

Date: Wed, Sep 11, 2024 at 6:40 PM
Subject: A Message from Assistant Principal Coles

A message from Shepherd ES



September 11, 2024

Dear Shepherd Elementary School 4th Grade Parents and Families,

At Shepherd, we are committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment for all students. Communicating home about incidents that impact our school community is critical to maintaining strong partnerships with families.

Today, following allegations of an isolated racist incident between a few of our fourth-grade students, 4th graders were gathered for a discussion on racism and discrimination. During the discussion, students were inappropriately asked to separate into groups determined by race and a staff member used the unabbreviated N-word.

I want to apologize for this unacceptable conversation. Students should never be asked to segregate by race or hear racist terminology used within the safety of our school building. Conversations around race and identity should be thoughtful, well-prepared, and facilitated by professionals. This incident has been reported to the DC Public Schools (DCPS) [Comprehensive Alternative Resolution & Equity \(CARE\) Team](#) for review.

In response to this incident, we will be receiving support from the district's Equity Team whose members are trained to support schools when alleged incidents of hate or bias occur. We are committed to engaging in broader discussions about how hurtful language or acts, regardless of intent, can cause harm. With the support of a trained facilitator, we will host a restorative conversation with our 4th grade cohort focused on repairing harm, providing a space for our students to process, and identifying our path forward from today's discussion. If you would like assistance talking to your child about race at home, please refer to the attachments provided by the DCPS Equity team for support in those conversations.

I also want to recognize that today's incident may have been triggering for our young people and remind families that Shepherd's dedicated social worker, Mr. Bardach, is available to provide students with a safe space to ask questions and share their feelings. The well-being of our students is important, and we are here to support them.

We are committed to ensuring Shepherd's environment embodies a safe and positive community where students, staff, and families have a sense of belonging and significance every day. If you have any questions, please call the school office at (202) 576-6140 or email me at Shamayne.Coles@k12.dc.gov.

Sincerely,

Shamayne Coles

Assistant Principal, Shepherd Elementary School

File attachments:

[NMAAHC Children Are Not Colorblind.pdf](#)

[PBS 10 Tips on Talking to Kids About Race and Racism .pdf](#)

[Smithsonian - Talking About Race.pdf](#)

Note: The attachment link will be expired in three years. Download and save the content if required.

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