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Observances and Celebrations Message From Superintendent Rundle

1 message

Fred Rundle <communications@mercerislandschools.org>

Fri, Sep 30, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Reply-To: communications@mercerislandschools.org

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Fred Rundle, Ed.D, Superintendent

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Dear Mercer Island Staff, Students and Families,

The rolling of the calendar from September to October affords us more opportunities to create space and raise our collective awareness about the identities of our students, staff, and community. I am personally committed to ensuring everyone in our school district feels a deep sense of belonging. Spotlighting specific days and months where we can celebrate religions, races, ethnicities, cultures, traditions, genders, and other identities is one way to achieve this commitment. Through our differences we can find unity.

Yom Kippur- Wednesday, October 5

We hope that our Jewish classmates, colleagues, and friends had a wonderful Rosh Hashanah holiday last week. This Wednesday, we will once again make space for those who celebrate Yom Kippur, the holiest Jewish holiday of the year. While schools remain open, we commit to refraining from assigning tests and quizzes, or holding significant events on this day.

Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement begins a day of fasting from sundown on October 4 and ends with a night of celebrating at sundown on October 5.

Indigenous Peoples' Day- Monday, October 10

Mercer Island is located within the natural land of the [Coast Salish people](#). Lake Washington provides a natural boundary between two Coast Salish groups: the Duwamish on the west and Snoqualmie on the east. On Monday, October 10, we join others around the country and within our region to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Though Washington is not one of them, 14 states and the District of Columbia officially recognize Indigenous Peoples' Day. South Dakota was the first state to do so in 1989.

Indigenous Peoples' Day is a celebration of the cultures and traditions of the Indigenous People, past and present. Mercer Island School District chooses to recognize native and indigenous people for their culture and enduring impact on our communities today.

Disability History and Awareness Month- October

Mercer Island School District joins other Washington public schools to promote educational activities that provide instruction, awareness, and understanding of disability history and

people with disabilities. Whether disabilities are visible or hidden, our school district strives to include all members of our community in our activities and events inside and outside of the classroom. While this is a twelve-month a year commitment, October is a month to dedicate explicit time and energy to deepening our understanding of disabilities and create a more accepting and empathetic space for all. We believe recognizing disability history will inspire students with disabilities to feel a greater sense of pride, reduce harassment and bullying, and help keep students with disabilities in school.

Bullying Prevention Month- October

Leaders at youth.org define bullying as unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. Bullying can also take place through technology, known as cyberbullying. Mercer Island School District has a long-standing commitment to preventing and intervening when bullying occurs. This is an ongoing challenge that starts with making sure every student feels a deep sense of belonging. I know we have work to do, but our shortcomings give me greater purpose and energy to prevent and eliminate bullying. Students will be encouraged to wear orange on October 19, which is Unity Day.

To build the learning environment we want for our students and staff we know it takes authenticity, relationships, and engagement. Honoring the traditions, beliefs, and identities of our community affords each individual the right to show up as their whole self in our schools.

Sincerely,

Fred Rundle

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