



PROGRAM SUMMARY

2014 Middle School Student Leader Breakfast

St. Andrews

March 4, 2014

Executive Summary

The Parents Council of Washington hosted its annual Middle School Student Leader Breakfast on Wednesday, March 4, 2013 at St. Andrew's Episcopal School. Approximately 50 students and 25 administrators primarily from the 7th grade of twenty-five Parents Council of Washington member schools attended and participated in the event. St. Andrew's Assistant Head of School, John Holden, welcomed the students and thanked them for participating. Mr. Holden encouraged the students that the purpose of the event was for them to learn from each other and exchange information. This would provide important feedback to their school communities about their thoughts and concerns. Parents Council President, Ms. Joan Levy, opened the program, explained the agenda and introduced Michael Chapper, the 7th grade Lead Advisor and Civics Teacher, and Kristin Cuddihy, the 8th Grade Lead Advisor and English Teacher from St. Andrews as moderators of the student discussions.

After the welcome and ice-breaker exercise, discussion centered around the definition of a 'leader'. Then the students brainstormed topics of discussion which included self-image/esteem, identity, influence of mass media, bullying, homework, time management, cliques, and communication. Students were randomly divided into four groups, and each group was assigned a topic. After a small group discussion, students participated in a 'fishbowl' where they briefly shared their thoughts with the group.

Eight topics were addressed. Regarding **Self-Esteem/Self-Image**, students discussed the pros and cons of wearing uniforms, with agreement that they are generally a good equalizer for students. Other comments included that confidence comes from people that you associate yourself with, but that the self-discovery that comes with maturity can create insecurity and make navigating friendships harder. The topic of Bullying mainly focused on bullying via social media, and how much easier it is to forget that there is a real person on the other side of the screen. Students also discussed **Media Influences**, and the pros (raising awareness, keeping in touch with friends) and cons (posting things that you later regret).

The next topic was **Friend Groups and Cliques** where kids talked about difficulties in breaking into a different group, and how to navigate cliques. **Communication and Honesty** centered on communicating through social media, and how comments such as “jk” (just kidding) are a guise for saying unkind things. **Homework** centered on being distracted by electronics, and planning your time when studying for a test. The topic of **Identity** had students discussing how people see who you really are, and how what you think of yourself and what others think of you can be two different things. **Time management** had students talking about managing competing demands (sports, playing instruments, etc) and procrastination.

After the students discussed these topics, they also talked and brainstormed ideas about bringing these ideas back to their classrooms. Suggestions included discussion-based meetings, and random seating at lunch to talk to new people. Teachers and administrators that accompanied them for the day came back to the room, and they had a chance to discuss the program and complete an evaluation form.