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Superintendent

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Dear Brookline Families,

The United States is no stranger to anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitic acts have long plagued our country and yet, over the past several years, we have seen a significant increase in these incidents of hate and bias. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a 60% rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 over 2016, and the number of anti-Semitic incidents in K-12 schools and colleges nearly doubled in this same period. This past Saturday we saw the clear and devastating effects of this rise in anti-Semitism when a gunman massacred 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

The growing hatred in our nation is not limited to expressing itself through anti-Semitic acts. We see this hatred manifested in racist acts on a daily basis, from voter disenfranchisement to murder based solely on the color of a person's skin. Attacks on the LGBTQ community are on the rise, yet the federal government is contemplating erasing civil rights protections for transgender people from federal law. Xenophobia and anti-Muslim hatred are reported with frightening regularity by the press.

As a public school system, it is our responsibility to help our students navigate their world. Sadly, in this day and age, they come to our classrooms too often with the need to discuss, make sense of, and even grieve senseless acts of hatred and bias. We need to support them by providing a path forward where we work together to speak up against and combat hatred and bias in all its forms. If we fail to do so, we risk normalizing the anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Muslim, hate driven attacks that now occur with shocking regularity

Taking on this work is not easy. The ADL has developed a number of resources to support families and educators in having these difficult conversations. These resources include specific lessons that can be used in the classroom to talk about the Tree of Life Massacre and tools that can be used to respond to and combat anti-Semitism. We have shared these resources with our teachers and want to make families aware of them, too. Links to four different resources developed by the ADL can be found below.

- [Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate](#): Tools, tips and strategies for what educators and family members can do to help young people discuss and deal with the aftermath of hate-inspired events.
- [Shooting at a Pittsburgh Synagogue](#): Table Talk about the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in the context of anti-Semitism.
- [5 Tips for Talking with Children about the Shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue](#): Tips for talking with young people about this incident.
- [Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories About Bias and Injustice](#): Strategies and resources for talking with students about important stories in the news about bias and injustice.

In this moment, I am taken back to a conversation I had with Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum on Election Day 2016, which was also Brookline's annual Professional Development Day. In that conversation, Dr. Tatum reminded me that the most powerful and lasting changes that have happened in our country started locally - in neighborhoods, cities and towns - where the state of affairs was no longer accepted or embraced. No matter the form of hate or bias that confronts us, we will continue to work as a community to reject it and change it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Bott', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent