



BLACK HORSE PIKE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

580 Erial Road, Blackwood, New Jersey 08012-4550
(856) 227-4106 • Fax (856) 227-6835

www.bhprsd.org

Where inspiring excellence is our standard and student achievement is the result

Dr. Brian Repici
Superintendent

Frank Rizzo
*Board Secretary, Business
Administrator*

Julie A. Scully
Assistant Superintendent

Matthew Szuchy
Director of Curriculum & Instruction

June 1, 2020

Dear Parents, Students, and Community Members:

Over the last couple of months, we were challenged to make sense of a worldwide pandemic and how COVID-19 disrupted our daily lives. The events around the world and in our own country are confusing and heartbreaking to adults, let alone our students.

Our confusion and heartbreak continue with the news of the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, Breonna Taylor in Kentucky, and the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, three recent illustrations of a long history of racial injustice. These murders blossomed from the seeds of systemic racism, where roots have taken hold after generations of historic racial inequities. Racism found in city laws and lawmen. Whether those historic racial biases emerge in Central Park, New York City or through the actions of police officers in Minnesota, as educators, we want to confront racial and ethnic injustice and prepare our students to work in a diverse world.

These most recent murders sadly remind us of the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice in 2014, and countless other senseless acts of violence borne from racial hatred in our recent and long history. As outrage of these most extreme illustrations of racism exists, we must be equally outraged by the daily illustrations of how black and brown people can be marginalized. Whether it be the lack of clean drinking water in Flint, Michigan or the inequities of health care or examples of legal discrimination in housing, educators recognize we can play a crucial role in educating our young people about race and justice in America. We also have to recognize that our young people can educate us about their lives in our communities and nation as a whole. This should also remind us of the importance of knowing if and how we contribute to an America where these killings and their underpinnings are allowed to persist. What are the changes necessary for a more just society? And what is our part in that change? These are just some of the many questions we are confronting.

I have asked our educators to be prepared this week to discuss these events with our students. I also encourage our young people to know the power of protest, the power of the written word, the power of formulating goals,

TRITON REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

250 Schubert Avenue
Runnemede, NJ 08078-1796
(856) 939-4500 • Fax (856) 939-4724

Melissa Sheppard, Principal

 @TritonHigh



HIGHLAND REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

450 Erial Road
Blackwood, NJ 08012-4599
(856) 227-4100 • Fax (856) 227-3619

Lisa Owen, Principal

 @HighlandHS

TIMBER CREEK REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

501 Jarvis Road
Erial, NJ 08081-2169
(856) 232-9703 • Fax (856) 232-5267

Luis Amberths, Principal

 @TimberCreekHS

<https://www.facebook.com/Black-Horse-Pike-Regional-School-District>



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both short-term and long-term, relative to justice, and the power of voting. Our educators embrace the opportunity to be part of the solution to racial injustice. A solution requires deliberate and unyielding devotion to break these historic patterns. We are prepared and eager to show our level of warmth, care, and respect in our diverse learning community so that we can strengthen our connections. As educators, we believe we play a critical role in demonstrating empathy and understanding for all so that a better future can be created.

This past school year, a council of parents and staff members dedicated ourselves to working towards greater equity for all. Over 150 students and alumni voiced their opinions about their experiences in our high schools, which informed our practices relative to belonging, relationships, and race. This Council will continue this work to ensure that our students learn how to communicate with those they love, those in their community, and with those whom they disagree. We have started down this path because it is the right thing to do and equity for all will strengthen our community.

We understand that our students and our community as a whole may feel heightened emotions during this time. You may feel anger, sadness, confusion, fear, bewilderment, or any combination of these emotions, but know that we are here for you. Our school counselors, student assistance counselors, mental health counselors, and school administrators are available via their email addresses and will respond quickly to help students and families who reach out. You can also visit our School Counseling website for resources and re-read our Weekly Updates posted [here](#), where you can find resources on managing stress and coping skills.

Racial justice matters and we will not stand idle. Nothing is more important to us than the well-being of our students and we hope that we can return to school soon to continue the work of making the world a better place for them, their families, and our community.

Be safe. Be well.

Dr. Repici
Superintendent of Schools

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