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Superintendent of Schools

RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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February 2, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:

Over the past year, we have all become aware of an increase in vocalized negative rhetoric concerning immigrants and foreign-born visitors to the United States. This problematic discourse has led to a corresponding buildup of concern and uncertainty for many, including for some of our own Village students and their families.

I feel that it may be helpful to remind everyone that our Ridgewood schools welcome and embrace children from all over the world, who by federal, state and local law are guaranteed equal access to an education. Our student database shows that we are truly a “melting pot,” with children from the following countries:

Albania	Egypt	Lebanon	South Africa
Australia	El Salvador	Malaysia	Spain
Bahrain	Ethiopia	Mexico	Sri Lanka
Bangladesh	France	Monaco	Sweden
Belarus	Germany	Netherlands	Switzerland
Belgium	Guatemala	Northern Mariana Islands	Syrian Arab Republic
Bermuda	Honduras	Pakistan	Taiwan
Bolivia	Hong Kong	Panama	Turkey
Brazil	India	Peru	Ukraine
Bulgaria	Iran	Philippines	United Arab Emirates
Canada	Ireland	Poland	United Kingdom
China	Israel	Puerto Rico	United States
Costa Rica	Italy	Romania	Uruguay
Czech Republic	Japan	Russian Federation	Uzbekistan
Denmark	Kazakhstan	Saudi Arabia	Venezuela
Dominican Republic	Korea	Singapore	Vietnam

Far beyond our legal and moral responsibilities for educating all children, the Ridgewood Public Schools have a long and proud history of incorporating and celebrating the diverse cultures of our student body into our regular curricular programming. From the annual Asian Festival held at Ridgewood High School each spring, to the International clubs at the middle school level, and down to International Day at our elementary schools, we affirm our respect and admiration for other nationalities in large ways. We are fortunate to have numerous families and community members from other countries who are willing and eager to share their traditions and we are

enriched by the numerous opportunities they give us to learn firsthand about other cultures and beliefs.

Through these opportunities, we are also able to teach our children about tolerance and respect for the dignity of every being. Of course, as we are all prone to making mistakes on occasion, we also have a longstanding official policy of zero-tolerance for prejudice and disrespect that is strictly enforced if the need arises.

In sum, long before the recent uptick in negative rhetoric on immigration issues, inclusivity has been a top priority in the administration of our schools. We have worked hard to be inclusive and we will always continue to work even harder to make all students and their families feel welcome and valued in the Ridgewood Public Schools.

I conclude with the meaningful words found at the base of the Statue of Liberty, that wonderful symbol of welcome to visitors and immigrants from afar:

The New Colossus

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

Emma Lazarus (November 2, 1883)

If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to reach out to your child's principal or me.

Sincerely yours,



Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

C: Board of Education