feeling valued and included
- Review policies, procedures and practices to ensure support across all levels
- Seek stakeholder input and engagement to better support needs of the school community
- Analyze survey results to improve services
- Respond thoughtfully to incidents that impact climate and culture within the district
- Propose events and programs to enhance district climate and culture
- Establish clear timelines for implementing initiatives that support kindness and respect
- Attend regular SCSET meetings and subcommittee meetings

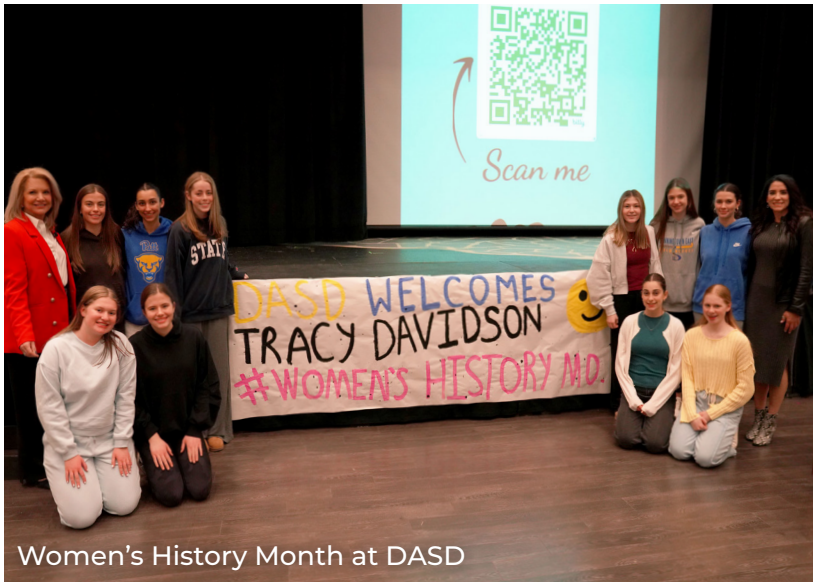
SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



DASD Unity Day


Veterans Day at LMS



Women's History Month at DASD



DASD Track and Field Day

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Hispanic Heritage Month at MC6GC

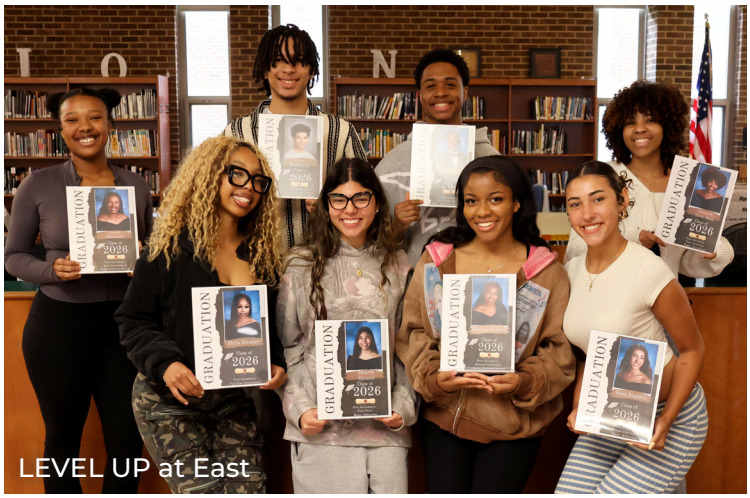

Lunar New Year at BW



Student Life Committee at West



ELD Night at EW

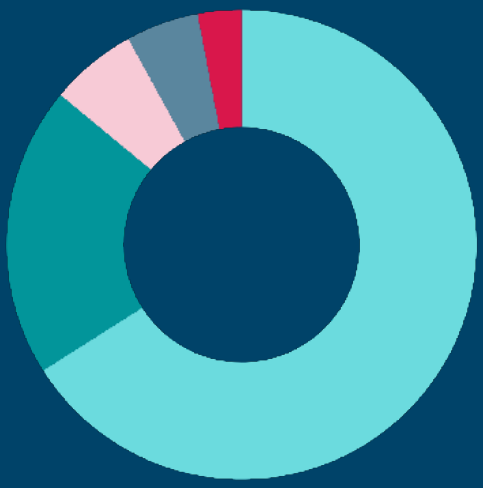


LEVEL UP at East



African Step Dance Ensemble at BC

WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?

