



# S.P.A.R.K.

Supporting positive attitudes, resilience, and knowledge

September 2023



## A note from Mr. Whipple

As we finish up our second “round” of SPARK classes we are encouraged by the conversations students are having at each grade level.

As an additional part of our SPARK program we are introducing Conversations Circles, which some of you may be familiar with as a part of Restorative Justice Practices. The purpose behind these conversations is to engage grades in difficult/controversial topics and practice what it looks like to speak and listen from the heart and work to communicate ways to better understand each other even if we disagree.

This month’s topic was cancel culture. Grades discussed their thoughts, feelings, and the societal issues surrounding cancel culture in pop culture as well as within our own communities.

Importantly, the conversation circles help build the foundation for when we run into student situations that require a more in depth conversations and repairing harms in the community. It has already proven fruitful!

## Digital Citizenship with Dr. Eicher

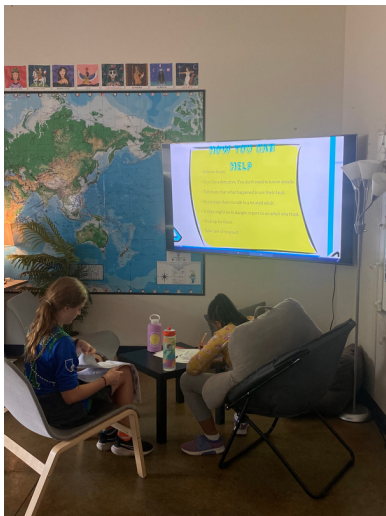
In **8th Grade Spark** we focused on practicing inclusivity in person and online. We discussed how offering respect makes others feel included. We also discussed how to respect someone we may not choose as a friend, and kids shared that sometimes that's hard. While this is not exclusively an online issue, we talked about topics that apply on and offline. It's clearly something 8th graders are thinking about but are not confident they understand how to navigate. One 8th grader pointed out that sometimes people we like don't treat us with respect, and they find that puzzling. **To continue this conversation at home, you might have a family discussion about the distinctions between liking and respecting someone. This can be a hard concept for middle-schoolers to grasp. Maybe share examples from your own life of how you give respect and share it—even with people who are not necessarily friends.**

In **7th Grade Spark** we considered online hate and the importance of seeking help. We discussed how sharing—be it a dance video or an opinion—involves exposing ourselves to negative attacks on our ideas, our identities, our bodies. Kids were remarkably aware: one 7th grader suggested that when sharing online, you should expect some negativity and have a plan to deal with how “haters” make you feel. 7th graders seemingly needed no convincing and were receptive to the idea of seeking help rather than attempting to deal with online hate alone. Parents, of course, are essential allies, but we also reminded kids that Seabury teachers and staff would always offer support in dealing with an upsetting online experience. **At home, maybe remind kids that if something online is making them feel bad about themselves, it's probably a sign that they should talk to a trusted adult who can give them a broader, healthier perspective.**

In **6th Grade Spark** we took on stereotypes. Be proud: 6th graders know how to identify a stereotype and know why they are dangerous. 6th graders completed a survey reflecting that most of the stereotypes they encounter involve gender and race. When asked what they would do if they were in a group text stream where someone expressed a gender or racial stereotype, our 6th graders were twice as likely as the national survey to say they'd call out the person expressing the stereotype. 6th graders taking a stand is applaudable, but they were less sure on how to kindly “call out” the person. One dimension that 6th graders need help navigating is how to challenge someone spreading a stereotype without totally alienating that person. **To continue this conversation at home, you could discuss how you encourage others to disengage from stereotypes and still keep them in community so they continue growing with you.**

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING WITH MS. BAKER POWERS

This month in Executive Functioning Skills class, the students were surprised to learn that your working memory only holds about 3-5 items at a time. This was the lead into the conversation about the importance of planning and developing a system for staying on top of tasks. Every person needs a way to keep track of things, and for school this means assignments, homework, and due dates. Middle School students, who think they will remember everything without writing it down, are strongly encouraged to come up with an effective system and make it habitual through repetition. Every middle schooler has been given a year-long planner, complete with school events and holidays, but we also explored multiple different "styles" of planners such as one specifically for our block schedule and one for planning out a long term assignment. **They are invited to come to the Student Success Center to pick up these materials.** 8th graders were introduced to a cool website called [Goblin Tools](#) that will, with a few prompts, electronically create a to-do list, while also providing time estimates and a breakdown of tasks. We discussed that successful planning means having the materials you need, a logical action plan, allowing time for the unexpected, and avoiding the procrastination trap. **Parents are encouraged to make sure that their child has a system and is using it effectively and consistently. Ask to see their planners each week and discuss ways that you stay organized in your life.** Starting this week, we have a fun Middle School competition for October designed to incentivize their planner usage, with the end goal being that they will see and reap the benefits of forward thinking!



## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL & ETHICAL LEARNING WITH KALLI

Miss Kalli's 6th and 8th grade SPARK classes welcomed Layla McEniry from [The Care Center](#) (7th grade rescheduled for this week on 10/6). Layla led a fun and interactive conversation around consent, gender roles, healthy boundaries, and relationships. She also provided information about The Care Center's services such as free individual counseling, 24/7 support and advocacy hotline, as well as other educational experiences Layla offers. We are so excited to have her back in the future. Plus, she has the best coloring pages! Hummingbirds for Healthy Relationships, Turtles for Tech Safety and Manatees Against Mansplaining are Miss Kalli's favorites. Find them [here](#). **While students may not want to talk to their parents about some of these topics, we suggest you continue to make sure your student feels welcome to ask questions surrounding consent, boundaries, and sexuality. Utilize opportunities in pop culture to open conversations about healthy relationships.**

## THE SOCIAL INSTITUTE

Our partnership with [The Social Institute](#) has provided us with an abundance of useful material for student engagement, but some of their most impressive content can be accessed via the [Parent Toolkit](#). I hope you will take the time to explore the site and learn more about the things your students are engaging with in the digital world. When prompted, our code is: 27dc696725AD56

#WINATSOCIAL  
APP SPOTLIGHT



### TRIP-UPS:

- Viewing inappropriate content
- Consuming misinformation, such as [self-diagnosis videos](#)
- Allowing anyone to watch and comment on their videos
- Staying up late watching videos and missing out on quality sleep
- Getting distracted from doing work, school, or homework

### WINNING MOVES:

- Be aware of the public and private settings and what they mean. If you do not want every TikTok user to have access to your video, stay private.
- TikTok also has a setting that allows you to share your videos only with Friends (the people who you follow and who also follow you).

### STRONG SETTINGS:

- If your video is public, it allows others to view and edit it how they'd like, so stay private if you don't want this to happen.
- The new password-protected Digital Well-Being setting in the app can limit kids' screen time.
- Restricted Mode (another feature in the app) can help prevent the inappropriate content you see on your page.