



We make a difference in Enfield - every child, every day.

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Dear Parents, Staff, and Students of the Enfield Public Schools,

I am going to begin with the facts. This past weekend, the Enfield High School football team was participating in their annual fundraising program where student athletes go around town and sell Blitz cards to raise funds for the upcoming season, all while wearing their Enfield Eagles football jerseys.

On Saturday morning, when one of our students approached a home to sell a fundraising item, the homeowner expressed their desire to not participate. Unfortunately, that was not the end of the encounter. This resident then proceeded to call our student a racial slur, as well as other statements that left our student feeling threatened and intimidated. By all accounts, our student athlete did the absolute correct thing—he walked away and immediately called his coach and his parents. Although no one should ever be in this situation, I want to publicly commend this student for having the dignity, grace, and courage to walk away and be the bigger person. His coach immediately called the police and rushed to the scene. Multiple officers and a supervisor from the Enfield Police Department responded to the scene and conducted several interviews of the homeowners, the football players, and any other potential witnesses in the area.

Yesterday was the first day of football practice at Enfield High School. Coach Lyver, his staff, and our Athletic Director, Mr. O'Connell, addressed this situation with the entire team, and we had counselors available to speak with any students who felt they needed one. This and other supports will continue indefinitely.

In addition to the steps taken as a district, I have also been in constant communication with our Town Manager, Ms. Zoppo, and Police Chief Fox. Our initial reaction was to attend practice with the team yesterday, for no other reason than to let our kids know that this is unacceptable and that we support them unconditionally. After speaking with Coach Lyver and Mr. O'Connell, it was determined that for this initial conversation, it was in the best of interest of our athletes for them to address the team first; however, this does not mean we will remain silent.

I need to be crystal clear on this part—there is no place in our schools, our town, or quite frankly, this country for what happened to one of our students this weekend. Although this did not happen in a school, it happened to one of our kids during a fundraiser for one of our athletic teams. This type of behavior is not only unacceptable, but also repulsive. I know I speak for the district, the Board of Education, and the Town Council when I say there is no tolerance for racism, bigotry, or discrimination against anyone in the town of Enfield. I also realize these are just words, and without action, those who feel underrepresented feel as if nothing will change. As a district, we have been advancing our work around equity and inclusion, and we will continue to strengthen these efforts to ensure every student, staff, and family believe our schools are a safe and welcoming community for them, regardless of what they look like, what they believe, who they love, how they learn, what their native language is, how they identify, or how much money they have; however, we cannot do this alone. To make progress, we need to embark on this together as a community. This will require all of us to have difficult but necessary conversations. This will also require us to talk, but more importantly, to listen to one another, whether we agree with one another or not. An important first step will be taken next week.

The Town Council and Board of Education will be hosting a **Community Conversation on Race, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** on Tuesday, August 23 starting at 5:30 pm on the Town Green. Bring your own chair, as well as your opinion and concerns about these issues. Members of the school staff, Town staff, and Police Department will be present, and various community groups have been invited. The event is free and open to the public and will be the start of a year-long discussion on these issues that will be supported

by the Board and Town. For more information, please call or email the Town Manager's office at 860-253-6350 or townmanager@enfield.org.

Two weeks from today is the first day of school, and I take no pleasure in having to send this letter home when most of you probably thought this would be about the opening of school. I am not attempting to minimize what happened. As I stated earlier, I am appalled; however, I must recognize this is an opportunity for all of us. This is a chance to use a terrible incident to not just make our students' lives better, but to better the entire community. We have an obligation to act – and that means all of us. In a time when disagreement and polarization dominate most conversations in the press or social media, we have an opportunity to rise above that and make real change. I cannot take back what happened or promise it will not happen again, but all of us have an opportunity to ensure this does not define who we are. Being in this community for as many years as I have, I have seen firsthand the good that makes Enfield the special place it is. When tragedy strikes, no community bands together better to support one another than the people of Enfield, and this is no different. We are better than this, and we all need to have the same courage our young student displayed to show our kids we are indeed better than this incident.

Thank you - and stay well,

Christopher J. Drezek

Superintendent of Schools