

Swedesboro-Woolwich School District holds Buddy Bench ribbon cutting



The Swedesboro-Woolwich School District is celebrating the installation of four Buddy Benches located on the playground of each school in the district. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on Wednesday Oct. 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the Charles C. Stratton School. (COURTESY PHOTO)



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WOOLWICH TWP. -- The Swedesboro-Woolwich School District is celebrating the installation of four Buddy Benches located on the playground of each school in the district. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the Charles C. Stratton School.

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and the Swedesboro Woolwich Parent Teacher Organization (SW PTO) raised funds for this special project through the Historic Swedesboro Ducky Dash Regatta, PTO fundraisers and generous community donations.

"The PTO is proud to collaborate with SEPAC on this amazing project. It will give the students of the district and the children of the community an even better understanding of how to be a good friend." said Cathleen Finger SW PTO president.

"We were inspired when Buddy Benches were installed in nearby districts. Though our original hope was to install one bench at a time, when you have passionate people working together for a good cause, such as promoting friendships between all children, anything is possible. We look forward to seeing many lasting friendships develop as a result." said Valerie Amaradio, SEPAC co-volunteer parent leader.

A Buddy Bench is a simple idea to eliminate loneliness and foster friendships on the playground. A Buddy Bench is a designated bench that will provide an opportunity for students to find a friend or to be a friend while promoting inclusion, kindness and respect. It shows we care about others when we ask others to play. All children should feel like they belong.

Students will use the bench to ask someone else to play or ask someone to walk and talk. The motto of the Buddy Bench is "Make a Friend. Be a Friend".

"We are thrilled to have Buddy Benches at our schools," said Stratton School Guidance Ranae Pollicino. "It breaks my heart when I see kids isolated or alone. I am hoping this project will help keep some kids from

feeling alone, and to know that they too are 'friend worthy' and have something to offer. Just like academics, the kids need to learn how to make friends and be empathetic and kind to one another. There is an emotional intelligence as well as academic intelligence, and I think the Buddy Bench Project can help cultivate that intelligence."

The school district leadership team and Special Services department will be rolling out a training program for each grade level ranging from focusing on social skills and forming friendships along with welcoming new friends into an already established circle of friends.

To learn more about Buddy Benches, visit buddybench.org.