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Superintendent

READING MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear RMHS Families and Staff,

Late yesterday afternoon, a teacher reported to administration that a student found two swastikas drawn in pencil on the leg of a science lab bench. There was no threat written as part of the graffiti. Administration documented the images and the incident response protocol was initiated: The Superintendent, Reading Police and Facilities Department were all notified. The images were removed and a thorough sweep of all furniture in that classroom as well as other classrooms in the building was conducted. No additional images were found. While this is an ongoing investigation, we are uncertain when the images were drawn because the graffiti was not in an obvious location.

Unfortunately, we continue to have these graffiti related incidents in our schools and in our community. The swastika symbolizes hate and anti-Semitism and there is no place for these types of hateful actions or behaviors in our schools or in the greater Reading community. The actions of one person cannot be allowed to overshadow the tremendous kindness, respect, empathy and acceptance our students, staff and greater RMHS community embody every day inside and outside of the classroom.

Over the past few years, RMHS staff has focused our efforts on making our core values of Respect, Responsibility, Perseverance and Scholarship come to life as we continue to build a community that embraces diversity. Last year, Dr. Anna Ornstein, a holocaust survivor spoke with students at an assembly hosted by our student club A World of Difference, which is sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League. We also had students and staff trained as upstanders and RMHS hosted the Unity Project, a very powerful interactive public art project about embracing difference. This year, we began the year with Community Day, which was an entire day devoted to our core values and to building a positive RMHS community. We have further training planned this year for our A World of Difference Club along with several other student leadership organizations such as our Peer Leaders, Rocket Ambassadors and Student Council.

Preparing Reading's Youth to be Productive, Informed, Independent Citizens In A Global Society

The Reading Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age or disability.

We seek to find those responsible for these acts and we must continue to educate our entire community if we hope to prevent these acts from reoccurring.

On Monday, we will notify students of the incident, and will ask them for any information that might guide us in a direction towards identifying the person(s) responsible for the graffiti. We will continue to use situations like these as teachable moments to help students understand the impact of these hateful acts and to reinforce our core values of respect and responsibility along with kindness, empathy and acceptance.

We will continue to work closely with the Reading Police Department, the Superintendent and the Town of Reading to address this and any future issues. If you have any questions, concerns or information about this incident, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Boynton
Principal, RMHS