

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

22 VALLEY ROAD ~ MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042

WWW.MONTCLAIR.K12.NJ.US

PHONE: 973-509-4020 FAX: 973-509-0586



Superintendent of Schools

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

April 9, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

I emphatically state that the District and all of its staff stand in solidarity with our Asian, Pacific Islander and Asian American community.

Acts of hate and harassment aimed at people of Asian heritage have been on the rise throughout the country. Recently, these racist acts have become more frequent and violent. We condemn all acts of hate and racism and xenophobia, prejudice and violence are never acceptable and have no place in our schools and our community.

We currently have actionable policies to address any such incidents, such as our Anti-Racism Policy, an Anti-Racism Resolution passed by our Board, and an Anti-Bullying Policy. By virtue of these policies, we do not tolerate racism or harassment of any kind in any situation whether on schools grounds, outside the walls of our buildings, or in social media. These policies hold everyone accountable and all allegations are investigated fully. Staff and administrators are trained in harassment, intimidation and bullying and take measures to ensure that the safety of all students and staff of every race, religion and ethnicity are in place and strictly enforced. We remain committed to providing a safe, secure, supportive, and inclusive learning and working environment for all.

The Montclair Public School District prides itself in creating more culturally responsive and inclusive schools and classrooms and an environment that deepens and strengthens solidarity across all of our diverse communities. We understand that as a school district one of the primary tools in fighting racism is education. With that being said, I have planned culturally responsive training for all administrators and counselors beginning this month. We have engaged the services of two experts in the field, one from the University of Auburn, and the other the President of Bloomfield College. Along with our policies, this training is one of the first actionable steps we are taking to emphasize our values and beliefs. It is critical that we have meaningful and intentional conversations around cultural differences as with this dialogue comes the celebration of our diversity.

Next, we will be reviewing curriculum with an eye towards cultural responsiveness so that all of our students see themselves appropriately represented in history books, in literature, and even in subjects such as math and science. All children need to feel valued and see examples of successful people among all ethnicities. Dr. Kalisha Morgan, Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum and Instruction, will be leading this curriculum work as well as exploring all opportunities for inclusion and anti-racism as part of the newly formed District Equity Team.

Additionally, I pledge my support for hiring a diverse workforce that reflects our student population where all nationalities are represented. Students deserve to see role models that look like them as it is highly motivational and contributes to their engagement and feelings of belonging.

Our work is ongoing, and the measures I have outlined such as training, curriculum review and diverse hiring are fundamental and the building blocks for long-lasting efforts to bring about real change. Our Principals will be infusing our beliefs of anti-racism and inclusion day in and day out as they make their instructional rounds, speak with students and staff, hold parent meetings, and purposely create a culture where every child feels loved, cared for and especially safe.

I am looking forward to our ongoing work and am eager to enjoy a robust and festive Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebration in May. The District values its diversity and understands the urgency needed to focus its energy on ensuring that our students, families and staff feel the love and compassion that they rightly deserve and always feel safe in our schools.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent