

## Instagram Post and a Covid Update

Dr. Melissa Varley <noreply@bhpsnj.org>  
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To: mskara@bhpsnj.org

Fri, Dec 18, 2020 at 2:03 PM

Dear Families and Staff;

Yesterday I was alerted to an Instagram post by a former GLHS student that detailed his experience at GLHS. That post was soon followed by others from additional graduates and current students detailing their experiences in Berkeley Heights Public Schools. I was horrified in reading the posts and I read through every single one of them. I am so sorry to learn of these instances of bias and hatred, and while I cannot change the past, I am dedicated to building a different future for all of our students and helping to heal the pain that has occurred.

Since becoming Superintendent of Berkeley Heights Public Schools in the summer of 2019, I have repeatedly stated my commitment to Inclusion. All students must feel safe and accepted when they come to school. To that end I have committed significant resources to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. This includes DEI training in Implicit Bias for the staff, and additional DEI training for the building principals. In addition, we have started Diversity Committees at all levels. The function of these committees is three-fold: education, communication, and celebration of diversity. All of the committees have met several times and new initiatives are being introduced at each level. The committees also discuss curriculum, instruction, and professional development. These are but the first steps in changing the culture in all of our buildings because from the posts it is apparent that our schools have developed a culture that tolerates words and actions that are deeply offensive to our values. In reality we have much work to do before we achieve the district mission to Include, Inspire, and Empower all of our students, because no child can be Inspired or Empowered if they are not Included.

It is up to all of us, administrators, teachers, parents, and most of all students to stand up against hatred and intolerance. I am committed to BHPS being Inclusive, and over the last several months many administrators and teachers have given of their time and energy to support the Diversity Initiative. I ask you, the parents, to help us make BHPS inclusive so that no student ever again has to endure the hatred and bigotry that were highlighted in the IG posts. Finally, to you the students, I ask you to stand up and speak up: If you see a student being subjected to this type of abuse, or if you experience this yourself, report it. I cannot address an issue I do not know about. If we are going to change the culture of our schools it will take all of us standing up for what is right.

In unrelated news, we have developed a COVID Dashboard. You can view it [here](#).

Our cases for the end of this week are below:

New Cases (since 12/14 update)		
School	Staff/Student	Result
Woodruff	1 Student	Last day in School 12/4 No in-school exposure
GLHS	1 Student	Last day in School 11/4 No in-school exposure
GLHS	1 Staff	Last day in School 12/14 Close Contacts Notified

I wish you all a safe and healthy weekend.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Melissa Varley