

MESSAGE FROM PRINCIPAL SWANSON  
RESPONSE TO RACIAL SLUR IN HHS RESTROOM  
DECEMBER 4, 2023

Good morning, Hingham High School.

As most of you know by now, I sent an email to our whole school community on Friday afternoon to share some news about an incident that had occurred earlier in the day, when we discovered that somebody had scrawled a racial slur on a wall in one of the boys' restrooms. For me, the incident generated a mixture of emotions, including both sadness and anger. I know most of you felt the same way. The graffiti was immediately removed by one of our custodians but, in some ways, the stain of such an ignorant action cannot be so easily erased.

As a community, we all need to take a stand when something like this happens, because it represents a direct challenge to our values. Even though that graffiti came from the hand of a single person, whose action deeply offends the rest of us, we all need to reaffirm what we DO stand for. And if you need any reminder of what that is, please look to our school's mission statement or, better yet, consider the powerful example set by so many of our students and our teachers every day. Hateful language has absolutely no place at Hingham High School, where we promote values that are diametrically opposed to racism and ignorance.

Finally, I would like to say something directly to the person who did this. Whoever you are. And, most likely, you're sitting at a desk in one of our classrooms right now, listening to this message along with everybody else. To more than a thousand of your fellow students, and to the hundred or so staff members who work here, your identity *so far* remains anonymous. But you (and maybe ONLY you) know who you are, at least for the moment. As your principal, I want you to know this: Your action on Friday was completely at odds with the values of this school community. Your

willingness to use hateful language is totally rejected, not only by your teachers but also by the overwhelming majority of your peers. Your action constitutes a hate crime, and it can lead to severe consequences, not only in school, but also in court, if our ongoing investigation leads to the discovery of your identity. You've revealed a lack of understanding and a lack of basic decency. Not to mention: Graffiti on a bathroom wall, etched in the shadows, is the very definition of a cowardly act. So I urge you: Expect something better from yourself.

To everybody else: Please, remain vigilant against hate. Students: If you see something that concerns you, please share that information with an adult in the building so we can hold people accountable for their actions. Above all, keep on acting in ways that promote unity, empathy, compassion, and respect. At Hingham High School, that's who we are. That's who we've always been. And that's what we need to remain.

Thank you, and here's Isabel with the rest of the announcements.