



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Joel Blumstein, Esq. - Chair
Tracey Spruce, Esq. - Vice Chair
Susan K. McCready
Paul Murphy
Shannon Scully

Dear APS Community,

I wanted to take the opportunity to address concerns that have been raised surrounding a recent series of events at Andover High School.

On Friday, October 11th, AHS students had Principal Conrad's permission to paint the rock in front of the building for *National Coming Out* day. The next morning, it was discovered that the rock had been defaced and AHS Facilities Department painted over the vandalism. Those who vandalized the rock have not been identified.

On Saturday afternoon, the AHS Gender Sexuality Alliance, along with members of the community, restored the rock to reflect the symbolism of *National Coming Out* day, which is a day to celebrate and promote inclusion and acceptance. The support the public showed for these students is reflective of the best of our community.

It may not be clear to some, but the rock is AHS property and the administration has always welcomed students to create positive messages for the community to see as they enter the building. Anyone painting on the rock needs the permission of the administration prior to doing so. Painting the rock without permission is considered defacement or vandalism and violates AHS Handbook policies

On Wednesday, October 16th, there was a physical altercation between two students during a morning class. First responders were called to the school to assist during the incident. Wednesday afternoon, a group of students approached Principal Conrad requesting to paint the rock in front of the high school in support of one of the students involved in the morning's incident. Principal Conrad asked the students wait until he was able to hold a collaborative conversation with them. They disregarded his request and painted the rock without permission.

Also, as a consequence of the altercation, on Thursday morning some students at AHS walked out of class. This walkout had not been communicated to the administration in advance and, therefore, had not been mutually agreed upon as required by the AHS Handbook.

I am particularly concerned about these incidents. I believe the high school administration does its best to support the voices of all APS students and to create an identity-safe school that honors the diversity of our community. Principal Conrad consistently offers to discuss issues with students, listen to their concerns, and find productive solutions to problems. He has also found ways to assist students in expressing their viewpoint publicly in a manner consistent with the administration's policies.

October 17, 2019

I want to affirm that we will approach all of the incidents holding firm to the values of respect for diversity and promotion of dialogue to resolve differences. At the same time, it is vital that the administration maintain a safe environment for all students and address incidents that violate that safety in an even-handed manner. We are deeply disturbed by the defacing of the rock and the altercation between students and will continue to pursue actions that protect students' rights, safety, and privacy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sheldon Berman".

Sheldon Berman
Superintendent