



The Public Schools of Brookline
Town Hall
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Brookline, Massachusetts 02445
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June 15, 2020

Dear Brookline Community,

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with unprecedented challenges, uncertainties, new fears, and concerns that must be addressed both nationally and locally. We now must deliver instruction, conduct meetings, and connect with one another in new and innovative ways. While these times require us to be flexible, to adapt and to reconsider best practices, we remain steadfast in our commitment to respect all persons and all differences. While all of us face struggles posed by the pandemic, one community in particular has been targeted by harassment and hate crimes as a direct result.

The COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed a “second virus” of racism and xenophobia against our Asian and Asian American community members, both nationally and here in Brookline. While the connection with COVID-19 to China may have triggered the despicable behavior, the racism and xenophobia toward the Asian community has long historical roots. This racist rhetoric echoes a history of discrimination such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and the internment of Japanese-Americans.

The increase in overt discrimination, racist acts, and hateful language being expressed towards Asian and Asian American community members is wrong, unacceptable, and has no place in our schools, virtual or physical. We ask all staff, teachers, and members of the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) community to join us in taking a stand against anti-Asian racism, just as the Brookline Select Board has done. Reach out (virtually and, eventually, in person) to your Asian American students, their families, and your colleagues to join together in affirming our intolerance for any racist words or actions. Most importantly, stand up when something is said or done that is hurtful. This will be especially important as students return to in-person instruction and interaction.

The Public Schools of Brookline rejects racism and xenophobia unequivocally. We reject hate and hateful language in all its forms. We strive daily to make sure our schools (physical and virtual) are places in which everyone is safe and valued. We must continue, prioritize and deepen our anti-racism and anti-bias work through professional development, classroom instruction and courageous conversations. To that end, we will be providing resources and materials for teachers and staff on how to identify and respond to racism and xenophobia.

The PSB, the Brookline Asian American Family Network and the Brookline Educators Union believe in the individual dignity and humanity of each and every person in our community. We embrace everyone for who they are and for what they bring to our schools and larger community.

At times like these, it is important to remember one of our district’s core values to “...*acknowledge and celebrate the diversity within our community while affirming the importance of our common humanity. By promoting a safe environment for questioning and challenge, we foster the growth in value that comes from different perspectives, cultures, and experiences.*”

Sincerely,

Ben Lummis
Interim Superintendent
Public Schools of Brookline

Jessica Wender-Shubow
President
BEU ALANA Coordinating
Committee for the Brookline
Educators Union

Chi Chi Wu
Steering Committee
Brookline Asian American
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