

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

512 Cedar Street
Scotch Plains, New Jersey 07076

Joan Mast, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

908-232-6161
Ext. 41102 or 41103

July 12, 2021

Dear SPF Community,

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer. The district team is planning for a strong start that will provide our students with as normal an experience as possible, as we move beyond the COVID-19 disruption and challenges.

Even as we plan for a more typical, more harmonious start to the school year, we are hearing a new and growing concern across our nation, in our state, and now in our town, that public schools are teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Before misinformation and misunderstanding fuel the discussion in our district and community, I want to address concerns about CRT. This is a decades-old academic concept created by legal scholars and used by universities, lawyers, and the legal system to review federal laws and the constitution to analyze inequity in our nation. Today, the term CRT is being used incorrectly as a catch-all phrase for all things related to racism. Some of the opposition around CRT revolves around fears that students will be taught divisive concepts.

We are not teaching CRT in Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public School District. We believe most parents in our district, and across the nation, want their kids to understand the historic path of our nation and this includes difficult discussions about racism. We also are committed to **ensuring all children thrive** and learn to lead and manage in a diverse community and nation. To fulfill this commitment, we are teaching diversity, empathy, and social justice. This approach helps build character, develop compassion and ultimately creates a stronger school community.

We are working with the Institute for Teaching Diversity and Social Justice, and this includes Dr. Khyati Joshi, who has worked with our district administrators. Dr. Joshi will continue working with members of our faculty to achieve the following goals:

- 1) Identity: Each student will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities;
- 2) Diversity: Each student will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language in speaking of human differences, and deep caring for human connections;
- 3) Justice: Each student increasingly will recognize unfairness, acquire-language to describe unfairness, and gain understanding that unfairness hurts; and,
- 4) Action: Each student will demonstrate empowerment and the necessary skills to act, with others, against prejudice and/or discrimination.

Parents and the community will be invited to a session to gain a better understanding and ask questions about this work on October 6, 2021.

If you have questions or concerns, please call my office at 908-232-6161.

Thank you for your partnership in supporting our children, our schools, and our community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joan Mast
Superintendent