

REFLECTIONS

“We do not learn as much from experience as we learn from reflecting on that experience.” – Thomas S.C. Farrell, Author, Educator

In our previous issue of *Reflections*, we examined social/emotional learning strategies our district has embraced this year and in previous years, including Positive Behaviors in Schools (PBIS), Mindfulness, Sanford Harmony, and skills that Dan St. Romain is sharing in a pilot study by some of our kindergarten staff.



Pictured above is our SEL collaborative action team, which is helping district leadership navigate this initiative. Similar to a social/emotional context for learning is the *cultural* context, and this edition addresses an approach that seeks to enhance teaching and learning from a cultural standpoint. According to researchers, school districts that embrace culturally responsive teaching strategies can enhance student learning significantly.

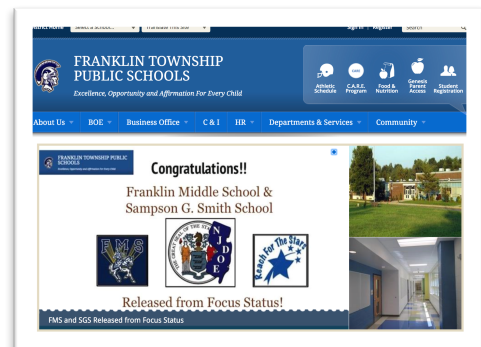
Franklin's Finest, Jan. 6th

Please join us for our fourth annual curriculum expo and performing arts showcase, to be held at FHS at 9:00 AM on January 6th.

Social Media Promotes Timely, Accurate Communication

To address one of the district's most important goals: “To improve efforts to ensure two-way, accurate, transparent communication, strengthening relationships with all district stakeholders,” FTPS implemented a new website and

social media on the website this fall. We at the *Reflections* staff are proud to contribute to this effort as well!



Culturally Responsive Teaching and the FTPS mission statement.

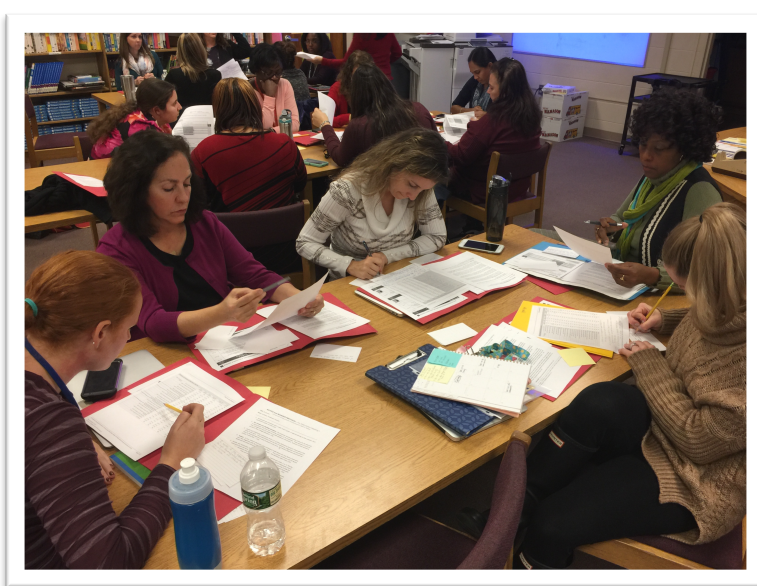
The district's mission statement – **Franklin Township Public Schools embraces its diversity, fosters excellent educational innovation and empowers all students to achieve their highest potential** – offers our school leaders a clear direction when formulating and making adjustments to existing programs. One area under current consideration involves the concept of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). In her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*, Zaretta Hammond defines CRT as an approach that uses "...familiar cultural information and processes to scaffold learning; emphasizes communal orientation; (and) focus(es) on relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical social awareness." In this past year, district leaders have been investigating CRT to determine how our schools can make the most of this approach, including engaging in book studies and bringing in guest speakers.

Cultural Awareness Speaker, December 12th

Parents are invited to this special presentation from nationally renowned speaker Robert Jackson, entitled *A Community of Learners*. Mr. Jackson speaks on learning topics from his perspective as a former math teacher to motivate and inspire teachers and parents to develop strategies for their students' success. Please join us for this exciting event!

Data-driven instruction is the result of a renewed PLC effort at FTPS in 2017

Beginning in the spring of 2016, district staff members were trained via the Institute for Authentic PLCs, known more commonly in the district as "Grapple." PLCs, or Professional Learning Communities, allow teachers to look more closely at student data, instructional practice, and to identify professional development needs as a result of instructional practice, and this year district leaders have created more time for this PLC process. Pictured below are teams from Conerly Road School engaging in the effort.



Culturally responsive teaching aims to enhance learning environments.

District staff members have been looking into cultural awareness and culturally responsive teaching as a means to enhance our learning environment from a cultural standpoint. One of our district's greatest assets is its diversity, and our district leaders have been investigating teaching strategies that serve our diverse population well. For example, a culturally responsive lesson is one that emphasizes student voice and storytelling, as this helps students see more relevance in lessons that allow them to see their own identity reflected in them. Pictured on the right: at New Teacher Orientation, staff members engage in a cultural awareness training session.

