

Littleton Public Schools

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Littleton Public Schools Students Foster an Inclusive Community Through Project 351 & the Playbook Initiative



Thirty Littleton Middle School "student influencers" are having conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion as part of the Playbook Initiative. (Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)

LITTLETON — Littleton Middle School students are driving to the basket and starting the conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Littleton school

community by taking part in the Playbook Initiative.

[The Playbook Initiative](#), a partnership between Project 351, the Boston Celtics, and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), is an anti-discrimination and bias-prevention program led by student trainers in communities throughout the state.

Interest in participating in the program at Littleton Middle School was significant. Out of nearly 50 applications, 30 LMS students who demonstrated their desire to foster a community of tolerance and belonging were selected to become "student influencers."

Littleton's Playbook Initiative 2024 Team Roster was soon solidified. Student influencers include Grade 6 students Madison Saunders, Aubrey McCarthy, Emilia Garrido, Nora Pasquale, Lana Yang, and Lauren Fitzgerald; Grade 7 students Nyla Jacob, Darsh Sharma, Sara Kerrigan, Drew Murch, Sophia Capoccia, Zach Ryan, Henry Young, Ruby Willis, and Abigail Muddasu; and Grade 8 students Caroline Nash, Adi Loan, Caroline DeChane, Aiden Donohue, Kyra Grant, Christina Rains, Makayla Rydwansky, Amby Harriman, Brianna Tucker, Janie Laferty, Eric Santos, Cassidy Forsberg, and Abak Maraial.

"Littleton's Playbook Leadership Team (PLT) has embraced this initiative and is committed to being architects of a more inclusive, responsive, and just school community," said Mary Cringan, Project 351 Educators Advisory Group Chair and Playbook Educators Coach. "The Littleton community will be enriched through inspiration, collaboration, and celebrating the voices of the students who are working hard to be change makers and bridge builders. It's a pleasure and privilege to work and learn from the PLT from Littleton."

As part of the program, student influencers meet during school hours to partake in two 90-minute workshops where they break the ice, open up to one another, and engage in discussions and activities surrounding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).

Workshops are led by Peer Trainers from Littleton High School sophomores, Lead Trainer Haaris Khan and Deputy Trainer Keirob Cherubino.

Cherubino and Khan were motivated to become Peer Trainers due to a common desire to strengthen the Littleton school community and spread their knowledge of DEIB to the younger students.

"In teaching students the significance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as well as Belonging, I want to make them feel comfortable when they're discussing related events or issues, and not be discouraged to come ask questions," said Cherubino.

"As a Littleton student, I have seen first-hand how diversity enriches our community," said Khan. It is important to educate our youth in the topics of bias and discrimination and the significance of equity and acceptance to make every person within our town and the world beyond feel a sense of belonging."

The theory of the Playbook hypothesizes that if it is possible for athletes to prepare for games by studying and practicing "plays," then perhaps the same holds true for social situations as it relates to preparing students to confront bias and discrimination.

In their first workshop on Jan. 25, students used a "Playbook" to navigate through difficult conversations about students' own lives, as well as work through scenarios dealing with issues of bias and discrimination.

Student influencers shared their thoughts about the first workshop during the Littleton School Committee meeting that evening.

Madison Saunders, Grade 6, took to the podium to share her enthusiasm for the program and excitement to learn about the different perspectives of her classmates.

"My experience in the Playbook Initiative workshop today was very exciting. I got to hear a lot of people's opinions about the statements and scenarios we had in our Playbooks. It made me understand that this is what people go through from different religions and cultures, and I was very happy that people were open to telling us about their personal lives. I cannot wait to learn more about how to become a better leader."

Kyra Grant, Grade 8, shared an excerpt from her application, "I firmly believe that exposure to other people's points of view helps you grow a tolerance and understanding for others. The Playbook Initiative would be an incredible opportunity for me to learn how to build a community of diversity that is not only accepted but celebrated."

Advising the program are Director of Student Services and District Equity Coordinator Lyn Snow and Littleton Middle School Assistant Principal Matt Levangie, who shared their pride with the School Committee for the vulnerability the students have shown in their work so far.

