



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



August 28, 2017

Dear Superintendents:

The tragic events that occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia on Saturday, August 12th were deeply disturbing on multiple levels. As we mourn the loss of life and pray for a speedy recovery for those injured, we must stand ready to combat racism, bigotry and domestic terrorism, and send a very clear message that they will not be tolerated in our schools. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) firmly believes that all children deserve to be educated in an environment where they do not feel threatened.

Events like these are not only difficult to process, but they are also sometimes difficult to even talk about. Over the coming weeks, as students return to classrooms across our state, it will be vitally important to assure them that they are in safe environments where everyone -- regardless of race, gender, gender identity, religion, nationality or sexual orientation -- has the same right to learn and be treated with respect and dignity as everyone else does.

As such, I am sending this letter to provide you with resources that may help engage in these conversations. The first resource includes information that was gathered by the National Education Association and contains resources for teachers, students and parents to help engage in a dialogue about racism, hate and violence. It can be accessed [here](#) and found on the NEA's website. The State Education Resource Center has also released a [statement with a list of resources](#) that you may find helpful.

I would also like to share contact information for professionals within the Department who may be of assistance:

1. For questions regarding bullying and school climate issues, please contact CSDE's Dr. Jo Ann Freiberg at (860) 713-6805.
2. For questions regarding school psychology, counseling, social work, and health services, please contact (860) 807-2050 and you will be directed to the appropriate consultant.
3. For questions or complaints regarding bullying, based on protected classes (such as race, sex, religion and sexual orientation) and other acts of bias and discrimination, please contact CSDE's Dr. Adrian Wood (860) 713-6795.

We are hopeful that these resources are useful and want to remind each of you that we must continue to stand together in condemning all acts of hatred and bigotry. When we openly celebrate the wonderfully diverse classrooms that we have around the state, it helps to make every student feel welcome and safe, and illustrates to them that we are more powerful when we choose to promote love instead of hate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell
Commissioner of Education