



Portland Public Schools

LEARNING TO SUCCEED

Xavier Botana, Superintendent
Jeanne Crocker, Asst. Superintendent for School Mgmt.
Craig Worth, Executive Director of Operations
Alicia Gardiner, Executive Director of Budget and Finance
Deborah Mullis, Interim Special Education Director
Sharon Pray, Interim Chief Academic Officer
Barbara Stoddard, Director of Human Resources
Grace Valenzuela, Director of Multilingual and Multicultural

Portland District Offices ♦ 353 Cumberland Avenue ♦ Portland, ME 04101 ♦ (207) 874-8100

Open Letter to the Portland Public Schools Community:

As you may have read or seen in the media or heard elsewhere, shortly after school dismissal on Friday, January 27, there was a hate crime committed against four Casco Bay High School students while they waited for the METRO bus. All of the students are physically fine; the Casco Bay extended family will help them to heal any emotional or psychological wounds they may have suffered.

By all accounts, our students acted exactly as we would want them to act. They were remarkably mature and supportive of each other during a frightening time. They stood up to the alleged assailant, took appropriate steps to be safe, and provided authorities with the necessary information to bring the attacker to justice. They exemplified the ideals on which Casco Bay High School was founded and made us all proud. They showed us that we are stronger together.

Principal Derek Pierce and his team have taken proactive steps to ensure that students will be safe while traveling to and from school. The Portland Police Department has assured me that they will have a stepped up police presence outside of our school buildings for as long as it seems necessary. We are looking at additional security measures that can be put in place for the near and long term.

I am proud of the Portland Community for their solidarity. I have been humbled by the words of outrage, encouragement and brotherhood that I have heard over the past twenty-four hours. Portland is an amazing city with an overwhelming commitment to progressive ideals. We will be working with community leaders to organize events that will give voice to our collective sense of frustration and compassion. I promise to keep you informed of our plans as they evolve.

More importantly, I want to take this opportunity to encourage all of us to understand the noxious environment in which this deplorable event took place. On Friday, the President signed an executive order barring immigrants from several Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States. This came on the heels of another order to build a wall along the United States' southern border. For a long time now, the rhetoric accompanying these actions represents a radical and disturbing departure from the principles on which this country was built and which so many have fought to protect and extend.

As someone who came to this country along with my family fleeing repression and injustice, not a single day goes by when I don't think about what my life might have been if the current policies had been in place in November of 1963. I am struck by the realization that fate and timing, not the inherent principles that I thought were the bedrock of this nation, are the reason that I am here today, able to raise my voice.

I want to be unequivocal that the Portland Public Schools, as an institution, is committed to those ideals and that we will work tirelessly to ensure that our children are in a safe haven while they are under our care. As a district, we will use every means within our power to protect the rights of our students and their families, including resisting actions by any branch of government that we do not believe have a sound legal basis.

Our district's vision is that all learners will be prepared to participate and succeed in a diverse and ever-changing world. Our world changed on Friday. But the staff of the Portland Public Schools is determined to continue to prepare our students to be active participants in a democratic society and bring about the change they, and all of us, desire and deserve.

Xavier Botana, Superintendent
Portland Public Schools