

Wellesley schools grapple with bathroom swastika, athlete called racial slur

Wellelsey Public School officials for the second time this year informed the community that a swastika was found drawn on the wall of the boys' bathroom at Wellesley Middle School and that the incident is under investigation. In addition, Superintendent David Lussier has relayed that a WHS athlete last week was called a racial slur by an athlete from a neighboring town.

This from Wellesley Middle School principal Mark Ito in a letter to the WMS community:

Dear WMS Community,

It is with deep concern that I share with you that a swastika was found in one of the boys' bathrooms at the middle school in the evening hours, late last week. As we continue to investigate, we are unsure of who drew it, but we do feel it was done after school hours when the building was open for evening activities. Regardless, this act of anti-Semitism is something that will not be tolerated in our school and district. As the building leader, I feel that any act that does not support our values of inclusivity and safety for all, will be strongly addressed by our WPS/WMS administration.

In response, we will continue to discuss strategies with our community partners from Temple Beth Elohim, consider the timing of

our anti-Semitic curriculum delivered in social studies classes, think of potential educational opportunities from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and monitor our building for safety. I also plan to communicate a message to all students in our school that expresses my concerns and thoughts about anti-Semitic and racist acts. We are a caring community at WMS, and I want everyone to be responsible for our feelings of safety and respect that need to be practiced daily.

If you have any information that you feel is important for our school to know, please contact me or one of our assistant principals directly. Additionally, I hope that you will talk to your children about the incident, as it involves all of us. As a school, we feel such sorrow and remorse when anti-Semitic incidents happen, as we work tirelessly to try and prevent them. That being said, I feel confident in our ability to address — reactively and proactively — those things that negatively impede our school days and greater lives. We continue to strive for safety for all students at WMS.

Sincerely,

Mark Ito
Principal, Wellesley Middle School

Superintendent Lussier's email:

Dear Members of the Wellesley Community,

As we continue to hold diversity, equity, and inclusion as high priorities in the Wellesley Public Schools, we have recently been reminded of the challenges we face in pursuit of these values.

Following an athletic competition last week, a WHS athlete was called a racial slur by an athlete from a neighboring community. At the end of the week, we discovered a swastika drawn in a bathroom at Wellesley Middle School. The District has reported both of these incidents to the Wellesley Police Department and the Anti-Defamation League.

Let me be clear that any actions involving language and/or symbols of hate are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our District. Each of these incidents also underscores the importance of our continued efforts to ensure that our school community remains a safe and inclusive place for all of our students and staff.

When hate is allowed to grow unchecked, it can lead to tragic consequences. Just one year ago yesterday, a gunman took the lives of eleven worshippers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. We are clearly not immune from the issues of hate and division that are on the rise in our country. As we engage with each other and our young people, I ask that all members of our community speak with one, unambiguous voice in support of our core values of Respect for Human Differences, Cooperative and Caring Relationships, and Commitment to Community.

Thank you,

*David F. Lussier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools*

These incidents are not uncommon

Unfortunately, these incidents have precedent in town.

[Swastikas found drawn at Wellesley Middle School, June 2019](#)

[Wellesley HS repulsed by racist email sent to teacher, March 2019](#)

[Swastika found at Wellesley HS in boys' bathroom, 2017](#)

[Wellesley HS investigates swastika etched onto computer, 2016](#)

[Wellesley parks vandalized, 2017](#)

Is it any wonder Wellesley students are sick and tired of dealing with the hate?

[Wellesley HS students walk out, demand everybody wake up to racism, April 2019](#)