

West Jessamine High School Welcomes Visitors from Hong Kong

By Erica Wachter

There is a recurring theme when one talks to people who have had the pleasure of hosting or interacting with visitors from Hong Kong. The theme is this: people are more alike than different, no matter how many miles separate them.



Students and teachers from Hong Kong recently visited West Jessamine High School (WJHS) in Jessamine County, Kentucky in March of 2017. As part of an International Alliance for Invitational Education (IAIE) exchange, students and teachers from Chung Sing Benevolent Society Mrs. Aw Book Haw Secondary School visited classrooms at the high school, learning about American culture and educational practices in the process. It was through this exchange that WJHS principal Dr. Scott Wells learned just how much alike Hong Kong educators and students were like American educators and students. Dr. Wells states that “at West High we learned that all people are truly the same! We learned that kids are kids and that they experience the same struggles and joys no matter where they are located on Planet Earth. Personally, I learned that Hong Kong educators work as hard as we do in American schools!” Social Studies teacher, James Botts, echoes this sentiment. He confirms, “We learned that we have more in common than differences.”

Jessamine County schools have had a longstanding relationship with IAIE and have hosted students in the past. West Jessamine High School was asked in the fall of 2016 to host a group from Hong Kong in the spring of 2017. James Botts says that West Jessamine welcomed the opportunity knowing what a beneficial experience it would be for students. The school hopes to continue this experience for its students in the future.

While visiting Kentucky, students and teachers from Hong Kong visited classrooms at West Jessamine High School, learning about a typical American student and educator's day. The learning, however, went both ways and had a lasting impact on WJHS. Dr. Wells remarks, "We are now convinced more than ever that being a secondary school that models IAIE tenets will have a life-long impact on (WJHS's) climate and culture. We now do business differently, and we are thrilled about our 'inviting' approach with all West High stakeholders."



Students from West Jessamine High School welcomed visitors from Hong Kong.

Building relationships was also a goal of students and educators from West Jessamine High School through hosting visitors from Hong Kong. One WJHS student talks about creating friendships that will be everlasting even though the students are half a world away from each other. Both Dr. Wells and Mr. Botts both hope to send WJHS students and educators to visit Hong Kong in the future.