

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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DR. ROBERT A. TREMBLAY
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

March 23, 2017

Dear Weston Community:

On Thursday, March 2, 2017, members of the Weston community - including parents, community members, Weston Public Schools faculty, staff, and administrators, the Weston Police Department, members of the Weston Wayland Interfaith Action Group (WWIAG), and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), among others - came together at the Weston Town Library for a moderated, two-hour discussion about nurturing a culture of respect for human differences in our community.

Motivated by the discovery of recurring anti-Semitic graffiti in a bathroom stall at Field School over a period of two days prior to the February school vacation week, our community conversation opened the door for a wider discussion around religion, race, ethnicity, and gender identity and the role that schools and families play in working together to ensure a culture of safety and acceptance for our children. In cases, like this one, where it remains unclear as to the source of such hateful actions, we are afforded the opportunity to bring together our students, their families, and the community to which they belong for reassurance that our community is one that embraces our differences and stands together when actions challenge our core beliefs.

Through our discussion together, we collectively agreed that schools and families need to have resources made available to them so that messaging around respect for human differences is clear and consistent in our schools and homes. There was further discussion about consideration for the Town to adopt an anti-discrimination statement and the need for more communication and synergy between and among our public schools and community centers (e.g., Town Library, Recreation Center, etc.).

In an effort to begin to address that call for action, the Weston Public Schools is in the process of exploring curriculum connections through the generous support of the ADL. We are proud to be partnering with WWIAG, who have offered to co-sponsor with the Weston PTO their upcoming panel discussion on "Discrimination: Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Racism – What Can be Done to Foster Understanding of 'The Other' and Why that Understanding is Crucial to a Democratic Society." This event will further our discussion on respecting and celebrating human differences and will take place at the **Weston Community Center on April 27, 2017 from 7:30pm to 9:30pm** with refreshments at 7:00pm. Please save the date. More detailed information will be forthcoming as the date nears.

As we consider and make available appropriate resources for schools and families, the Weston Public Schools are in the process of developing an online library that can be accessed through the district and town websites. This will continue to be a work in progress as both the conversations and district website itself evolve. While there is always room for improvement in our curriculum offerings and communication efforts, we also believe it is important that we acknowledge our long-standing commitment to creating safe environments for our children. If your child is experiencing any feelings or concerns around acceptance, please know that our schools have resources to help. Creating safe environments is of paramount importance to everyone in the Weston Public Schools and you should always feel comfortable reaching out to your child's teacher, counselor, principal, or other trusted adult or simply raise the concern through the *Anonymous Concerns Report* link on the homepage of the Weston Public Schools website so that we can help.

The Weston Public Schools faculty, staff, administrators, and I want to take this opportunity to share just some of the powerful work that is happening in classrooms across the district:

- We are proud to celebrate school- and district-wide efforts and programming in the Weston Public Schools that aim to address kindness, care, and compassion through school assemblies, multi-cultural events and curriculum efforts;
- We are grateful to Penny Hurwitz, Associate Education Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and Matt Lucey who have scheduled training for all Field School staff on May 3, 2017 based on ADL specific curriculum. The professional development will address implicit/unconscious bias, microaggressions, cultural awareness and responsiveness, and inter-cultural communication as the staff work more purposefully with students and families;
- We continue to address themes of stereotyping, racism, anti-Semitism, bigotry, Holocaust, identity, inclusion, citizenship, and world religions and cultures at the secondary level, including our Social Competency program framed by Relationships, Awareness, Learning, and Integrity (RALI) as pillars to support weekly student meetings held by grade leaders at the middle level.

During our gathering a few weeks ago, there was also expressed interest in developing an anti-discrimination statement as a unifying action for the Town of Weston where there is broad community commitment to upholding the human and civil rights of all persons in Weston. It is clear to me that our initial conversation has already had far-reaching impact and the conversations and actions that lie ahead will only strengthen our community. On behalf of the Weston Public Schools, we hope you find this information to be helpful and we look forward to partnering with our families and the greater Weston community as we continue the conversation around what it means to live in a community that values and celebrates – not just tolerates – human differences.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Tremblay

Robert A. Tremblay, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools