



Westhill CSD

May 16, 2022

It wasn't necessarily my plan to make a comment or put out a statement on the horrific tragedy from Buffalo over the weekend, but I've been thinking about it for a few days now and I decided to share my thoughts.

Unfortunately events like this take place far too often and have become as common on the evening news as getting the weather forecast. When mass shootings and senseless acts of violence driven by hate take place, I instantly start to think about my sphere of influence as a parent and an educator; "What can I do?" "How can I help?" I know that having a debate about the Second Amendment isn't going to be helpful in the moment. Expressing my outrage isn't going to change anything. Turning the channel and moving on with my day also isn't a good response. So, I keep going back to thinking about my sphere of influence.

As parents, we have this amazing opportunity each and every day to have a profound and positive influence in shaping who our kids are as people. If you're an educator, you have that same amazing opportunity with other children each and every day. It really is incredible! We have the magnificent power to teach and model the values of kindness, fairness, inclusiveness, selflessness and respect for all. We have the ability to teach and show the value and worth of everyone, regardless of who they are or where they are from. It's such a powerful influence and it comes with great responsibility. We have the miraculous power to change the world one child at a time. That's how we combat hate. That's how we respond.

Out of these unbearable tragedies we must reenergize ourselves and recognize the positive influence that we all have as parents and educators. We have to call out hate and discrimination when we see it, and we all need to lead with and model compassion, open-mindedness and love. The tragedy in Buffalo is also a reminder as to why the work and conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion in schools and the community at large are so important. We are absolutely committed to that work. If we are not going to actively challenge hate, then we are allowing it to thrive.

There is no way for any of us to make sense of what happened in Buffalo, but we can respond to it. Doubling down on kindness, fairness, inclusiveness, selflessness and respect for all is a good place to start.

Continued Success,
Steve Dunham
Superintendent of Schools