



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

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November 30, 2016

Dear Cheltenham School District Stakeholder:

Following a tumultuous election, there has been a wave of incidents across the country in reaction to the outcome. Both in our community and throughout the country, we have seen acts of intimidation and discrimination, including by letter, graffiti and spoken word. Cheltenham is an inclusive and diverse community and school district, and we cherish the unique differences that make us so. We do not and will not tolerate acts of discrimination and intimidation of our students and staff, and the School Board and Administration are working diligently to ensure intimidating speech and actions are unable to take root in our school district. We are an educational organization, and there is no room for hate or intimidation based upon racial or ethnic characteristics, socio-economic class, religious belief, sexual identification or disability.

As has been discussed in our community, an incident occurred at Cheltenham High School recently in which a teacher made racially insensitive and discriminatory remarks to several students. The incident was investigated and the teacher was suspended pending further investigation. As this is a personnel matter, further details about the incident and any next steps in discipline of the teacher cannot be addressed publicly by Cheltenham School District (CSD). Please be assured that due to the nature of the incident, action is being taken that is consistent with the district's overarching principle that CSD values its diversity and rejects hate.

We have heard clearly from concerned families, students and staff members about the incident at Cheltenham High School and the need for CSD to address not only the incident but actions to eliminate a climate where anyone would mistakenly believe that hate or intimidating language is in

any way acceptable. Since this incident occurred, the Board and Administration have been in constant communication, meeting regularly and discussing both short-term and long-term actions. To date, the following actions have been taken and more will follow:

- Before the incident, and, as a part of the Strategic Plan, we have sought to reinforce that intimidating, threatening or discriminatory language and actions by any member of the CSD community will not be tolerated. Stated at the beginning of the Strategic Plan Mission: *Drawing on its cultural richness, creativity, and tradition of scholastic excellence, Cheltenham School District strives to nurture each child through a wealth of academic endeavors and community partnerships that provide the skills and vision needed to lead a productive and meaningful life beyond our classroom walls. We will not waiver from this mission.*
- On Tuesday, November 15, 2016, Dr. Marseille shared a statement with the community expressing concern, outlining that intimidating or hateful speech towards anyone in the school district community will not be tolerated.
- On Thursday, November 17, 2016, a letter from Dr. Marseille was shared with all staff of CSD that touched on the recent event and reaffirmed that there is no tolerance for intimidation against any group of people.
- Students at CHS have been provided counseling and a safe space in which to discuss their concerns and the impacts of intimidation within their building.
- Opportunities for parents and caregivers to dialogue are under development and will be announced to the community shortly.
- An update on these and all other activities related to our commitment to maintaining a hate-free environment will be provided to the community on a quarterly basis.

The Board is re-evaluating district policies to ensure that “No Place for Hate” is reflected, modeled and enforced throughout our district. If you or your student feel that you have been targeted by intimidation or negative comment, you are encouraged to report this immediately to the building principal so that Central Administration may properly investigate and address the matter. Know that there is no retaliation permitted under Board Policy for reporting an incident of intimidation or harassment. If you have questions or thoughts that you wish to share, please feel free to communicate these to the Board by emailing us at schoolboard@cheltenham.org so that we have the opportunity to do everything we can to improve the educational environment of the entire Cheltenham School District.

Sincerely Yours,

Board of School Directors