

## **Resolution to Address Harm Caused to Students by Incidents of Hostile and Racist Behavior**

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WHEREAS, at recent Orange County Schools' events and meetings of the Board of Education, there has been a growing presence of white nationalist displays and intimidating behavior, including bigoted, misogynistic, racist, homophobic and transphobic language; and,

WHEREAS, the Orange County Schools community has been confronted with a planned and concerted effort to bully and intimidate students and their families, staff and board members, Black and Brown members of the community, and the LGBTQ+ community; and,

WHEREAS, emotional and psychological harm has been caused by this presence and collective behavior, harm which has been deepened by White people standing by and applauding, failing to intervene, or even failing to name the racist, bigoted, and threatening behavior; and,

WHEREAS, at school events, board meetings, and on school property, men wore clothing indicating their allegiance to a Western Chauvinist and extremist group with ties to white supremacy; and,

WHEREAS, the presence of extremist groups in our community and in proximity to school property influences the school climate; and,

WHEREAS, school climate, particularly racial climate, is directly related to motivation, engagement, belonging, and academic outcomes for all youth, but especially youth of color; and,

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of school personnel and adults in the community to create spaces that allow all students, and particularly marginalized students, to engage with school to their fullest potential; and,

WHEREAS, respect for diversity and emotional and physical safety are central elements in the Safe and Supportive Learning Environments adopted by the US Department of Education in 2015; and,

WHEREAS, honest debate regarding the value of specific health measures in the interest of students has been exploited by opportunistic adults motivated by racist self-interest; and,

WHEREAS, there is a danger of Orange County Schools' students being recruited by white supremacist groups; and,

WHEREAS, staff members have emailed board members about recent events, including:

- “Having witnessed recent board meetings, the most recent one in person, I felt afraid: afraid for you, afraid for me, afraid for our students and staff. If we don't draw the line at racism and hate, then why are we even here, and more importantly, who are we here for?”
- “One of the reasons that I decided to become a teacher is because I believe that students of all backgrounds deserve love and a place of belonging. Although the Proud Boys have come and gone from the proximity of Orange High School's campus, their hateful presence has remained and continues to trouble my students. From the time that the Proud Boys arrived near campus, students in my classes have expressed a deep concern and paranoia about what would happen if and when the Proud Boys might show up on campus again. As a teacher, I always want to comfort my students and reassure them that I will be able to care for them. But, as it pertains to the potential for hate groups like the Proud Boys to show up again, I am not able to offer my students reassurance about the future or their safety. Therefore, I think it is important for my students, for Orange County Schools, and for our nation, that

we work toward creating a more welcoming and accepting place that treasures people of all backgrounds;” and,

WHEREAS, Students from Orange High School shared with the Board of Education the following statements:

- “The thought of an organization known for violence and racism choosing our school to make a statement scares me. I can't believe they are allowed to be so close to our school even with a nonviolent protest... The presence of a violent right-wing group that hates me for my beliefs and sexuality has only added to that feeling. Knowing that they are able to easily access our campus without repercussions makes me fearful of school-related violence.”
- “I personally felt very unsafe. There were a lot of them and nobody did anything. Didn't even tell them to go away. It could have turned dangerous really quickly. They were talking about how BLM is a terrorist organization. I did not feel safe. It was more than just the masks.”
- “I would just like to say that the Proud Boys made me feel unsafe at my school. I was worried that something might happen where I or other people would get injured.”
- “This gathering was not student-led, as the gathering was made up of an overwhelming number of adults, most of which were not even parents of Orange High students. These adults were also not protesting masks and guest limitations alone, but they stood for a different cause. They sent their message loud and clear with their chosen colors, the black and yellow they displayed told everyone that they were the Proud Boys.”
- “The Proud Boys, a known homophobic, misogynistic, neo-fascist organization gathered outside my school on Friday night. As a female student, I feel threatened by their gathering and yelling and sign-holding.”
- “I wanted to let you know that the students do not feel safe knowing that this extremist hate group can post up in large numbers outside a public school. Their message and their goals are actively against people like me, young women, and many other members of our school, such as LGBTQ+ students. I implore you to take our feelings of the lack of safety into consideration for any decisions made on these gatherings in the future.”
- “I don't want the Proud Boys to show up on our campus. Orange High school should feel like a safe space for everyone and them being here can make it feel like they are in danger.”
- “I didn't understand how they were allowed to display and shout messages that attacked my personal identity as a gay male adolescent.”
- “It's weird that the protestors felt as if they had the right to show up to a school to voice their concerns and harass students passing.”
- “At this protest there were representatives from the Proud Boys. (A far- right organization that supports ideals of racism, neo-fascism, sexism, homophobia, among others.) As a young black woman, it was very scary to hear about an organization openly presenting themselves that close to my school. Not to mention, I was on campus during these protests. What if something like this was to happen again but there were more people? What if violence breaks out? Now that something like this has happened once, it's bound to get worse if actions aren't taken to stop it.”
- “September 24 the Proud Boys showed up to give their opinions on the county's rules. They were very hateful and said terrible things. Students don't feel safe because of how comfortable the Proud Boys were.”
- “As a Black female, the whole Proud Boy issue really affected me because over the course of the years, I have experienced racism and hate. Therefore, this is an issue me as a student wants to be hands on

with, especially because I am a freshman. This isn't what I expected my first few weeks of high school to look like. I know Orange is a safe place but others might not know that."

- "My mind began to wonder as we passed the group of racist, homophobic, and misogynistic protestors by the Orange High School student parking lot. They yelled homophobic slurs, called us communists, yelled comments about race, expelled lies upon lies, and expressed their disliking of our black principal simply for his race. Questions began to arise in my mind. What will Monday in class be like? Will I be ridiculed by classmates? How atrocious it is, for students to be forced out the rear entrance of a school for fear of being ridiculed. How disgusting it is, for students to physically break down at the news of homophobic, racist, and misogynistic protestors being out front of their favorite high school. I do not feel safe. My peers do not feel safe. Any person who attends this school who is not a white heterosexual male, was in danger that day and is still in danger from that day;" and,

WHEREAS, Policy 1030: Equity in Education, states that OCS acknowledges persistent racial intolerance, inequities and academic disparities in our district; and,

WHEREAS, Orange County Schools is committed to disrupting all forms of discrimination in our school community by challenging intolerant behavior that jeopardizes the safety, wellbeing, or learning of others; and therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Orange County Schools Board of Education stands united against all forms of white nationalism and white supremacy; be it further

RESOLVED that the Orange County Schools Board of Education recognizes the phrase Black Lives Matter as an affirmation of the inherent value of the lives of our Black students, staff, and community members; be it further

RESOLVED that the district will create a detailed action and communication plan for future incidents involving hate groups in the OCS community, including a text alert system, as requested by students; be it further

RESOLVED that the district will make students and staff aware of counseling services available to them following events where they are targeted by hate groups, as requested by students; be it further

RESOLVED that OCS will provide ongoing education to staff members and students on how to recognize extremist symbols and tactics and what to do when they are recognized; be it further

RESOLVED that Orange County Schools will continue to have open and honest dialogue about how to best address the threat to student and staff safety when there is a presence of hate groups on property adjacent to or on school campuses; be it further

RESOLVED that the board stands in solidarity with our Indigenous, Black, Brown, LGBTQ+ students, staff and community members and will continue to name harm and stand against hate in our community.

Adopted by the Orange County Schools' Board of Education this 11<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2021.

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Hillary MacKenzie, Chair  
Orange County Board of Education

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Dr. Monique Felder, Superintendent  
Orange County Schools