



PORTLAND **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

prepared & empowered

Dear Lincoln Families,

I am writing to update you on the events of this past Friday and to share expectations for this coming week.

As you know, on Friday, a group of Lincoln students organized a protest to give voice to their concerns about racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic experiences they have felt while at Lincoln. At my direction, Lincoln leadership created a setting that honored students' choice about whether to participate in the protest, and to do so safely. I firmly believe that our work as a school system involves creating opportunities for authentic student voice and civic engagement. I also recognize that not everyone may agree with this perspective.

By and large students lived up to our trust in them. Although a significant number of students stayed out past the time that we had scheduled for classes to resume – and as a result were marked absent and their parents were informed – most students conducted themselves peacefully. Unfortunately, there were some students who did not live up to the expectations that were outlined, and we are in the process of engaging with them and their families and providing appropriate due process and consequences where appropriate.

I also want to acknowledge that we did not execute the plan as effectively as we wanted. Families were not notified until late in the day that students had overstayed the allotted protest time, and some students were prevented from re-entering the building after the protest time was up. Some students were erroneously told that they would be suspended for their participation in the protest. I apologize for our poor execution on the advertised plan.

As we move forward, we will continue to work towards the creation of school communities that are safe and welcoming for all, and we will work to improve our practices of listening and responding to our students and staff. Our staff holds the same desire and commitment to improve practices to make schools welcoming and safe for all. I also want to be clear that moving forward we do not expect further protests. Any attempt to do so will be unsanctioned and unsupported by the district with the corresponding consequences.

We will be scheduling a Lincoln community meeting in the coming days to further discuss what we have learned from the concerns raised by the students and discuss the school's strategies for responding to them. I hope you will stay engaged and involved in our efforts to make Lincoln a welcoming and safe place for every student regardless of their race, national origin, gender or sexual identity.

Finally, I want to share that Interim Principal Robyn Bailey has requested a leave of absence as of Monday, May 16. Please contact Assistant Principal Kathleen Marquis-Girard or Assistant Superintendent Aaron Townsend at (207) 874-8145 with any further questions.

Sincerely,

Xavier Botana, Superintendent