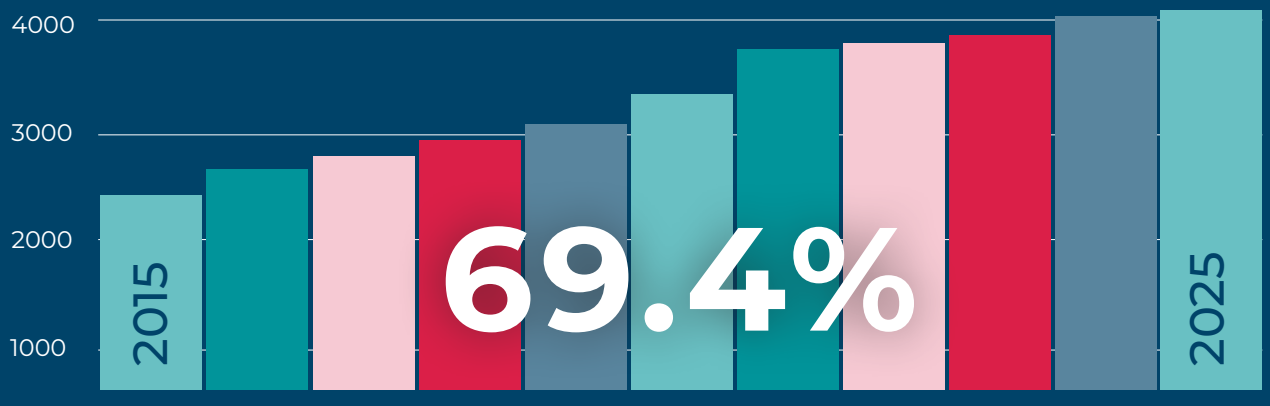




2025/26 DEMOGRAPHICS

- WHITE - 63%
- MULTI - 6%
- ASIAN - 22%
- BLACK - 3%
- HISPANIC - 6%

DASD STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



10-YEAR INCREASE IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF STUDENT POPULATION

SRSC **BY THE NUMBERS**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

3,500+

COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPANTS

- SIX BIG IDEAS TO GROUND AI IN EDUCATION WITH MATT MERVIS
- BREAKING THE BURNOUT CYCLE FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS WITH SCOTT PRENDERGAST
- YOM HASHOAH - HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL EVENT WITH SECOND GENERATION SPEAKER LINDA JAFFE
- BELONGING IN 2026: MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE WITH JEN CRONEBERGER
- TEAMWORK AND PERSEVERANCE WITH PHILADELPHIA EAGLES WILL SHIPLEY
- CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH WITH TRACY DAVIDSON
- AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH WITH PHILADELPHIA EAGLES DARIUS COOPER AND MISS PENNSYLVANIA
- NEVER FORGET: A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S STORY WITH DR. JACK WETTER
- DASD UNITY DAY
- INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

75 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT MEMBERS

16 BUILDING CLIMATE TEAMS



WWW.DASD.ORG/SRSC

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



INDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

This year at DASD, parent volunteers partnered with the district to host “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.









SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

WILL SHIPLEY

Students and staff at DASD had the exciting opportunity to welcome Philadelphia EaglesWill Shipley to our schools.

Will spoke with students about the importance of hard work, perseverance, leadership, and staying connected to the people who support you along the way. He encouraged students to remain confident in themselves, overcome challenges, and continue pursuing their goals both inside and outside of the classroom.

His visit inspired students while also helping foster a positive climate centered on empathy, teamwork, and belongingness throughout our school community.





SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS CLUB



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
- Book Talks (teacher-supervised literature sharing)
- Highs and Lows of the past week (authentic sharing/discussion)
- Self Portraits





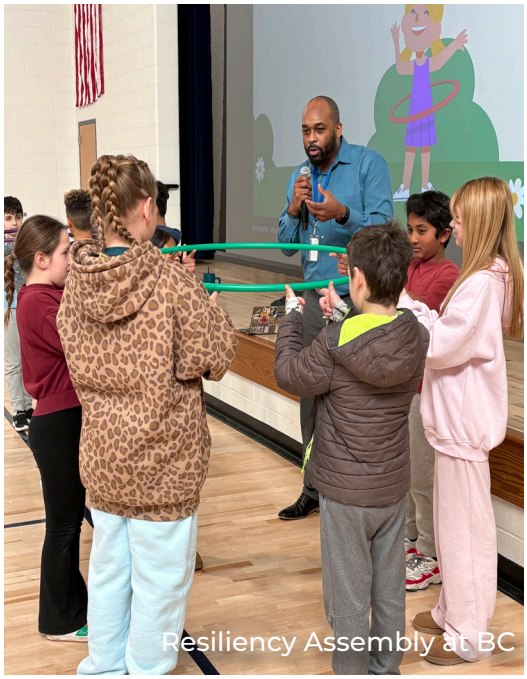


SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Hispanic Heritage Month with Aramark



Resiliency Assembly at BC

MAKING CONNECTIONS



LAW ENFORCEMENT SYMPOSIUM

Making Connections joined students from across the county for the Chester County District Attorney's Office Student and Law Enforcement Symposium. 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.



