

The Week At WHMS (parent edition)

Week of February 14, 2022








Thought for the week:

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

– Paulo Freire

Weekly Calendar: P.S. I Love You Week

<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Sat/Sun</u>
2/14	2/15	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19-2/20
<p><i>Day 2</i></p> <p></p> <p>All day – JVE Trade Show in MS Library</p> <p>Happy Valentine’s Day</p> <p>Club Meets: Mathletes - COMPETITION</p>	<p><i>Day 1</i></p> <p></p> <p>7:10a – Site-based Committee meeting</p> <p>Lunch periods: counselors in cafeteria to help with 8th graders’ HS course selections</p> <p>3:00p – Select department meetings</p> <p>Club Meets: Dignity & Tolerance</p> <p>7:30p – Board of Education Meeting @ HS VCR</p>	<p><i>Day 2</i></p> <p></p> <p>1:15p – PST meeting</p> <p>Club Meets: Art club; Dignity & Tolerance</p> <p>7:30p – PTSA meeting @ HS VCR</p>	<p><i>Day 1</i></p> <p></p> <p>All day – PD for ELA and SS teachers with UVM, see email for time/details</p> <p>Club Meets: Art club; Chess club; Science & Robotics</p>	<p><i>Day 2</i></p> <p></p> <p>8:45a – RTI meeting</p> <p>8th grade course requests for HS due TODAY</p>	<p>WINTER RECESS BEGINS</p> <p>School resumes on February 28th</p>

Instructional tips: (from *Edutopia*)

3 Ways to Enhance Culturally Responsive Teaching by Julia Benedit (excerpts)

Middle and high school teachers can cultivate student agency to facilitate conversations about difficult subjects in history class.

When I taught early American history, my students and I discussed both the tragedies and the triumphs surrounding the founding of the United States. My students—mostly Black and Latino—could appreciate the grandeur of the [Washington Crossing the Delaware](#) painting, while simultaneously empathizing with [Phillis Wheatley's](#) poetic longings for equality. A culturally responsive approach to teaching inspires deep conversations and can be equal parts challenging and rewarding.

Over time, I've come to realize that *understanding* the principles of culturally responsive education and actually *being* a culturally responsive educator are not synonymous. Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and successful execution may include mistakes, such as jumping into sensitive topics without building trust or making assumptions about students' lived experiences. There are three key steps to help navigate difficult conversations in a culturally responsive way.

1. CENTER STUDENT VOICE AND CHOICE

Culturally responsive teaching incorporates and connects students' interests and experiences to our learning objectives. Centering student voice and choice not only engages students; it also shows that their perspectives and input matter. Christopher Emdin's theory of [reality pedagogy](#), which centers student agency and connects academic content to current events, highlights the importance of co-teaching with students. Sharing the classroom "steering wheel" with students builds inclusivity, belonging, and their sense of agency.

For example, when I taught a unit about women suffragists, my students chose their research subjects as well as the facts they wanted to share with their classmates. I was amazed by how many of them focused on what women like Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were like growing up. I would not have thought to share much about suffragists' childhoods, and yet my students were so inspired by the suffragists' journeys toward activism.

Through this model of co-teaching, my students showed me their interests. I paid attention, and I integrated their values in subsequent lessons. Ultimately, culturally responsive classrooms support academic achievement through personalized connections.

2. DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SAFE SPACES AND BRAVE SPACES

Meaningful and challenging discussions will arise in your classroom. Safe spaces and brave spaces are foundational in fostering and holding such moments. According to scholar [Shihua Chen Brazill](#), a safe space is "established through mutual respect built on group norms," and it "protects students from psychological harm" and judgment. A safe space is the foundation of a brave space, which Brazill describes as "a tool to discuss controversial and sensitive issues regarding diversity and social justice."

An excerpt from Sandra Cisneros's [The House on Mango Street](#) inspired my class to engage in a conversation about family history and cultural belonging. In this safe space, students shared anecdotes and tall tales punctuated by moments of laughter and tears of nostalgia. During the conversation, a

student admitted that she was not always inclusive of people different from her. I knew it was time to transition into a brave space.

