



August 31, 2020

Dear Community Members:

As you may be aware, there was a decision by some of our student athletes to carry a blue line American Flag onto the football field on Friday night. Given the turbulent times facing our country right now, this action understandably drew responses on social media and direct communications to district officials.

Based on discussions that ensued over the weekend, it does not appear that this action was motivated by racism, rather a show of support for one of our coaches who serves as a police officer, as well as for the first responders in our community who have developed a special relationship with our school and students in the wake of our school tragedy of February 27, 2012. Nevertheless, it is understandable how this could be interpreted as a racially-motivated action and, therefore, not acceptable in a school community.

Our school district is fundamentally anti-racist as reflected in Board of Education policies ranging from Equal Employment Opportunity to matters of student and staff activities. Our goal is to ensure that all students, staff and community members are provided the same opportunities to grow and learn in Chardon Schools and that this occurs in an environment that values the contributions of every school community member. Our staff members work to support that goal in our classrooms and through lessons learned within the scope of extracurricular activities.

Further, school district policy does not permit engagement in political activity. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that we clearly understand how this action could be perceived as political in nature. As a result, this display will not be a part of future pre-game activities at Chardon athletic contests. In addition, measures will be put in place by our Athletic Director to review any planned pre-game displays for possible connections to any form of discrimination or particular political views.

The district is committed to an atmosphere that respects and values every individual within our school community and is in the process of engaging with an equity/organizational development consultant to review policies, practices and systems throughout the district. The goal of this work will be to improve awareness and to develop specific strategies that will enable us to move forward effectively.

As a school district we absolutely recognize the significant impact of this event and the discussion that occurred in our community in the following days. It will be important for us to use this as a learning opportunity and to grow stronger as a school district.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Hanlon, Jr., Ph.D.  
Superintendent