



ECPS EXPRESS

Monthly News and Notes about Essex County Public Schools

November 2018

Essex Schools Teach Positive Behaviors to Handle Life's Challenges

A wise observer once said, "growing up is hard to do." And for some children, a little extra help is needed to encourage them to use a positive approach to handling challenges that come with life in and outside of school.

It's no surprise that students in ECPS work hard at mastering traditional areas of learning such as math, English, science and social studies. But they also focus on mastering positive behaviors that they are expected to display at schools, on school buses, and at school events through a program called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The simple, but powerful idea behind PBIS is to create a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm.

"Introducing, modeling and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important part of the student's overall educational experience here in ECPS," said Superintendent Dr. Scott A. Burckbuchler. "We believe it is truly important for them to be able to manage conflict and choose socially appropriate behaviors, which will help them succeed in life."

Beyond providing lifelong skills, the PBIS program has also dramatically reduced the number of incidents that might require a formal discipline action, such as a suspension. In fact, Tappahannock Elementary School (TES) under the leadership of Principal Angela Gross and Assistant Principal Fontella Calhoun, saw its out-of-school suspension numbers decrease by 77 percent for its special education students over a one-year period. TES was recently recognized for this accomplishment by the Virginia Department of Education at the Education 2018 Equity Summer Institute.

Updated discipline data was recently shared and discussed at the School Board meeting. It showed a significant decrease in discipline referrals at Tappahannock Elementary of 82 percent as well as a 17 percent decrease at Essex Intermediate and a 26 percent decrease at Essex High over a one-year period. In reviewing the data, Dr. Burckbuchler noted, "Clearly the students, faculty, and staff are working very hard to create a positive school environment. I am very encouraged and thankful for their efforts."

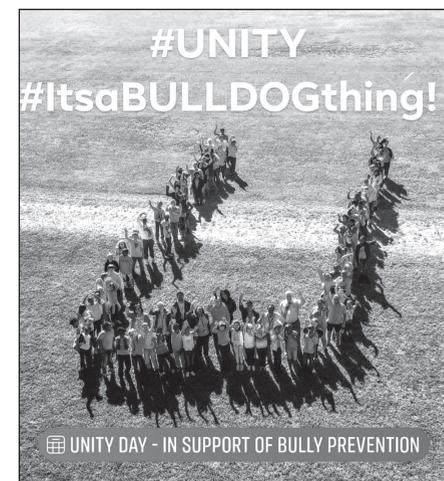
How does PBIS work? A variety of tools and interventions are used to help students improve their behaviors. For example, teachers develop in-class

motivators to encourage students to make the right decisions such as assigning class jobs to students, praising students, and allowing students to help determine classroom expectations. There is also home counseling for parents as well as matching students with mentors. Teachers are also encouraged to use creativity for initiatives, such as a recycling program that was student led and served as a positive motivator.

Students who exhibit positive behavior receive rewards such as "Free Fridays" at Tappahannock Elementary and Essex Intermediate. For example, at TES they can participate in extra gym time, play basketball or choose their own activity. At EIS, it is used as enrichment time where students play math games or participate in different clubs such as the step team or drama club.

ECPS is fortunate to partner with the College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University both of which provide a variety of services and assistance to teachers that enhance their professional practice in PBIS. For example, teachers learn to use a framework to make decisions that help them provide multiple levels of support to students quickly and effectively.

"Our commitment to our students is not only focused on ensuring they succeed academically, but also on giving them the skills and knowledge to navigate life's challenges," said Dr. Burckbuchler. "That is the hallmark of an excellent education, which every child is provided here in ECPS."



ECPS Graduate Rate Surpasses State

One of the measures of a school division's success is the percentage of students who graduate from high school. For the last school year (2017-18), the ECPS graduation rate surpassed the state's graduation rate. Congratulations to our students, families, teachers, and staff whose hard work and focus made this possible!



Virginia | 91.6%
ECPS | **93.3%**

You are Invited

Looking for some outstanding entertainment this holiday season?
We welcome the community to our upcoming performances:

EIS WINTER CONCERT

December 6
6:30 p.m. at EHS

EIS DRAMA PRODUCTION OF ROBIN HOOD

December 7 & 8
7 p.m. at EIS

EHS WINTER CONCERT

December 13
7 p.m. at EHS

Essex County School Board
Denise Hammond, Chair
Jacob Plummer, Vice Chair

Garlyn Bundy
Leah Segar
Raymond Whitaker

P.O. Box 756
109 Cross Street Tappahannock, VA 22560
804-442-4366 | www.essex.k12.va.us

The ECPS Express is published
with support from the
Rappahannock Times.