

Cara Denny
Herbert Cambridge Elementary
Stand Up for Justice 2021

Jimmy Carter once said when describing the diversity of our Nation, “We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.” I believe that this is true of our school communities as well. Herbert Cambridge Elementary (HCE) School is a new Collier County school in one of the most diverse sections of Naples. It was created when Golden Gate Elementary split into two schools. There are always challenges transitioning to a new school, even more so with Covid-19 but we had an important goal to create a community with a culture of kindness and respect. How could we do this with some students learning in person and others learning from home virtually? The answer came from a team building company, Odyssey Teams and a program called Team Mosaic. The program gives HCE students learning both in school and those learning virtually the opportunity to work collaboratively to help build a sense of belonging and community.

In planning the lesson to go along with this project, there are so many lessons that we can learn from a Mosaic. The students learn that our new school is like a blank canvas, as is life itself, for us to create the picture, maybe even a masterpiece, and that each person plays a role in creating our future. Students learn that even though they are only working on one piece of the mosaic, and they may not realize what role it plays in the final product, their efforts are important and will affect others. Each piece is unique and each piece is important to the final picture. The activity reinforces that as people we are all unique, we are all important, and what we do or say affects others, so it is important to be thoughtful in our actions and words. With the mosaic complete, students recognize that together they can create something bigger than themselves and better than they could create on their own.

Each student at Herbert Cambridge Elementary, grades Kindergarten through 5th Grade participated in this project. In Kindergarten through 2nd grade we discussed diversity, different backgrounds, languages skin colors, strengths and talents that come together to make up our classroom and our school community. In grades 3-5, we discussed the quote from Jimmy Carter. We emphasized that students do not need to blend in, but to celebrate their differences and identify what they can add to their classroom and school community to make it a better place. Each student chose a square from a computerized version of the mosaic. When they chose their square, it revealed the piece of the mosaic that they would recreate on a paper square. When they completed their piece, we uploaded a picture of their recreation, which will be revealed as a virtual mosaic, and then they added their paper pieces to the physical mosaic, our masterpiece in progress on the wall. The Mosaic pieces stood as a symbol that although each was different, each one was important to complete the picture and that just as we would use glue to put our paper mosaic together, kindness is the glue to holds our Herbert Cambridge Elementary Mosaic together.

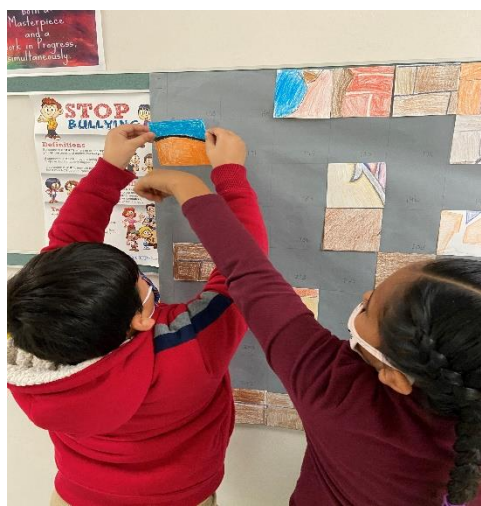
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After completing this activity one student reported that it helped her “Understand that everyone can work together and that if someone is missing, it just won’t be the same, everyone is important”. Another student stated, “It’s important to work together as a group, if there was only one person, you wouldn’t see the whole picture, invite different people to be a part of the group and then you can see the whole thing”. Other students simply said, “We’re better when we work together”, or “It’s important to be kind”. As I write this, we are working with the final classes to complete their pieces for the mosaic. It has been exciting for both staff and students to watch as a blank canvas slowly becomes a picture that they can recognize, and how their piece fits into our masterpiece. More importantly, that they recognize that together we are amazing, our differences don’t separate us but make us stronger and more beautiful. We can’t wait to share our completed mosaic with you!

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We do our best when we work together!



Look at how we all fit together.



Almost there...



Stay Tuned, we cannot wait for you to see our completed Mosaic.