

EXAMPLE ONE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APPLETON EAST TO HOLD “WORDS HURT” CAMPAIGN

Appleton East High School is holding a week long campaign (January 11-15) against slurs. The week’s focus is to make students aware of the words they use that may be harmful to others. Although the campaign has been organized by the Gay-Straight Alliance and their advisor, Lana Thiel, the participation in the week has grown to include a multitude of clubs. It is well-supported by staff and administration.

The week will consist of different events and activities geared toward creating awareness about the effects of harmful language. Different clubs have taken charge of organizing ways to spread the word including “Words Hurt” bracelets, posters, ribbons, and t-shirts. Teachers and students will take a pledge to be more mindful of words that are used by themselves and others.

The GSA held an informational meeting for teachers on Thursday, January 7. They were given the opportunity to sign a pledge and offered a “Safe Zone” poster to hang in their classroom symbolizing a zero tolerance policy for negative language. Students will have the chance to participate in a training seminar after school on Monday, January 11. It will be an open forum on the issues facing Appleton East and how we can address them.

Every Thursday, Appleton East participates in “East Reads,” a period dedicated to silent reading. Thursday, January 15 we will be participating in our second “East Writes” which will ask students to anonymously write about a time that words have hurt them. They will decorate the walls of East to send the message that words really do hurt even if someone doesn’t intend to do so.

Our largest event will take place on Friday, January 15. The GSA leaders, Maria Peeples, Katie Cronmiller, and Jason Donker have organized presentations that will take place in the auditorium. There is one speaker for each class period focusing on a variety of issues including, religious tolerance, racial equality, cognitive disabilities, domestic violence, mental illness, GLBT youth, and issues of class.

After already seeing the amount of support our school has shown we are hoping that Words Hurt Week will encourage other surrounding schools and the community to take part in similar efforts. We believe this week will have a large impact on the way kids speak to each other at Appleton East.

End

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APPLETON EAST TO HOLD “WORDS HURT” CAMPAIGN

Appleton East High School is holding a week long campaign (February 18-22) against slurs. The week’s focus is to make students aware of the words they use that may be harmful to others as well as to let go of any hurt they have experienced. This is the fourth year that Appleton East has implemented a program they have coined “Words Hurt Week.” The week has spread to many other school districts, including surrounding schools as well as schools halfway across the country. In 2009, Words Hurt Week was originally inspired by advisor and Communication Arts teacher Lana Thiel and a small group of students in 2009 who wanted to make their school a safer place.

“Words Hurt” week has continued to grow each year, adding new events and ideas. The week has become much more involved and there is widespread support for the events. Many students and teachers get involved in the event and help with planning. Words Hurt Week is now organized by advisor, Lana Thiel, and a committee of students of all grade levels and backgrounds. The committee is known as “The Words Hurt Committee” and they volunteer their time and energy because they believe that this is an event that will change the environment of their school. The main leader and contributor is high school senior, Lizzy Mui, who not only designed the Words Hurt t-shirt and bracelet but has spent countless hours with her advisors Lana Thiel and Elissa Hoffman to organize the event and make it happen.

Some of the events of the week include an “East Writes” activity which asks students to write an anonymous statement to anyone or anything about a time that they have been affected emotionally. They decorate the walls of East to send the message that they are not alone in their struggle. This year, the wall has both blue and white post cards that spell a message if you stand from afar: “Be the Change.”

On Monday, January 30 there was a Spoken Word Night where kids could express themselves through poetry. This week Thursday during 6th hour students are able to sign up for a self-defense class to learn how to defend themselves if someone is attacking them. There will be presentations Thursday and Friday this year, one speaker for each class period focusing on a variety of issues including, racial equality, cognitive disabilities, domestic violence, mental illness, LGBT youth, sexual assault, eating disorders, and bullying. Presenters are volunteering from all over the community to be a part of this event. A few high schools from the area are coming to check out our “Words Hurt” week in hopes of starting their own “Words Hurt” week at their high schools.

Ashleigh Ashton, a singer-songwriter from Illinois will be playing her music for the students during Thursday presentations and a special event Thursday night from 6-8 for the community. Heather Severson will also be speaking about domestic violence that night.

What started out as an inspired idea by one teacher and four students has turned into a campaign for all schools to end bullying. The students at Appleton East are proud that they have inspired courage in others.

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