

January 9, 2017

Dear Students, Parents and Guardians:

I would like to first reassure you that this morning our doors opened with no incident. Students entered our building ready to learn as usual.

However, today is a different day at Arundel. I was saddened and stunned by the mere existence of the petition, to say nothing of the wording used in it. The petition clearly does not align in any way with the values that we represent and teach at Arundel High School. This was explained this morning to a few students who sought out adults to ask about the news story regarding the petition confiscated in our school.

As shocked as I was by the petition, I have been equally heartened by the resolve of our staff, our parents, our students, and our community. The collective message has been clear: Arundel High School will not be defined by this incident. We will remain one community that celebrates our diversity. With that said, we must understand that we are not a perfect community. Therefore, we must continue to have open conversations about race and culture.

It is our school's responsibility to do everything we can to help shape all of the young men and women who enter our doors into citizens who will help shape the world when they leave Arundel High School. I believe we have done that in many instances by helping them grow not just in terms of knowledge, but in terms of an expanding mindset that better allows them to see, understand, appreciate, and value the vast diversity of the world they will one day lead. We are just not there yet.

We live in a society where our children – even long before they ever reach their high school years – are bombarded by messages of intolerance, disrespect, and hate. Especially in recent years, those messages have grown louder and more prominent on social media and news sound bites. I am very proud of the work our school has done to help combat those messages, but we can't do it alone. I truly believe that fear and hate can only be resolved with education and communication.

We must have a conversation about where we as a community go from here. Please join me at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, January 11, in our auditorium to take the next step in that process. Together, I am confident we will rise above this incident. I ask you to join me in that effort.

Sincerely,

Gina Davenport
Principal

GD/bm