



64 Cabot Rd, Danvers, MA 01923  
978.777.4800 978.777.8931  
danverspublicschools.org

11/9/21

Dear DPS Community,

We are writing to inform the community of racist, homophobic and anti-semitic graffiti that was found in a student bathroom at the Holten Richmond Middle School. A student or students wrote homophobic and racist statements, along with two swastika symbols. The police and school administration continue their investigation and will be following our student handbook for appropriate student discipline and legal action, as well as counseling/therapeutic support for the individual(s) responsible.

This hate crime and type of hateful behavior has no place in our Danvers Schools or any place in our community. It will not be tolerated. We are incredibly disappointed that this type of behavior has occurred in our school and understand the frustration of the community.

We have worked collaboratively with our curriculum center and middle school team to put together a plan to process this event immediately with the entire middle school student body this afternoon, and will continue the work tomorrow morning and throughout the remainder of the year. We will continue to put into place curricula and activities to help educate our students, including working with outside organizations who can help support this work.

This incident does not reflect the core values, mission and vision that we seek for our school system. We do not tolerate, and will continue to address, hate speech and actions.

In moving forward as an equity-seeking district and educating our students, we need to rebuild trust and continue supporting our school community as we learn from our actions, and encourage all to come forward without repercussions if anything makes them uncomfortable. We are committed to providing a safe, supportive, culturally sustaining, equitable and inclusive learning environment in our schools.

We are acutely aware that this most recent incident fits into a broader pattern – both within our schools and in the broader community – that includes allegations of racial profiling at a local business, an apparent noose left outside a local church, an investigation into racist and homophobic behavior last year by student athletes, a Confederate flag flown in our downtown as part of a political rally, and a swastika discovered in the woods behind the middle school.

**Caring. Quality. Commitment. Collaboration.**

Keith Taverna  
Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Personnel  
978.774.4800 ext. 2432  
taverna@danvers.org

Lisa Dana, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
978.777.4539 ext. 2430  
dana@danvers.org

Mary Wermers  
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning  
978.777.8932 ext. 2281  
wermers@danvers.org

We want to be crystal clear in our condemnation of these acts, actions, and allegations. Individually, they are ugly, unacceptable, and have no place in Danvers or in any community. Collectively, they are proof that there's much work to be done. And the work won't do itself. It will be done by individuals, working with other individuals, talking to people who may not agree with them on every issue, but who probably agree on far more than they realize. What does this work look like?

This past winter, the Select Board directed the Town Manager to form a committee of local stakeholders to develop recommendations aimed at ensuring that Danvers remains a welcoming community to all. That committee's final report can be found [here](#).

Next week, the Human Rights and Inclusion Committee will host a virtual event titled, *Tell Me The Truth: Exploring the Heart of Cross-Racial Conversations*, which aims to explore 21st-century racial dynamics through authentic conversation. A link to register for this event can be found [here](#).

By the end of the year, the Town hopes to fill the newly created Director of Equity and Inclusion position, which will be a shared resource between the Town, schools and library, and help coordinate among the broad network of stakeholders who wish to engage in this work. A link to this job opportunity can be found [here](#).

This incident, as well as those over the past few years, reinforce the urgency of the work ahead of us. Again, this hate crime and type of hateful behavior has no place in our Danvers Schools or any place in our community. It will not be tolerated. We implore the community to help us in recommitting to kindness and dignity.

Eric Crane	Dutrochet Djoko	Lisa Dana	Steve Bartha
SC Chair	HRIC Chair	Superintendent	Town Manager

## **Caring. Quality. Commitment. Collaboration.**

Keith Taverna  
Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Personnel  
978.774.4800 ext. 2432  
taverna@danvers.org

Lisa Dana, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
978.777.4539 ext. 2430  
dana@danvers.org

Mary Wermers  
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning  
978.777.8932 ext. 2281  
wermers@danvers.org