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EASTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Easton Community:

I would like to address several issues regarding the incidents recently shared by the Easton Public Schools. I will first reiterate that the incident of racist graffiti and multiple incidents of digital memes that included racist, sexist, and anti-Israel messages that were brought to our attention are completely unacceptable. They are hateful and intolerable, and we have no place for them in our school or, indeed, our community. We are intent on using all of our resources to counter such actions.

Due to the fact that an investigation is still ongoing, there are some details that we cannot yet share. We have disclosed that disciplinary consequences have been imposed and may continue. However, we are well aware that this is not the end of our responsibility as an educational institution. To that end, I would like to explain what we have already been working on as a district to combat intolerance, what has been in place and will continue, how we plan to strengthen this work going forward, and how we are reaching out to you for your assistance and partnership in all of these efforts

Strategic Plan and Goals

We are keenly aware that there have been increased incidents of this nature in both our state and the nation, and that this can potentially impact the perceptions and belief systems of our children. It has also had a marked effect on the social-emotional stability of our students, and has therefore been a focus of our most recent professional development and budget allocation choices.

For these reasons, there are several components of the newly updated District Strategic Plan that address these areas. While this Plan has not yet been finalized, we believe this is an opportunity to share sections of it that are pertinent to this topic. This starts with the Vision, which can be found [here](#).

Next, the Core Values are the fundamental beliefs that serve as the guiding principles in all decisions and actions that we commit to abide by and hold each other to respecting. Please find them [here](#).

Beyond the Plan itself are the goals we set regularly as educators within the system. For example, the School Committee formally accepted my goals as the Superintendent of Schools. Action steps that reflect a small section of the goals can be found [here](#).

In addition, our Curriculum Leadership Team recently completed a series of goals that will be incorporated into our curricula in all grade levels and content areas. These goals were presented to, and overwhelmingly embraced by, the entire staff at this year's professional development day. You may have already seen them integrated into some of your child's work, displayed in the school or classroom, or part of the language they are using. You can find this document [here](#) where you will see the skills and values that we are working to foster in all areas.

Current Reality

Inclusivity and equity have always been and will remain a priority in the district. To that end, a partial list of what is already in place, has been working successfully, and will continue is available [here](#).

Plans Going Forward

Clearly, our work is not done. Despite our best efforts, we find ourselves confronting actions that do not reflect our values. We feel that this is an opportunity for enhancing our offerings and approaches. Therefore, we are engaged in reflection about how we work to provide further education and opportunities for our students as well as assess whether the policies and procedures we currently have can be further improved. Because student safety is always our most pressing concern, we have identified our immediate actions. You can find them [here](#).

Each of these actions is preliminary, and much more will come as a result of the Committee's work going forward. The goals and plans in the Strategic Plan (noted above) will continue as well.

Call to Community

The issues we are now facing are hardly unique to Easton. Sadly, we see such incidents increasing at both the local and national levels. Based on the feedback we have been receiving, we are well aware that there are varying levels of concern and ideas of how we should address this. As the leader of this exceptional school system, I would suggest that this is indicative of neither a rampant "culture of hate" in Easton nor "kids being kids." I would urge you not to jump to conclusions of a safety issue but would also ask you not to dismiss this as somehow developmentally expected. We believe it is mostly a matter of ignorance and not malice. *With that said, the effect on the victim or anyone who might see, hear, or read the offensive messages is the same, regardless of intent.* This must be acknowledged. Therefore, we will use this as our opportunity to further educate all students about the effects of these actions. However, we cannot do this as a school district alone.

We believe these incidents also provide an opportunity to determine and communicate what we stand for as a community and whether we are willing to pledge to work together to teach our children and model for them those beliefs and values that are non-negotiable. The measure of a community is not always what happens there, but how the community responds to it. We understand that as an educational institution, we can play a critical role in this charge, and we are committed to doing so. However, no teacher, administrator, school, or district can do this alone. While this happened in school, it was not taught in school. There are influences all around children that bear on their beliefs and actions. It will take a cooperative effort to counter these influential forces. This is the work that lies before us.

We are asking that all areas of the community, including service organizations, elected officials, public employees, faith groups, parents and families, alumni, and residents join the district in this effort. This is a complex issue, and it will involve a complex series of solutions. We are asking that you reflect and consider what you can do to encourage tolerance and promote understanding in your sphere of influence, whether that is a committee, social organization, business office, or family. Please express your commitment to this work in a way that is most appropriate for you. We will be reaching out for participants on our Committee and for ideas and suggestions moving forward. Please feel welcomed and encouraged to participate. None of us can guarantee that such occurrences will never happen again; this is not reality. However, using these unfortunate instances as a call to action will only improve our excellent system and the partnerships we wish to continue and further create in this wonderful town.

In closing, I would like to repeat the Core Values of the Easton Public Schools and encourage you to incorporate this language into your own interactions with Easton's children and other adults to reinforce their importance.

- *Continuous Growth*
- *Safety and Respect*
- *Communication and Collaboration*
- *Leading by Example*

We look forward to working with you in this important endeavor. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisha Cabral
Superintendent, Easton Public Schools