



Superintendent's Statement on Racism and Discrimination

June 9, 2020

Over the last several days, several citizens have shared with me either their own experience or what they observed others experience concerning racism within our community and our School District.

I thank those who have brought forward these events. Hearing about them makes us all in the School District reflect on what we did, what we could have done better, and what we can do to prevent these things from happening again.

As a School District, we don't have all the answers. We make mistakes. And we need to learn from them. One citizen brought forward an event occurring several years ago where a school held a "slave day", auctioning off students to be the slaves for a day of those who purchased them. That is wrong. And just as it is wrong today, it was wrong then. We take responsibility for that and I unreservedly apologize on behalf of the District for that event.

Another incident involved a student wearing blackface as part of a mock trial classroom exercise. A picture of that ended up in the yearbook. The school bears responsibility for allowing it to happen. Today we can look back and ask how did we let that happen? But we did, and we need to take responsibility. We do.

There are potentially other incidents and experiences of racism and other discrimination that have taken place in our District. I want to hear from the community about them, preferably directly instead of through social media, which I find difficult to engage authentically in meaningful dialogue. I want to hear ideas about how we can be better.

As a School District, we have a special responsibility. We, along with families, are charged with instilling in our students the values of respect for diversity, inclusion, tolerance, and the inherent human dignity of every person. We are expected to, and must, lead by example.

If we can talk openly with each other, we can surely make progress towards a better School District, and a fairer, more equal community.

Sincerely,

Rohan Arul-pragasam
Interim School Superintendent