

TO: Northeast Middle School Community

RE: Message to Northeast Middle School Community from Ed Graff

I want to reach out to our Northeast Middle School community as we work through a difficult situation. Students, staff and families alike have felt the pain and trauma of one of our staff members reading a racial slur out loud from a student text during class.

I join Principal Rowe in apologizing to the Northeast community for the use of a word that should never be used regardless of circumstances. We are a community that respects and values all members of our community and are taking steps to address the impact of this incident.

A variety of actions have been taken to support the Northeast community:

- Principal Rowe has personally been in touch with dozens of families and students to address both student impact and involvement.
- He facilitated a healing circle discussion with dozens of students at Northeast last week.
- Northeast teachers have led listening circles in advisory classes for three days in a row, and the same has occurred for the 8th grade classroom in which the incident occurred.
- MPS Culture and Climate staff members have been at Northeast both weeks to support teachers, prep them to support student needs and help teachers understand, communicate and listen.
- Breakout groups have been held for students who need intensive time with an adult to process their feelings and response.
- Finally, staff from the MPS Employee Assistance Program have been on site at Northeast to listen and support staff.

MPS has launched a formal investigation into the situation and I want to outline how the process works.

The first step is gathering all the relevant information concerning the incident, including intent and impact, a process which is usually concluded within 30-60 days. What happens after that, however, can vary greatly in time and content. If and when discipline is recommended, the employee has contractual and legal rights that may include a formal union grievance, or even mediation or arbitration.

It's important for you to know that while MPS remains committed to fulfilling its promise to address this situation fully and fairly, it cannot provide the public with any specific information until a final decision has been reached. While this lengthy process can be difficult for a community, the time is required to ensure that the rights of everyone involved are honored.

I also want to share with you that at our last MPS Committee of the Whole meeting (a working committee of our Board of Education) on Oct. 26, our Board continued to learn about the MPS Hate/Bias Incident Protocol Committee that is working to identify protocols for situations exactly like what happened at Northeast Middle School. See [Slides 42-45 on the PowerPoint presentation at this link](#) for more information on that committee. The goal of this committee is a more consistent district response to these incidents, more transparency in how they are addressed, and a strong alignment with the MPS philosophy of restorative practices.

Thank you to Principal Rowe, MPS staff and the Northeast Middle School community for supporting each other during this challenging time. We will move through this, learn from it and be stronger.