

March 24, 2021

Dear Mansfield Families,

As a school community, we are all saddened to hear news reports about another incident of racially motivated attacks last week in Atlanta. Of the eight victims, six were of Asian descent, and it is suspected that they were targeted because of their race. Studies show there is a significant increase in crimes against Asians and Asian-Americans across the country since the COVID-19 pandemic. Then again this week our country is rocked by news of a random act of violence killing ten people at a grocery store in Colorado.

As a community of learners, and responsible for providing guidance to impressionable children, we must stop and process the magnitude of these attacks. As a university community Mansfield is enriched by families and students from across the nation and the world. Mansfield Public Schools condemns racism, prejudice and unfair treatment of others, yet we are continually reminded that racism does exist, and in every community including ours.

On Monday night, our community's elected officials adopted a statement condemning this racially charged attack, and I share with you some of that statement here:

"Mansfield has long welcomed people from all parts of Asia and we will continue to do so. Most come to our town through UConn, but whether they live here for a short time or make Mansfield their long-term home, they are part of every facet of our community: as students and educators in our K-12 schools and at the University of Connecticut; as participants in and coaches for youth sports; volunteers on Town and non-profit committees and boards; as medical providers; and as patrons and owners of local businesses. We will not condone hate or bigotry in our community."

As I expressed to you last June when America's streets were filled with protests over the death of George Floyd, our future leaders of America—our students—are watching and learning. Mansfield Public Schools continually examines our own practices to ensure we are doing what we can to shape tomorrow's citizens and to simply develop good people.

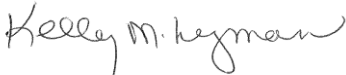
Within our schools we continuously examine curriculum, teaching resources, and our practices to present a program rich in diversity that expresses value and respect for all people. Staff continue to engage in professional learning focused on building skills and practices that support anti-racist teaching.

A community group that formed in the fall of 2019 continues to wrestle with the issue of racism in our time. [Conversations on Racism in Mansfield](#) hosts regular virtual sessions to provide the platform to share personal stories, bring forward concerns and discuss strategies to implement change.

Additionally, volunteers serve on Mansfield's [Human Rights Commission](#), established last spring by Mansfield's Town Council to guide the town's policies on equity and "place priority upon protecting, respecting, and fulfilling the full range of universal human rights." If you want to lend your voice to a conversation about overcoming racism, there is momentum and opportunity here to make change.

We share your concern and the challenge of explaining racism and violence to children. We encourage you to have conversations at home to help children process what is happening, raise their awareness and promote acceptance of other people who may not look, act or speak like them. I share with you below some resources that can assist you in the conversation about these increasing attacks on individuals of Asian descent. Please, as always, reach out to your school principal, psychologist or counselor if you or your child need special support, or to clarify for you the work we do about acceptance in our schools.

Sincerely,



Kelly M. Lyman  
Superintendent of Schools

Resources:

[Countering COVID-19 Stigma and Racism](#)-Tips for Parents and Educators

[Talking to Kids About Violence](#) –Tips for Parents and Teachers

[Dear Asian Youth](#) (youth-based)

[Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#)