



WATCHUNG HILLS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

ELIZABETH C. JEWETT, PHD
SUPERINTENDENT

TIMOTHY M. STYS, CPA
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

FRANCIS T. HOWLETT, JR.
INTERIM PRINCIPAL

November 5, 2019

Dear WHRHS Learning Community,

The Watchung Hills Regional High School District condemns, in the strongest terms possible, the conduct of some of our students who dressed up as an African American slave and slave owner at what appears to be a weekend Halloween gathering. Although this incident occurred outside of school and the event was not affiliated with WHRHS, we are undertaking a thorough investigation into this matter, working closely with law enforcement.

The Watchung Hills Regional High School community denounces this event and embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While DEI is a current area of focus for our district, in alignment with our Strategic Plan Goals, there is much work yet to be done. A team of Watchung Hills educators, our Equity Team, along with our student-led Diversity Council, have been discussing next steps to promote healing. We have begun to engage our entire school community in difficult conversations around diversity, equity, tolerance and inclusion within our district and the community at large. A first step in this process is an opportunity during our “flex time” in tomorrow’s schedule for students to meet in small groups with staff members to unpack the events of the past several days and focus on the future. Participation in these discussions is entirely optional, and more details will be shared with students tomorrow morning.

One of our key responsibilities as a Board, leadership team, faculty, and staff is to ensure a safe environment for our students. Hate has no place on our campus. The Watchung Hills Regional High School District seeks to develop ALL of our students into young adults who are able to demonstrate empathy, cultural sensitivity, and ethical decision-making. Toward that end, rather than responding to a hateful act with more hate, I am asking that we, as a community, work together to ensure that the racial insensitivity and inappropriateness of these students’ actions serves as a teachable moment. Let us work toward restorative, rather than retributive, justice, repairing the harm done through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Warm regards,

Elizabeth C. Jewett, Ph.D.
Superintendent