"This is a powerful example of how important it is to elevate student voice," said Snow. "I'm beyond impressed by these students and I applaud their bravery and willingness to engage in these difficult conversations. This is a skill that many adults – myself included – find challenging."

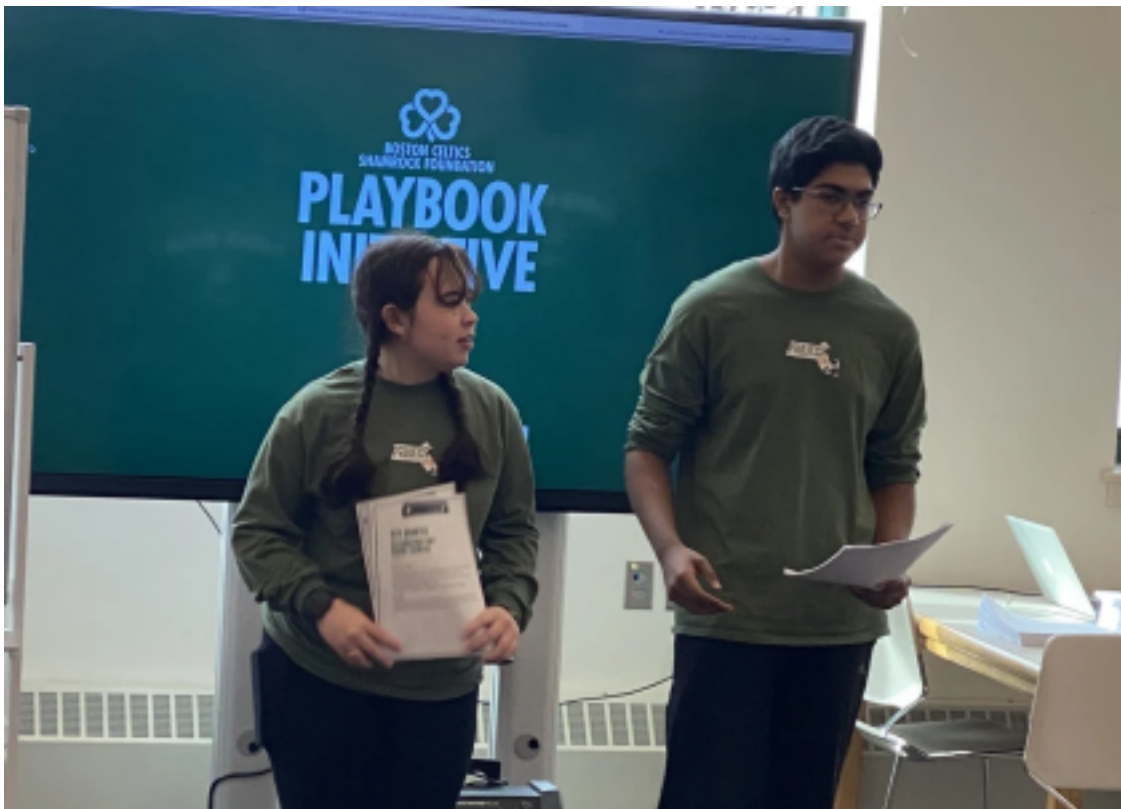
Littleton student influencers engaged in their second workshop on Tuesday, Feb. 6.

"I'm so impressed by the number of students who wanted to be part of the Playbook Initiative," Superintendent Kelly Clenchy expressed during the School Committee Meeting. "Today, I witnessed a number of you come up to the podium and talk about things that are important to you. I have been an advocate for student voice for a number of years, and I believe that it is one way we can start the conversation about celebrating diversity. I hope that this is only the beginning for our students to talk about things that are important to them in our schools."

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The Littleton Playbook Initiative team meets for its first workshop on Thursday, Jan. 25. (Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)



Lead Trainer Haaris Khan (left) and Deputy Trainer Keirob Cherubino, both students at Littleton High School, lead LMS students through a "Playbook." (Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)

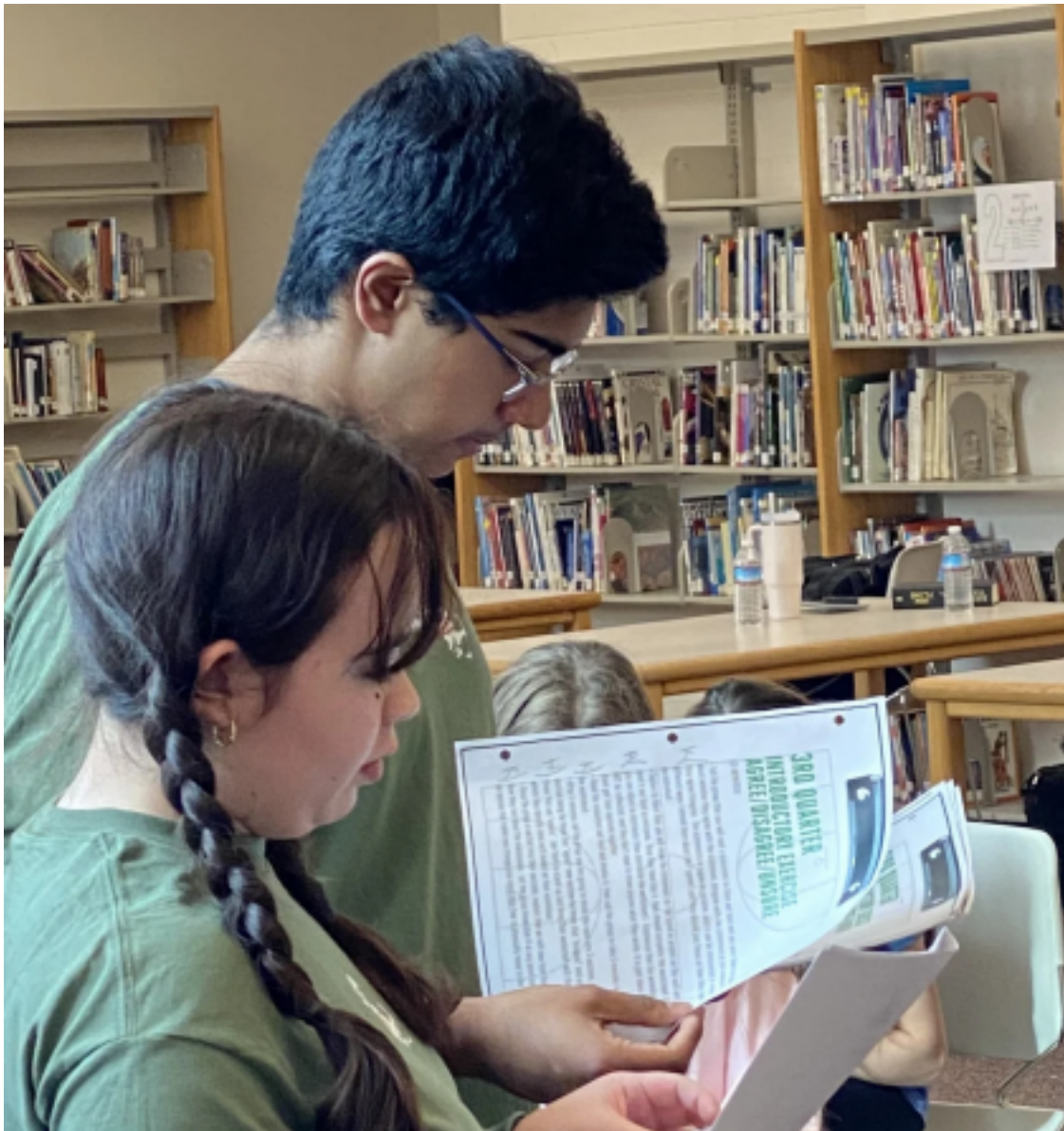


From left, Lana Yang, Nora Pasquale, and Madison Saunders participate in an activity during the workshop. (Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)



From left, Aubrey McCarthy, Emilia Garrido, and Lauren Fitzgerald participate in an

activity during the workshop. (Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)



Peer Trainers Keirob Cherubino (back) and Haaris Khan review the Playbook.

(Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)v



Peer Trainers Haaris Khan (left) and Keirob Cherubino collaborate with LMS student influencers during the workshop. (Photo Courtesy Littleton Public Schools)

A message from Littleton Public Schools