



Ridgewood Avenue School

Dr. Michael Donovan
Principal

May 23, 2022

Dear Ridgewood Avenue School Community:

The Glen Ridge School District has been dedicated to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Ridgewood Avenue School has embraced this focus with a number of steps including, but not limited to:

- Meeting with our literacy consultant to review all literature used (including short stories, poetry and novels) to better represent diverse characters and authors
- Ensuring classroom environments are decorated so that posters, banners and other classroom decor highlight and celebrate diversity
- Activities at faculty meetings where staff discuss various issues that affect students, reflect upon and brainstorm ways our focus on DEI can improve their experiences at Ridgewood Avenue School
- Professional development training for all staff
- Making sure to plan and implement lessons during specific months dedicated to honoring diversity, but also making sure those lessons are integrated throughout the entire school year

Recently, we have experienced three separate issues where students have used a racial slur. This does not reflect our focus on diversity, equity and inclusion nor our focus on social-emotional learning. Ridgewood Avenue School has a staff that is dedicated to DEI and to ensuring a safe school for all. When these issues occur, each situation is investigated and there are consequences. Beyond consequences, we begin steps toward remediation and where appropriate, conflict resolution.

I am reaching out to ask for parent support with this issue. We will continue our efforts and ask that you join us in having discussions with your children about words that should never be spoken, attitudes that should never be given or hate that must never be spread. As a community, we must work together to ensure this next generation is the change our world needs. Some immediate steps we have taken at Ridgewood Avenue School to address these recent issues include, but are not limited to:

- Scheduling Dr. Mykee Fowlin for a presentation to our 5th and 6th grade students on June 3rd. Dr. Fowlin has visited Glen Ridge in the past and uses his experiences in acting and psychology to connect with the audience. Each time he has visited Glen Ridge, his message has resonated
- Each 5th and 6th grade class will have a guidance lesson focused on DEI and the harm words can have
- Each 5th and 6th grade crash house will have a special lesson focused on DEI

- I have spoken with a local resident (and RAS dad) who has done training for our staff in the past on Implicit Bias and have begun conversations with him about how we can continue to work together
- The local GRDIA (Glen Ridge Diversity and Inclusion Association) has secured an Author Visit this June for our 4th graders with Alliah Agostini, author of The Juneteenth Story.

Ridgewood Avenue School takes these incidents seriously. We always hope our proactive efforts are all that is needed, but are not afraid to be reactive when we realize more needs to be done. We will continue brainstorming, engaging in dialogue, researching best practices and looking for new and more successful ways to ensure every child feels safe and loved at our school, every day.

Respectfully,

Dr. Michael Donovan