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## Top 10 Talking Points

1. Together, we must protect the mental, physical and social health of all students, families, staff, and visitors in our schools. This includes removing any and all barriers that interfere with a student’s wellbeing, belonging, and ability to learn and thrive.
2. When one person in a school community is treated poorly, everyone is affected. The presence of hate symbols on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or national origin causes harm and significantly disrupts the operation of schools.
3. Every student is entitled to a high quality educational experience, free from discrimination or harassment based on perceived race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin.
4. Everyone benefits from a calm, collected, happy environment, and every student should be free to receive their education without fear of hatred, racism, or violence.
5. Staff and leaders are entitled to work in an environment that is free from discrimination or harassment, and visitors are entitled to participate in our school environment without fear for their safety.
6. This means actively adopting and implementing rules and practices that promote equity and the well-being of students.
7. At the instruction of Governor Brown, the Oregon State Board of Education has passed a permanent rule called “Every Student Belongs” prohibiting the use or display of any noose, symbols of neo-Nazi ideology or the battle flag of the Confederacy on school grounds or in any program, service, school or activity.
8. Districts will adopt policies and procedures for addressing incidents where these symbols are present following guidance from the Oregon Department of Education and its partners.
9. Staff members and administrators will do their best to respond to incidents by creating opportunities for education and conversation, and not respond to incidents using disciplinary strategies like suspensions, expulsions, or similar punitive measures unless essential to protect health and safety.
10. We will communicate with you regularly as policies and practices are put in place, and both our district leadership and ODE welcome your feedback.

## Letter to School Board

Month XX, 2021

To: XX District School Community

Re: Board support needed to develop policies and procedures in response to the Every Student Belongs Rule.

Dear school board,

I am writing to invite you into a conversation about how to best care for the health and well-being of our school community by developing policies and procedures in accordance with Oregon’s new **Every Student Belongs** rule. In response to an increasing number of students expressing concern for their safety and their ability to access education in Oregon’s schools, Governor Brown instructed the Oregon School Board of Education to adopt the **Every Student Belongs** rule, which prohibits the display of three of the most recognizable symbols of hate — the noose, symbols of neo-Nazi ideology or the battle flag of the Confederacy at all school events and activities, both in-person and remote. The permanent rule became effective on February 18. 2021. This rule requires districts to adopt and implement policies and procedures for addressing all in-person and remote (distance learning) school events and activities where there is potential for these symbols to be present.

**Background**

Our district recognizes that student health and safety are the cornerstone of education and that all students are entitled to a high-quality educational experience, free from discrimination or harassment based on perceived race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin, and without fear or hatred, racism or violence. Staff and leaders are also entitled to work in environments that are free from discrimination or harassment, and visitors should be able to participate in their school communities without fearing for their safety. The **Every Student Belongs** rule is an important step in creating safe and inclusive school climates where everyone in our school community feels welcome.

As you are aware, our youth and communities of color, members of Tribal communities, and LGBTQ2SIA+ students and adults across Oregon have experienced increasing levels of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and hate, both through words, actions or symbols, and via exclusion or inequitable access to resources. No student is immune from being a target of these harmful acts or exclusion, and no member of our school community should ever be in fear of physical, mental, or emotional injury. In our district, [describe situation if appropriate]. When one person is harmed, it affects us all. As adults, we are responsible for making sure that our children are safe, and that they receive the education that they are entitled to.

**Ensuring the Health and Safety of Our Community**

The rule, which you can read here, protects all of our school community members, and ensures that all students receive the education that they deserve. The presence of symbols of hate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or national origin causes harm and significantly disrupts the operation of schools by creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, while also diverting staff time, attention and resources away from teaching and learning. I would be happy to provide additional information about the material impacts on students and staff as needed.

**In practice, this means our district will adopt policies and procedures for addressing bias incidents.** Administrators will develop and implement policies and procedures for addressing incidents where these hate symbols are present in in-person or remote school events and activities. These responses will focus on education and communication regarding the impacts of these symbols, and not include disciplinary strategies like suspensions, expulsions, or similar punitive measures unless there is a risk to health and safety. Instead, we will work to educate our communities and those displaying hateful symbols regarding the impact of their actions with non-punitive remedial measures. The Oregon Department of Education has provided initial guidance immediately, with additional guidance, resources, and professional development to follow, to provide clear requirements and recommendations for us to implement policies consistently and effectively.

This policy is about the impacts on students being harmed by hate symbols and experiencing a material and substantial disruption to their education — but it carries the benefit of creating a safe learning environment for students and staff; one that allows for exploration, and open, respectful, conversation. Through our unity and your vocal support, we can ensure that schools are a place where we learn to respect differences between people, where *every* student benefits from a safe and healthy environment, and where students can be free to receive their education without fear of hatred, racism, or violence.

As a first step, I’d like to ask for [request for support, such as co-signing a letter to community].

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to the well-being of our school communities. I look forward to working closely with you on this in the coming weeks and months.

If you have feedback for the Oregon Department of Education please direct your questions and comments to [EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us](mailto:EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us).

[signoff]

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## Letter to Community from Superintendent and School Board

If possible, send this letter from the superintendent and the school board in unison.

Month XX, 2021

To: XX District School Community

Re: Every Student Belongs in [district/school name]

This year, amidst a series of crises, the health and well-being of our staff, students, and communities has been our highest priority. We know that Oregon’s youth and their families rely on their schools to take care of students and keep them safe, and depend on school communities to be welcoming and inclusive. We are deeply grateful for all that you do to support this school community during difficult times. Once again, we are calling on your partnership, leadership, and spirit of community to make sure that all students and staff feel as though they belong in our schools.

Our district recognizes that student health and safety are the cornerstone of education and that all students are entitled to educational environments that are free from discrimination or harassment based on perceived race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin, and without fear or hatred, racism or violence. Staff and leaders are also entitled to workplaces that are free from discrimination and harassment, and visitors should be able to participate in their school communities without fearing for their well-being.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of students in Oregon are reporting concerns for their safety and their ability to access their education. This prompted Governor Brown to instruct the Oregon School Board of Education to passed a permanent rule called “Every Student Belongs” prohibiting the use or display of any noose, symbols of neo-Nazi ideology or the battle flag of the Confederacy at all school events and activities including online and distance learning. It requires districts to adopt and implement policies and procedures for addressing all in-person and remote (distance learning) school events and activities where these symbols are present.

As you are aware, our youth and communities of color, members of Tribal communities, and LGBTQ2SIA+ students across Oregon are experiencing growing levels of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and hate, both through words, actions or symbols, and via exclusion or inequitable access to resources. No student is immune from being a target of these harmful acts or exclusion, and no member of our school community should ever be in fear of physical, mental, or emotional injury. In our district, [describe situation if appropriate]. When one person is harmed, it affects us all. As adults, we are responsible for making sure that our children are safe, and that they receive the education that they are entitled to.

To keep our school community safe, administrators will develop and implement policies and procedures for addressing incidents where these hate symbols are present in in-person or remote school events and activities. These responses will not focus on disciplinary strategies like suspensions, expulsions, or similar punitive measures. Instead, we will work to educate our communities and those displaying hateful symbols about the impact of their actions with non-punitive remedial measures unless there is a risk to health or safety. The Oregon Department of Education is providing us with guidance, resources, and educational materials that will help us to implement policies consistently, fairly and effectively.

Ultimately, it will take all of us to transform the conditions that lead to hate entering into schools. This policy isn’t just about the impacts on students being harmed by hate symbols—it is about creating a safe learning environment for students and staff.One that allows for exploration, and open, respectful, conversation.

Through our unity and your vocal support, we can ensure that schools are a place where we learn and engage in meaningful dialogue to more deeply understand and respect differences between people, where *every* student benefits from a safe and healthy environment, and where everyone can be free to receive their education without fear of hatred, racism, or violence.

If you have feedback for the Oregon Department of Education please direct your questions and comments to [EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us](mailto:EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us).

**[Signoff from superintendent and school board]**

## Letter to Staff from Superintendent and School Board

If possible, send this letter from the superintendent and the school board in unison.

Month XX, 2021

To: XX District School Community

Re: Join us in creating an environment where Every Student Belongs.

Dear educators and staff,

We see how hard you’ve been working this year to support this school community during extremely difficult times. Your voices and participation are crucial, now more than ever, as we work together to make sure that all students are safe and belong in our schools.

Our district recognizes that student health and safety are the cornerstone of education and that all students are entitled to a high-quality educational experience, free from discrimination or harassment based on perceived race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin, and without fear or hatred, racism or violence. Every educators, staff and leader is also entitled to work in environments that are free from discrimination or harassment, and visitors should be able to participate in their school communities without fearing for their safety.

