

# EAST LONGMEADOW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

180 Maple Street  
East Longmeadow, MA. 01028-2788



*Achievement*      *Accountability*

**Gordon Smith**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Pamela Blair**  
Asst. Superintendent for Business

June 2, 2020

Dear ELPS Families,

Like all of us, I am sure that the last few days of constant and consistent news stories describing the social unrest and chaos that is taking place across our country is bringing up questions, concerns, and anxiety along with many other emotions. These reactions around the country come after we learned about the unthinkable, senseless, and tragic death of George Floyd. I am reaching out to all of you today to let our families know that just as our main focus when the remote learning began due to the closure from Covid-19 was our families' safety and well-being and maintaining a connection with and providing a consistent structure for our students, this focus is now, more than ever, so important.

Please know that we in ELPS are here to support and assist our students and families in any way that we can. As a school district we understand the incredibly important responsibility we have to help our students, staff, and families understand diversity, equity, and how as a school community we can all engage these topics and have discussions in a positive and productive way. All of our students should feel supported and know that they have a voice. Over the last few years, we have been making better progress with this. District goals and professional development have focused on and will continue to focus on how we develop stronger relationships and support all of our students and families socially and emotionally in addition to supporting them academically. In the 2018 - 2019 school year, the District established a District Diversity and Equity Steering Committee, which is made up of approximately 21 people, providing representation to the many constituents in ELPS (students, parents, staff, building administrators, district administrators, and School Committee). The Steering Committee has been working with the Center for Educational Leadership and Equity (CLEE) to complete an equity audit for the District and develop an action plan to help us make ELPS more inclusive for all students.

At the end of the 2018 - 2019 school year, or last year, through the work of the Steering Committee, we had approximately 25 ELHS students participate in the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) Bridges program. The Bridges program is a program for students to begin to understand the origins of prejudice and how it affects others, to confront their own prejudicial beliefs, to recognize the harmful effect of stereotypes and develop strategies to implement this learning in their own schools. ELHS students continued to work with NCCJ during this school year. The students had developed a professional development workshop for our staff that was scheduled to take place on March 18th before we closed operations on March 13th due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. NCCJ facilitators have provided professional development workshops for ELPS staff as well.

We have made some progress, but we know that there is much more work needed and many more discussions to have. As we all go through this turbulent time, please know that we are all here in ELPS to support you. Our Curriculum and Instruction webpage will soon have additional resources to support families. [ELPS Curriculum and Instruction Web Page](#) We also will have a Remote Learning and Well-being survey out soon for our students in grades 3 – 12. Please do not hesitate to contact and connect with us.

Stay connected and stay strong. Talk to your children and each other. It is important that we model for our children how to peacefully and effectively confront bias and hate so that all of us can live in a world that is safe and just. We can do this together.

Sincerely,

Gordon C. Smith  
Superintendent of Schools