LEXINGTON
HIGH SCHOOL

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Principal

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Dear LHS Parents/Guardians:

This morning an LHS student notified us that a communication from a young person who does not currently attend Lexington Public Schools had been forwarded to students in the LHS community. The contents of this message contained truly vile, racist, and violent language specifically targeted at African Americans. We are grateful that a student was courageous enough to bring this and the impact it was having on our community to the attention of trusted adults.

Given the nature of the message, we informed the appropriate authorities including the police, and we are cooperating with the active investigation that is currently underway.

This issue today harmed our community and had a great impact on some of our students and staff. Messages like the one some of our students received completely violate our shared Core Values and we will acknowledge and condemn such acts publicly. We must address the impact of these harmful actions without amplifying the message that caused such harm in the first place. I strongly urge students to speak with a trusted adult when they see or receive offensive messages like this. Forwarding screenshots or quoting the violent, racist language can often cause additional and unintentional harm to individuals and our community as a whole.

Our focus as a school community is on the impact this had on our students, staff, and families, while simultaneously engaging in the long-term work needed to prevent these incidents in the future. This incident is also occurring within the larger context of the recent targeting of Asian Americans and the start of the George Floyd murder trial. Those national events among many others put weight on people in our community that is made heavier when acts of intolerance occur locally.

In addition to trusted adults to whom I hope students will reach out, our counselors and administrators are available should students need during the school day. Additionally, the Counseling Department will host small group community circles for students who desire support and wish to discuss the impact of racism and racist language on them as individuals and on us as a community. Students can sign up through a google form that will be emailed to them to express their preference for timing as well as whether they would like to be part of an affinity group. Students will then be contacted by the group facilitator with a zoom link.

I am sorry for having to bring this issue to you and I think it is essential that we continue to speak out when such offenses occur. It reaffirms our commitment to one another that we mean what we say when we state our Core Value that *We All Belong.*

Andrew Stephens

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