

January 7, 2021

Good Afternoon,

I watched with horror, as I am sure all of you did, the stunning scenes of violence and mayhem that unfolded in the heart of our democracy.

I was left shaken as a quintessential element of the American experiment, the peaceful transfer of power from one leader to the next, was disrupted by what the leadership of both parties have called insurrection.

We must take to heart the lessons learned from this horrific episode and apply them to one of the central missions of public education: the education of informed and engaged citizens.

We must also, all of us, do better. Our Civil Discourse must be civil. We, as a community, must embody and model the values of open and respectful dialogue. We are all engaged in the service of the common good even when we disagree, we must remain friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens.

At tonight's board meeting, we will welcome three new Board Members to the table. Robert Cianculli - who is rejoining us, Joy Young who is a first time BOE member, and Jordan Hyman, our new Mountainside Representative.

The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Task Force is being formed. We have enough parent volunteers, but are still looking for teachers, current students, and former students who would be interested in getting involved and volunteering their time and perspectives. If you are interested in helping us make Berkeley Heights Public Schools a more inclusive place, please [email me](#) to schedule a time to talk.

As an update on the status of the investigation regarding the recent Instagram posts discussed at the December 21st BOE meeting, as of today, we have approximately 45 current and former students who spoke, posted, or both. By law, HIB incidents reported by current students must be investigated by the district's Anti-Bullying Specialists. Incidents that were reported by former students will be investigated by Cleary, Giacobbe, Alfieri and Jacobs, who specialize in education law. We are using an outside attorney to be transparent as possible. There were many individuals who could not be identified. If a student wishes to report an allegation, they may do so through the [district anonymous reporting system](#). If a former student has an allegation or a grievance, they may use our attorney's email address to report it: BHFormerStudents@cqajlaw.com. Once the investigations are complete, we will determine our next steps.

By January 25th, there will be two dedicated Gender Neutral Bathrooms at GLHS. This project has been in the works for some time, and I apologize that it was not up and running at the start of the school year. Unfortunately, it was one of the items that was delayed by the pandemic.

The District has been working very closely with the Berkeley Heights Diversity Council and they have asked me to announce that they will be holding an on-line celebration and day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I encourage everyone to be involved so, please go to their website for more information <https://www.bhdiversity.org>.

Regarding our COVID-19 cases, our GL cases are on the rise once again. You can see the breakdown below:

New Cases (1/7/21)		
School	Staff/Student	Result
MKM	2 Students	No in-school exposure
TPH	1 Student	No in-school exposure
WW	2 Students	No in-school exposure
CMS	1 Staff	Close contacts notified
CMS	1 Student	No in-school exposure
GL	10 Students	No in-school exposure

Finally, we look forward to seeing our students in person for K-8 on January 11th and GL on January 25th. Grades 1-5 will return on January 11th with Plan A, 6-8 will return with Cohort A, and on 1/25 GL will return with Cohort A. Pre-K and K will remain the same.

I want to wish you all a Happy New Year and a better 2021.

Sincerely,

Dr. Melissa Varley