



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear APS Parents, Guardians, and Staff,

Our nation is undergoing a period of division and tension. Sentiments are running high and no person, no family, no institution can escape the almost daily reminders that pour forth on both mainstream and social media. Our students are exposed to this atmosphere, too, leading some of them to feel uncertain about their todays as well as their tomorrows. Nowhere does this feeling strike home more acutely than among our students from international backgrounds.

I want to take this opportunity to express as clearly and as firmly as I can that Andover Public Schools—every campus, every facility, and every event—will continue to stand as a place of not just shelter but active welcome to children and adults of every nationality, race, faith, gender, and sexual orientation. We take pride in the diversity of our student body, recognizing that it reflects the history of America and brings strength to our district.

Within APS, each student is viewed as first and foremost a learner, interacting daily with an entire community of learners. Because learning is hampered by insecurity, as a staff we focus on ensuring that all students know and witness that our schools are havens from the buffeting of daily news, that all students are physically and emotionally safe within our walls, and that they are not just tolerated or accepted but are truly wanted and welcomed as valued members of the APS community.

It is easy to say these words; but just saying them is insufficient to the tenor of our times. That is why we, the APS leadership and staff, are publicly recommitting to our parents and students, indeed to the entire Andover community, that we will continue to intentionally promote a welcoming climate for every student. We will continue to acknowledge each student's uniqueness and will nurture budding talents. We will address any derogatory or exclusionary words or deeds that we happen to observe or that are brought to our notice. Above all, we will protect all students' safety and security, with particular attention at this time to students whose immediate families hail from nations other than the United States.

At every grade level, we will through example and through open discussion actively teach acceptance and appreciation of all persons, regardless of country of origin. Recognizing that there are many ways to tackle a problem or to move forward on an issue and that we should encourage people to think all thoughts in search of the best approach, we will model and foster appropriate ways to express and respond to differing opinions—in a manner that is thoughtful and respectful. And, with the support of the entire Andover community, we will prepare today's students for positive participation in a world that reaps immeasurable benefits from the contributions of the rich diversity of people who share this earth.

With confidence in the future of America and the ideals upon which it was founded,

Shelley Berman