



Smithtown Central School District

26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, New York 11787

Mark Secaur, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
(631) 382-2006

February 9, 2024

Dear Smithtown School Community,

In the wake of several incidents that involved anti-semitism and racist graffiti, the district has sought to examine its approach to provide a safe, supportive environment for all of our students. In recent mailings, we have made it clear that anti-semitism, or any form of hatred, has no place in our schools or community and will not be tolerated.

The district has sought to blend its curricular work with providing our students with a set of experiences that promote safe and inclusive learning environments that are free from hate and prejudice, respectful of human rights and supportive of diverse cultures, identities and beliefs. Our examination of the current state of this work found that many, but not all, of our students were exposed to the powerful, experiential learning opportunities that allow them to better understand history and the impact of racism and hate. As a result, we have begun planning for a more systemic approach to ensure that all of our students benefit from these experiences. With this in mind, we have made plans for all of our 8th grade students to see the play "From the Fires: Voices from the Holocaust." Similarly, both of our high schools will continue to partner with the Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County to bring in first-generation and second-generation survivors of the Holocaust to speak with all 10th grade students. An updated, comprehensive overview of our work can be found [HERE](#).

In addition, we are also identifying new resources to incorporate in the future. These will likely include a visit from the Suffolk County Hate Crime Unit and a presentation that will make clear what constitutes a hate crime, as well as repercussions of committing a hate crime. We are also working with the Town of Smithtown's Unity Council and the potential for a Multi-Faith forum where people of different faiths could come in and speak about their religion and culture to small class groups throughout the day. This would be done in conjunction with the Global History curriculum. Furthermore, we have actively engaged with building administration, student council members and our leadership teachers to discuss this issue and what else we can do collectively. This dialogue on both sides of town will continue with the intent of promoting a student-led grass root campaign promoting unity and anti-bias behaviors.

We all have a responsibility to know the impact that acts of bias and hatred have on people. Whether it be antisemitism, islamophobia, or any other form of hate, we will hold people accountable, but we also need to look at the root causes of these behaviors. We need to reflect on the role we all play, the example we set, the environments we create.

It is natural and understandable that we turn to our schools to help with these types of situations. We have shared, in detail, the work we are doing and will do in this area and we welcome this responsibility, but cannot bear it alone. We all need to work together to break this cycle of hate and do better by our children.

Sincerely,

Mark Secaur, Ed.D.
Superintendent