Typically, brave spaces allow learners to engage in critical analysis, challenge a norm, and/or engage in a debate. Teachers can use a visual or nonverbal cue as well as a verbal cue to signal such a transition. During this lesson, I explicitly signaled the transition from a safe space to a brave space by placing a blue magnet on the easel and leading the class through a “deep belly” breathing exercise... Throughout the conversation, I referenced anchor charts with community agreements so that students knew how to engage in the space.

When dialoguing in a brave space, ensure that everyone knows the hand signals and safe words needed to convey nonverbal communication throughout the discussion.

3. EASE STUDENTS INTO THE LESSON

One of the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy, a philosophy developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings, is to “[identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems](#).” This can be a difficult task. Immediately diving into hard questions and confronting content can be confusing, alienating, jarring, and/or traumatic. Especially in these moments, it is crucial to ease students into the lesson.

To start the lesson, preface the agenda and the content. Remind students that you will scaffold the unit over time (lesson by lesson) and let them know what the overarching goal of the unit is... You can begin by asking students what they already know about the historical event and what they would like to find out.

Furthermore, units should highlight acts of resilience from those who survived and fought for justice. We should celebrate and honor people who have been historically marginalized so as not to reduce their history to a single story of pain and suffering.

Culturally responsive teaching is good teaching. Successful and impactful culturally responsive teaching is a village effort, and members of the community can help you hone these skills. Have resources available for students to process their feelings at school (such as time with a guidance counselor) and for families to help with processing at home. The goal is not to be perfect but rather to be aware, flexible, and responsive.

For full article see <https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-ways-enhance-culturally-responsive-teaching>

Items of importance:

- The online course request window for our 8th graders going to high school run 1/31 through 2/18. Please see the mailed letter from Mr. Pumo, high school principal, which can also be found at: <https://www.whufsd.com/o/whhs/article/623645>
- **WEATHER NOTICE**: we have outdoor recess, outdoor AM line-up, and outdoor PE daily unless it is raining. Please make sure your child has appropriate clothing and outerwear. We only stay indoors if the temperature falls below 30° or the wind chill falls below 28°
- **Have you downloaded the West Hempstead App yet?** It is available in the App Store and Google Play, just search “West Hempstead.” This will let you keep track of everything happening in our school and access documents such as this “Week @ WHMS” newsletter.

- Let me know when you have exciting learning taking place that I can tweet out and be sure to tag @WH_MS RAMS if you tweet yourself

Items of interest:

- The yearbook is still for sale. Go to www.jostens.com for more information.
- Our club calendar is available on the website at: <https://www.whufsd.com/o/whms/browse/221769>. Students should listen to AM announcements for the most up-to-date information about meeting dates and locations.
- The **extra help schedule** can be found at: https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1553808/Extra-Help_Schedule_MS_21-22.pdf. Students should take advantage of teachers' availability to do their best work.
- The Homework Center is open after school on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. See details below:

Homework Center Information: 21-22

Homework Center is open 2:45-3:45 on the following days

Day	Teacher	Room	Notes
Monday	Ms. Healey	257	Support available for any subject, or just a quiet place to work after school.
Wednesday	Ms. Geiger	17	
Thursday	Ms. Rogan	16	

"COVID Corner" Information:

- The district has updated its plan and protocols regarding quarantine, isolation, and who is considered a "close contact" based on guidance from New York State. Go to: <https://www.whufsd.com/page/reopening-information> for more information.
- I cannot say how vital it is that **if your child, or anyone in your home, feels sick, your child MUST REMAIN HOME FROM SCHOOL**. Call the nurse or Mr. Murray for advice on when it is okay to return to school.
- **Please send your child to school with a refillable water bottle.** Our water fountains are "COVID-safe" and only the water bottle filler function is available.
- For more information about the COVID vaccine for 5-15 year-olds, go to: <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov>

Looking ahead:

Monday, February 21 through Friday, February 25: **NO SCHOOL – Winter Recess Begins**



Monday, February 28: *Day 1*

- **SCHOOL RESUMES**
- Interdisciplinary teaming committee, 3:00pm

Tuesday, March 1: *Day 2*

- Faculty meeting, 3:00pm
- Board of Education Budget Meeting, 7:30pm @ HS VCR

Wednesday, March 2: *Day 1*

- PST meeting, 1:15pm

Thursday, March 3: *Day 2*

- Schools to Watch committee meeting, 3:00pm

Friday, March 4: *Day 1*

- Math PD, all day
- RTI meeting, 8:45am