As you are aware, our youth and communities of color, members of Tribal communities, and LGBTQ2SIA+ students across Oregon have experienced increasing levels of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and hate, both through words, actions or symbols, and via exclusion or inequitable access to resources. No student is immune from being a target of these harmful acts or exclusion, and no member of our school community should ever be in fear of physical, mental, or emotional injury. In our district, [describe situation if appropriate]. When one person is harmed, it affects us all. As adults, we are responsible for making sure that our children are safe, and that they receive the education that they are entitled to.

In response to student concerns for their safety, Governor Brown instructed the Oregon School Board of Education to adopt the **Every Student Belongs** rule, which prohibits the display of three of the most recognizable symbols of hate—the noose, symbols of neo-Nazi ideology or the battle flag of the Confederacy at all school activities, both in-person and remote. The permanent rule became effective on February 18. 2021. It requires districts to adopt and implement policies and procedures for addressing all in-person and remote (distance learning) school activities where these symbols are present.

**Ensuring the Health and Safety of Our Community**

The rule protects our school community members and ensures that students receive the education that they deserve. The presence of symbols of hate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or national origin causes harm and significantly disrupts the operation of schools by creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, while also diverting staff time, attention and resources away from teaching.

**In practice, this means our district will adopt policies and procedures for addressing bias incidents.** Administrators will develop and implement policies and procedures for addressing incidents where these hate symbols are present in in-person or remote school activities. These responses will not include disciplinary strategies like suspensions, expulsions, or similar punitive measures unless there is a threat to health or safety. Instead, we will work to educate our communities and those displaying hateful symbols regarding the impact of their actions with non-punitive remedial measures. The Oregon Department of Education is providing initial guidance immediately with iterations of guidance, resources, and professional development to follow to provide a clear standard so that we can implement policies consistently and effectively.

You know from experience that schools work best when they are a place of discovery and development where young people can have positive experiences to take them into adulthood. This policy isn’t just about the impacts on students being harmed by hate symbols—this is about creating a safe learning environment for every student, educator and staff member.One that allows for exploration, and open, respectful, conversation. Through our unity and your vocal support, we can ensure that schools are a place where we learn to respect differences between people, where *every* student benefits from a safe and healthy environment, and where students can be free to receive their education without fear of hatred, racism, or violence. Your support for the **Every Student Belongs** rule, and willingness to participate in strong implementation of the guidance will help ensure this is the case.

Thank you for your continued, courageous work to create a place for students where they can learn to respect differences between people and where every student can be free to receive their education without fear for their safety.

If you have feedback for the Oregon Department of Education please direct your questions and comments to [EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us](mailto:EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us).

**[Signoff from superintendent and school board]**

## Letter from Administrator or Educator to Community

Month XX, 2021

To: To the [school name] community / To my students and their families

Re: I Believe Every Student Belongs.

Dear families, students, and community members,

As [a principal/an educator], one essential word I stand by is ‘belonging’, which means acceptance as a member of a group or community. Educators who honor belonging create a warm and welcoming school for every Oregon student. We create safe school climates so that all students can freely learn, question, socialize, create, grow, become curious, and discover. Honoring belonging also means that we create and maintain schools that are free from hateful speech and symbols that stoke fear, intimidation, discrimination and harassment among students, staff and families.

I am proud to say that beginning September 2020, all of Oregon’s public schools will take a stand to ensure that **Every Student Belongs**by prohibiting the use and display of hate symbols that incite fear and discrimination among students and staff at all school-related events. These include the noose, symbols of neo-Nazi ideology and the battle flag of the Confederacy. These symbols have no place in public schools.

For years, the use of these symbols has created atmospheres of fear, intimidation, even violence toward numerous students and staff in Oregon’s public schools. By explicitly prohibiting such symbols on school property, and in distance learning environments, we honor the belonging of every student, family and staff member by ensuring a high quality educational experience and environment free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation and fear.

As a proud [administrator/educator] for an Oregon Public School, it will be my responsibility to be part of the effort to make our school a welcoming, nurturing and safe space for everyone. I will join with my colleagues and community members to provide a culturally responsive, safe, and supportive school climate for each and every student. I also plan to [participate in/ensure educators have access to] professional development opportunities, so that I can better learn how to create and maintain a safe, inclusive school culture.

Through our unity and your vocal support, we can ensure that schools are a place where we learn to respect differences between people, where every student’s health and safety are assured, and where every student can be free to receive their education knowing that they belong in their schools and communities.

If you have feedback for the Oregon Department of Education please direct your questions and comments to [EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us](mailto:EveryStudentBelongs@state.or.us).

**[signoff]**