

## **All It Takes Is a Friendly Face!**

*JJP Elementary Students Celebrate “Start with Hello” Week*

Students at Judy Jacobs-Parkway Elementary School (JJP) in the Plainview-Old Bethpage Central School District recently participated in the Sandy Hook Promise “Start with Hello” Week, an initiative aimed at bringing attention to the growing epidemic of social isolation. JJP faculty members organized various student activities throughout the week to promote an inclusive and connected environment.

Students were encouraged to complete kind activities, like simply saying “hello” to a new peer, learning new ways to greet and approach new peers, examining how saying “hi” is impactful, and/or decorating paper masks with smiles.

“Kindness and inclusion amongst students have always been a top priority in our District and is now part of the POB Mission Statement: Creating an environment where all students feel a sense of belonging,” said Dr. Mary O’Meara, Superintendent of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Central School District. “Teaching our children how to properly interact with their peers helps create a culture of acceptance and empowerment.”

Fourth grade No Place for Hate Student Ambassadors created a video to teach their peers, both remote and in-person, how to notice the signs of a classmate struggling socially and how to reach out and help. The video was then shown to students in their classrooms, an activity that is part of the No Place for Hate Initiative (NPFH). NPFH is an ongoing program that focuses on anti-bullying, anti-bias lessons through school-wide activities.

Start with Hello is a prevention program based on the Sandy Hook Promise that teaches children how to be more socially inclusive and connected to each other. Start with Hello asks students, educators, parents and other community leaders who interact with children to take steps in class and/or other times in their day to be inclusive and connected.



Mrs. Lori Stitt's third grade class dancing to the "Hello Song" to kick off Start with Hello week.



Judy Jacobs-Parkway students explain the three steps of "Start with Hello" – Step 1: See Someone Alone, Step 2: Reach Out and Help, and Step 3: Start with Hello!