

WAYLAND * PUBLIC * SCHOOLS

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Dear Students and Families:

We want to follow up on yesterday's initial communication regarding a series of Instagram posts found on an account created to be a safe space to anonymously discuss experiences of sexual harassment and assault in Wayland.

First and foremost, we would like to recognize the courage it took for students to share their experiences publicly. We've been deeply moved by the pain they feel. We are grateful for students' willingness to express their feelings of hurt and anger. In the stories that students shared, too often we heard frustration and disappointment in their descriptions of how adults have responded in the past. Knowing this, and knowing the pain that those responses must have caused, we want to acknowledge the incredible strength of these young people in sharing their stories again. We hear you.

As parents, as educators and administrators, and as people who care about you, we take this very seriously and want to create meaningful change. Every student deserves a harassment-free environment. As we work towards creating this environment, we want to provide opportunities for parents and students to participate and inform this process and we want to be transparent about the action steps we have identified so far.

We believe that the District needs to take the following steps:

- 1) **Assert a Culture of Trust and Confidence:** We need to make clear to our students that we will listen to them when they come forward. We will also respond with supportive measures and will address any reports of sexual harassment using a transparent process that is clearly communicated.
- 2) **Deepen Our Support for Our Students**
We will ensure that students have meaningful access to the support that they need. We have engaged our experienced partners who are developing workshops so that staff has the most up-to-date training on fostering healthy relationships, recognizing signs of abuse, creating trauma-sensitive classrooms, and responding when students come forward with reports of sexual harassment and/or abuse.
- 3) **Create Forums for Families and Students:** We will schedule forums to be led by trained and experienced facilitators who can guide parents, caregivers and students in discussions about issues of sexual harassment and violence prevention.

- 4) **Provide Meaningful Access to Resources in the Community:** We know that not every student or family will want to share their experience with the school, and we want everyone to be able to access the support that they deserve. We will offer opportunities for families and students to meet and connect with resources both at the school and in the community. Our partners in the community can be contacted to provide supportive counseling at these links: [Wayland Youth and Family Services](#), [REACH Beyond Domestic Violence](#), [Voices Against Violence](#), and [Boston Area Rape Crisis Center](#).
- 5) **Re-examine Our Classroom Curriculum:** We will examine when and how we teach students about sexual harassment and redouble our efforts to teach our students how to engage in healthy relationships and how to access help when they face concerning situations. We will mobilize our High School student groups such as Student Council, Climate Committee, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP), and the Alliance and involve them in our planning, as they play such a critical role in educating their peers.
- 6) **Clarify the Formal Complaint Process:** As indicated yesterday, formal complaints of sexual harassment can be made through Director of Student Services, Richard Whitehead, who is our Title IX Coordinator, or through building principals, who can outline the federally mandated steps we must go through to investigate thoroughly, ensure due process, and protect the rights of all involved. We will develop new avenues of communication whereby students understand their rights and the resolution process around sexual harassment in a clear, age-appropriate way.

There is a lot of work to do, and we know that we must take many steps to address the urgent concerns that students have recently raised. We are deeply grateful to all of the students who shared their stories. Their voices, and the voices of their parents and caregivers, will ground and inform our efforts.

We look forward to partnering with you.

Sincerely,

Arthur Unobskey, Superintendent
Parry Graham, Assistant Superintendent
Richard Whitehead, Director of Student Services
Allyson Mizoguchi, Principal of Wayland High School
Betsy Gavron, Principal of Wayland Middle School
Christie Harvey, Principal of Claypit Hill Elementary School
Brian Jones, Principal of Loker Elementary School
Tricia O'Reilly, Principal of Happy Hollow Elementary School