

WAYLAND · PUBLIC · SCHOOLS

41 Cochituate Road
P.O. Box 408
WAYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS 01778
www.wayland.k12.ma.us

FAX: (508) 358-7708

Arthur Unobskey, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
(508) 358-3774

Parry Graham, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
(508) 358-3772

Richard Whitehead.
Director of Student Services
(508) 358-3756

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance
and Operations
(508) 358-3750

Leisha F. Simon
Technology Director
(508) 358-3714

November 9, 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Over the last couple of weeks, it has been my privilege to share experiences with students and staff that have caused me to reflect on how we deal with student stress. Last Friday, I went to the middle school play, *The Rememberer*. I have also been rehearsing my small part in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Finally, I recently read an interesting children's book entitled *Anxious Little Pishy* by Brittany and Chris Joseph. In different ways, each of these experiences showed how the right kind of stressful situations can create empathetic and resilient children who are eager to impact the world.

The Rememberer, a play adapted by Steven Dietz from the memoir of Joyce Simmons Checka, depicts how a young Squaxin Indian girl from Washington state, is forcibly removed from her family's land and taken to a Christian school where she is taught how to wash, dress, pray, do chores and work like typical young white girls at the turn of the Twentieth Century. The main character, Joyce, struggles to remember and honor the traditions of her family even as she tries to comply with the hopes of her white instructors. Kelly Lopez, the Middle School's Theater Director, and the student-actors successfully communicated a wide range of emotions among the characters, from earnestness (the school's principal) to absurdity (the visiting superintendent). The play encourages our students on stage and in the audience to confront the impact of ignorant do-goodism. I was deeply impressed with the cast's and Ms. Lopez's eagerness to tackle a difficult and inspiring script.

I have also had a chance to spend some time on stage, preparing for my small part in *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. One of the central themes of the play is Charlie Brown's unyielding striving to be good, and all of the obstacles that his earnestness places in front of him. He has ambitions of eliciting a smile from the cute little redheaded girl, of winning the baseball championship, and of simply arriving to school on-time with a minimum of mishap. Yet, he fails over and over again. Furthermore, he takes everyone else's heartache as his own, blaming himself for Lucy's overconfidence and Linus' timidity. It's been fun for me to work with our high school actors and embrace Charlie Brown's consistently optimistic struggle with near-misery.

Finally, *Anxious Little Pishy (2018, Mischief Productions)*, is a picture book about an anxious fish who worries about things that "may or may not happen" or when "she [has] to do something on her own." She gets "butterflies in her tummy, and she [can't] catch her breath" "and she [doesn't] know what this feeling [is], and that [scares] her even more." Teacher Pish tells her "you might feel better if you talk about it." Mama Pish teaches her that "big pishies have anxiety too" and how to take a "deep pishy breath." She learned how to raise "her little fin in class when she wanted to and [not] raise it when she didn't." *Anxious Little Pishy* reminds us how students need our patience to help them find their voices.

WAYLAND · PUBLIC · SCHOOLS

41 Cochituate Road
P.O. Box 408
WAYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS 01778
www.wayland.k12.ma.us

FAX: (508) 358-7708

Arthur Unobskey, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
(508) 358-3774

Parry Graham, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
(508) 358-3772

Richard Whitehead.
Director of Student Services
(508) 358-3756

Susan Bottan
Director of Finance
and Operations
(508) 358-3750

Leisha F. Simon
Technology Director
(508) 358-3714

One lesson I have learned from watching our students is how quickly they pick up dance steps or how insightful they can be about history. I have also seen how learning is natural for them. Throughout this year, as part of our goal of deepening social emotional learning in the district, we will study how we can enhance our efforts to make our classrooms places where every student feels noticed and supported so that they enter the fray, share their point of view, make mistakes, and learn from others.

I am grateful for the opportunity to sing the line in *Charlie Brown*, "Happiness is morning and evening." Ultimately, this line sums up what we want for our children: that they enjoy their opportunities to question, debate and learn every day.

I look forward to continuing this ongoing conversation. I hope to see you at the show (November 16-18).

Sincerely,



Arthur Unobskey, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools