



## Regional School District 8

November 18, 2022

A Message to RHAM Families, Staff, and Students,

Earlier today at RHAM High School, a staff member discovered what appeared to be a noose commonly associated with a racial hate crime hanging in the boys' locker room. The staff member immediately removed it and alerted school administration. The district engaged with the Hebron Police Department and Resident State Trooper to initiate an investigation into the matter as a possible hate crime. They are collaborating with both the Major Crimes Unit and Hate Crimes Unit from the Connecticut State Police on their investigation. District staff are working with authorities to find the responsible individual(s) as the investigation will continue throughout the weeks ahead.

It is my hope that we learn the identity of those responsible so that the district can take significant and appropriate action. To that end, we established a phone number where anyone with information pertaining to the matter can anonymously report it to a voice mail system. Individuals are encouraged to call 860-228-5319 to share any information they may have.

Words cannot express the feeling of disgust that overcame me when I learned about this situation. There is no place in the RHAM community for this behavior or the beliefs associated with it. In my short time working in the district, I have witnessed RHAM staff members working to foster an inclusive school environment for students and families and demonstrate an understanding of the importance of diversity and equity. While it would be naïve to believe that racism and bigotry do not exist in our society, please know that words or actions spreading racism, discrimination, or hateful ideologies will not be tolerated in our schools. RHAM is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment that is physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe and thus free from forms of harassment and discrimination.

I recognize that learning about this situation will trigger strong emotions. The district will have counseling staff available for all students from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM tomorrow (Saturday, November 19) at RHAM High School. As always, counseling staff will be available to students throughout normal school hours as well. Parents and guardians are encouraged to take advantage of these resources if your child(ren) needs it, or to contact their child's counselor directly via phone or email.

We are not in this alone, as similar events have unfortunately been permeated across our state and our nation. What is important to focus on now is how we move forward, and I

have spoken with the town leaders and school district Superintendents in Andover, Hebron, and Marlborough to discuss next steps. Each of them shares my concerns about today's event, as well as the belief that our communities need to use it to come together and address this issue through education, training, and community conversations. As educators, we are trained to recognize learning opportunities when they present themselves, regardless of how difficult or painful those learning opportunities may be. Our goal moving forward is to ensure that members of the RHAM community learn from this experience and that an event such as this never happens again.

I appreciate your support for our students and community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin McNamara', with a stylized, cursive script.

Colin McNamara  
Superintendent