



THE EDUCATION CENTRE - AURORA

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Dear Families,

We wish to take this opportunity to welcome our new and returning families. We hope everyone is having a great start to the school year.

Families are our most important partners in education, and we share a common goal - to support our students in reaching their full potential. At York Region District School Board, our core business is student achievement and well-being. We know students achieve their best and feel better about themselves when they feel safe, respected and have a strong sense of belonging. In other words, schools and classrooms that are equitable and inclusive lay an important foundation for excellence in achievement and well-being.

Recognizing the importance of equity and inclusion in our Board, we believe it's important to address incidents of anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and other forms of oppression we have recently seen taking place around the world.

This was seen most recently in the United States as well as right here in our community. As you may have heard, we were appalled when a number of our school buildings were vandalized over the summer with hateful anti-Semitic and anti-Black racist graffiti. While the Board responded swiftly and strongly in condemning these hateful acts, we understand the feelings of anger and disappointment with what seems to be a rise in the open expression of hate and oppression. We also know that members of our Jewish and Black communities as well as other marginalized groups are concerned about what this means for the upcoming school year and for the future. As well, we know that many of you are wondering about how to talk about these issues at home with your children. There are a number of equity resources available on the Board website to support you as you have these important conversations.

We cannot predict what will happen in the future, but we know that it is essential that we are prepared to talk and listen to children in a manner that is thoughtful and respectful. We must be both committed and prepared to name anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, and all forms of hate whenever and however they are expressed. Staying silent about incidents of hate and intolerance is not an option.

In YRDSB, we are unwavering in our commitment to ensure that our schools and workplaces are safe, caring and inclusive spaces for everyone. This is why equity is one of our foundational practices and we continue to proudly say, *diversity is our strength, equity is our commitment and inclusion is our goal*.

Ultimately, when the doors of our schools open, those who enter bring their social identities with them and must feel that they are welcomed to learn and work in spaces where they are valued. We know that doing so is key to mental health, well-being and achievement.

Equity requires that we all take responsibility to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to success and be vigilant about condemning incidents of racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, bigotry or any form of hate. Such incidents must be immediately reported to your child's teacher or principal. We encourage you to reinforce with your child the importance of reporting such incidents to a trusted adult.

York Region is one of the most diverse communities in the country. This diversity, reflected among all of our 123,000 students, their families and our over 12,500 staff members, strengthens our communities and our school district.

This school year, we hope you will join us in setting the tone for an environment where all our students can feel safe, included, and can focus on achieving excellence. As we work towards achieving this goal, it is critical that we engage in conversations about the incidents of hate we saw during the summer. As parent members of our educational community, it's important that you join us in taking a strong stance against all forms of hate.

A new school year is an exciting time of hope and optimism. Our Board remains one of the top performing boards in the province, and we look forward to working with our parent community to create welcoming and inclusive schools and continuing to improve student achievement and well-being.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Wallace
Interim Director of Education



Loralea Carruthers
Chair