



Whitney Wolves

Dear Parents and Legal Guardians of Eli Whitney:

It's hard to believe but the first Marking Period of the 2019-2020 school year has come and gone by very quickly! It has been both an exciting and eventful start of the year. Over the next two weeks, parents/guardians will meet with their children's teachers during parent-teacher conferences being held on:

- *November 6th/13th Full days/Evening conferences*
- *November 12th/14th Early Release days/Afternoon conferences*

In addition to the Second marking Period beginning, we are also embarking on an amazing time of year where we purposefully reflect on the many things for which we are thankful for. Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to share just a few of them with you: We are thankful for our students who come to school every day ready to learn – they give us all a daily reminder of what is important and why we are here. We are thankful for the support of you, the parents, in creating an outstanding partnership for our students. We are thankful for the Teachers, Paraeducators, Nurse, Bus Drivers, Secretaries, Lunchroom Aides, Support Staff, and PTO who really care about student achievement and have the best interests of our students at heart. We are also thankful for our Volunteers and Community Stakeholders who enthusiastically contribute so much to our school regularly.

In these often-challenging times, we see dedicated and tireless individuals going above and beyond to make sure that great things continue to happen at Eli Whitney! They do make a difference, and the children, in their own individual ways, benefit from these efforts. Most importantly, we are appreciative for you, the parents/guardians who have kept the faith in us. You continue to share your most valuable possession with us and—in most cases—work hard and advocate to be a partner in your children's education, safety and well-being. For this, we are ever so thankful.

In addition, all schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where each student achieves academically and socially, has a strong and meaningful voice and is prepared for democratic life and a successful transition into the 21st century global society. A positive school climate and culture is an essential element of achieving these goals. Therefore, a rigorous implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote these desired outcomes.

The Enfield Public School District Board of Education (the "Board") adopts these policies that are guided by the fundamental belief that each and every school community member should be treated with dignity, should have the opportunity to learn, work, interact and socialize in physically, emotionally and intellectually safe, respectful and positive school environments, as well as the opportunity to experience high quality relationships. Schools, therefore, have the responsibility to promote conditions designed to create, maintain and nurture positive school climate and culture which also lends itself to **"Social Justice"**. **Social Justice** means a community that enables its members to be fulfilled as fully engaged contributors within their community. It provides the foundation for a healthy and thriving school community that takes care of all its members, especially those with the least advantage or those who have been historically, marginalized. A socially just community ensures that there is complete and genuine fairness (equity) and equality. To that end, each school community member (students, faculty/staff, parents/guardians, family members, community members, etc.) no matter his or her age, role, power base, privilege, advantage, etc.:



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- 1. Has value, worth and is treated with dignity;*
- 2. Is assured protection of his/her liberties, rights and opportunities;*
- 3. Is honored and celebrated for his/her unique background, culture, language, gifts and/or challenges;*
- 4. Has fair and equal access to all curricular, extra-curricular educational and social programs;*
- 5. Is provided the opportunity to have a meaningful voice in decision making and policy creation; and*
- 6. Feels physically, emotionally and intellectually safe to exercise his/her voice, participate freely and contribute to the well-being and benefit of the entire school community.*

Let me also take the time to reiterate what has been already explicitly outlined within our BOE Policies as well as within our Elementary Schools Handbook for parents and students. We, at Enfield Public Schools, take bullying and harassment very seriously. Furthermore, we adhere to all state of Connecticut statutes regarding this important subject. Recently, we have learned that some of you may not be fully aware of these policies, our programs for students and staff, including specific procedures, to prevent and follow up on bullying or harassment reports submitted to the school.

Sec. 10-222d. Safe school climate plans. Definitions. School climate assessments. (a) As used in this section, sections 10-222g to 10-222i, inclusive, and section 10-222k:

(1) “Bullying” means (A) the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district, or (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. “Bullying” shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics;

Let me remind you that we want to maintain our partnership with you, as parents and legal guardians of Eli Whitney students. We also want to continue sharing all that we are doing this year – and every year – to prevent bullying/harassment, including policies and procedures for reporting and follow up. You are encouraged to talk about bullying and harassment with your children and the negative effects it can have on them and others with whom your children interact. Furthermore, we appreciate ideas or suggestions you may have, so please feel free to contact us to share them as well as keeping in mind that we welcome you to join our amazing PTO as there is still room for you!

When we receive a report that an alleged bullying/harassment may have occurred, we adhere to the process mandated by the Connecticut State Department of Education. Most importantly, we ensure that students’ rights are protected, and we are committed to doing investigations in a thorough manner. Investigation procedures may take some time, but we complete investigations as quickly as possible to resolve each complaint brought to our attention. Also, we



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will protect the confidentiality of each student involved, and therefore we will not be able to share what kinds of consequences have occurred for other people's children.

To help instruct and empower our students, we at Eli Whitney adhere to *(PBIS) Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* which begins with the philosophy that positive behavior must be taught and supported consistently in order for appropriate behavior to increase. The **PBIS** approach establishes school-wide behavioral expectations that are infused into all areas of the campus. These expectations are what makes up our **Whitney P.A.C.K.:** *Positive, Accountable Careful and Kind*. The approach emphasizes modeling, teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviors related to these expectations. Although **PBIS** focuses on modeling, teaching, and recognizing positive behavior, it is also used to address problem behaviors in a more meaningful and restorative way.

PBIS expectations and strategies are used in all areas of Eli Whitney – in classrooms, on buses, during physical education and recreation activities, in cafeterias and in many other common areas on campus. In addition to **PBIS**, you will hear your child engaging in discourse around *Restorative Approaches & Practices as well as Social-Emotional Learning and overall Mental Health Awareness* throughout this year and the years to come. As Principal, it has been my commitment to ensure that all students learn essential, life-long Academic, Social and Emotional Learning competencies of:

- *Self-Awareness*
- *Self-Management*
- *Social-Awareness*
- *Responsible Decision Making &*
- *Relationship Skills*

For your reference, I have provided links and/or attachments that are available for you to read through and discuss within your household. One, is our Three-Year Restorative Approaches and Practices Plan. The second, is information about (CASEL), Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning. The third, is our District's Safe School Climate Plan. Again, you are strongly encouraged to hold regular conversations with your student (s) to inform and empower them to know their rights as a citizen of Eli Whitney.

Furthermore, I would like to once again extend my deepest gratitude to all of you for welcoming me into this dynamic community at Eli Whitney and Enfield Public Schools respectively. My journey thus far has been nothing short than amazing!! I also would like to say, "Thank You", again for being such engaged, involved and cooperative parents. Lastly, I would like to take this time to extend to all of you and your families a happy, healthy and relaxing holiday break that will be here before we know it!



With Gratitude,

TaLoria M. Wilson