

Statement from the Blind Brook-Rye UFSD

The faculty, staff, administration, and Board of Education of the Blind Brook School District express our deepest condolences to the families of the eight victims of the heartbreaking violence in the Atlanta area that occurred this week. While police investigations continue, the early facts suggest that this terrible crime was rooted in hatred toward the Asian American community.

Our District condemns discrimination, bigotry, and violence in the strongest possible terms, and we stand in solidarity with our Asian American students and their families, as well as other community members who struggle to overcome prejudice in their daily lives.

Our nation, our community, and our schools are at their best when people come together. COVID has inspired us to innovate new approaches to learning, and we are proud of our collective successes during the pandemic to the myriad of challenges we have encountered.

Similarly, scientists from across the United States and around the World have collaborated across national boundaries to share knowledge in the development of vaccines that will ultimately allow us all to return to our normal lives.

Living through the pandemic has also illuminated darker aspects of our society, such as blaming China for all our current woes. Racially charged rhetoric from the highest levels of government may have amplified hatred against Chinese Americans and the Asian American community in general.

A recent study by California State University found that hate crimes against Asian American citizens in our nation's 16 largest cities rose by 150% in 2020, and a disproportionate number of those crimes occurred in and around New York City.

Senseless violence this week reminds us that there is still much work to be done, and our schools play an important role. In the wake of protests that elevated awareness of racial justice struggles, our District established a standing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. We hosted a series of forums that provided valuable insights from current students, alumni, parents, and other community members.

Our commitment to fostering a learning environment that celebrates cultural diversity as an asset to our school has only strengthened. We believe that by embedding social justice and current events across the curriculum, we not only expose students to the world beyond our school walls, but we also empower them as agents of positive change who will embrace diversity and inclusiveness as foundations of a strong and healthy society.

Additional resources in our schools include the following staff members who are available to provide support directly to our students with respect to issues of intolerance, prejudice, and hatred:

- **Guidance Counselors:** Provide academic as well as social/emotional support to students. The function of the counselor is to assist students with academic and personal concerns. One of their goals is to help students resolve personal conflicts and social issues.
- **School Psychologists:** Help students navigate academic and personal challenges in addition to conducting required psychological testing. School psychologists also provide confidential counseling dealing with personal challenges or interpersonal difficulties.
- **Social Workers:** Support students toward social, emotional, and academic success by working with students individually and/or in group settings.

- **Student Assistance Counselor (HS):** Primarily focused on intervention and prevention strategies relating to substance use and abuse, which may relate to other conflicts or stresses.

Respectfully,

Dr. Patrick Brimstein

Superintendent of Schools