



## Pine Brook School

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To Our Pine Brook Community,

We are pleased to inform you that during the week of September 16th, your child will be engaging in schoolwide culture-building activities for “Start With Hello” week at Pine Brook School. “Start With Hello” week brings attention to our students about the importance of skills they need to reach out to others they may not normally socialize with, those who may feel lonely and to create a culture of inclusion and connectedness within their classroom and school. With all of our students being new to Pine Brook, this is a perfect time to introduce oneself to a new classmate!

Last year, schools from across the United States participated in a week of activities to highlight and spread the message of the power of “Start With Hello’s” three simple steps:

1. See Someone Alone
2. Reach Out and Help
3. Start With Hello

What is known as social isolation for some is the overwhelming feeling of being left out, feeling lonely, or being treated like you are invisible. It is a growing epidemic in the United States and within schools across the country. According to a 2018 survey of 20,000 adults, nearly 50% of Americans reported sometimes or always feeling alone while feelings of loneliness are the worst for younger generations per this loneliness study.

We encourage you to talk to your child about the “Start With Hello” activities they are engaging with throughout the week and ask them to share what they have learned. Not only will that help you learn how to support your child to identify isolation and to reach out and connect with others, but it also demonstrates to your child that you can support them in their actions to create a more connected and inclusive home, classroom, school, and community.

Please also be advised of the following school culture spirit days (Remember, participation is optional, but encouraged):

- **Monday, September 16th - “Wear a Kindness/Positive Message T-Shirt, if you have one!**
  - Encourage students that if they have a t-shirt about being kind, caring, or nice to someone or just a message of positivity, wear it today!
- **Tuesday, September 17th “Say Hello” Day**
  - Wear something with your name on it! And if you do not have anything, no worries! Our office will be distributing nametags for students, educators, and administrators to wear; everyone will be encouraged to greet each other by name in the hallway, when entering school, classroom, and dismissal (students write the first name only on tag). A small hello acknowledging the person’s name can go a long way in making someone feel special or less isolated. Better yet, add a compliment with your hello, and carry on this concept each day of the school year!
- **Wednesday, September 18th “Wear Green” Day**
  - Show support for school and student safety by having your child wear green. Green is the recognized color of the “Start with Hello” project which was started by families affected by Sandy Hook. Students will discuss the importance of “starting with hello” and the reasons

why inclusivity, kindness, and getting to know others that may not be in their circle of friends are important and necessary!

- **Thursday, September 19th - “Talk Like a Pirate” Day**
  - Today is International Talk Like Pirate Day! We all came from different schools and have had different experiences, but we are all now Pirates! Show off your pirate pride by wearing your best Pirate accessories/gear/colors.
- **Friday, September 20th #KeepCalmAndPirateOn!**
  - We are all one community of Pirates! We all may be different and unique, which is what makes us special, but we all have something in common — we are all part of the Pine Brook family! Have your child show school pride by wearing Pine Brook spirit wear or red/black/white for our school colors!

For more general information about Sandy Hook Promise programs, please visit:  
<https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/>. Thank you for supporting “Start With Hello” week and our school!

Thank you,  
*Julie Szustowicz*  
Julie Szustowicz  
Principal