CHAT & CHEW WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Making Connections had the opportunity to meet with local law enforcement, strengthening relationships and building community connections. Through open dialogue, students were able to ask questions, share their perspectives, and foster stronger ties with law enforcement.

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Culture Night at BW


Shades of Brown Event at East


Holocaust Survivor Presentation at DMS


Hispanic Heritage Month Cuban Band


9/11 Ceremony at LMS

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026

ADDITIONAL RECOGNITIONS

- More than 40 district-wide SRSC 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 100 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.



DASD welcomed Darius Cooper and Miss Pennsylvania for an engaging program in recognition of Autism Acceptance Month. Cooper shared his personal journey and encouraged students to lead with kindness in their daily interactions, while Miss PA spoke about acceptance and the importance of making peers feel seen and supported.

Throughout the visit, Cooper and Miss PA connected with students by answering questions and encouraging empathy, leadership, and positive relationships. Their message left a lasting impact on students and staff while reinforcing a school culture rooted in belonging, encouragement, and mutual support.

BEST BUDDIES

Best Buddies is a program that operates in schools across the United States, including Downingtown Middle School, Lionville 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.







SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



International Family Heritage Night at SC



Diwali at East



Black History Month Project at EW



UH Bubbles of Kindness



Sankofa Conference at Bloomsburg University



Winter Food Bank Donation Drive at SM

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YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Student Life Committee at DMS



Rock Your Socks at WB



Indian Heritage Month at MC6GC



Día de los Muertos at DMS



Red Ribbon Week at MC6GC

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Veterans Day at LE


Yom HaShoah Ceremony at West



Black Soldiers Presentation at DMS



Miss Pennsylvania at LE

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026


Hispanic Heritage Month at STEM


UH Kindness Club


Will Shipley at PV



Dignity Driven Leadership Training

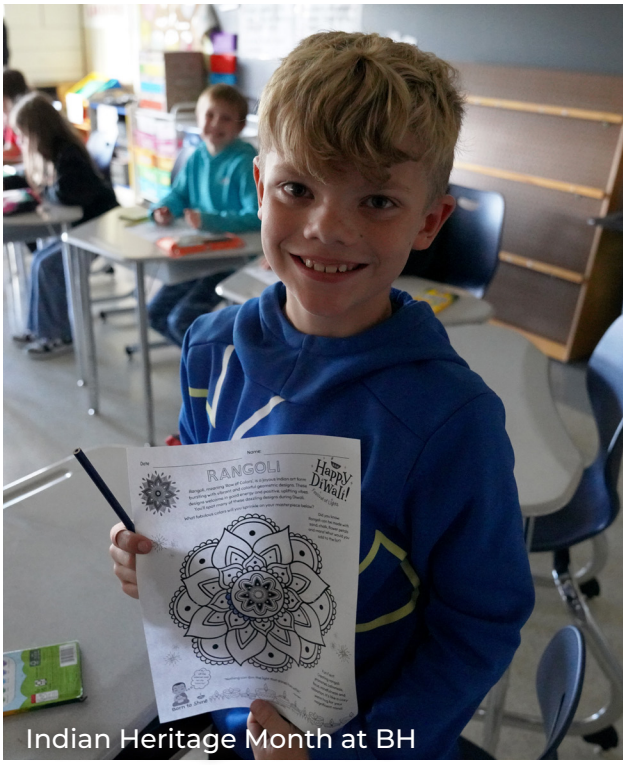

Indian Heritage Month at WB


LE Culture Fair

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026


Making Connection at STEM



Indian Heritage Month at BH


DASD Track and Field Day



Latino Fair at East


First Responders Day at SC

SRSC **IN THE CLASSROOM**

YEAR IN REVIEW 2025/2026



Read Across America


Holocaust Memorial Ceremony


Tipi Rising at BW


MLK Day of Service



Mental Health Resource Fair at East



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

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SRSC IN DASD