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September 18, 2025

Dear SDUSHD Community,

Our school community is shocked and appalled by a hateful situation that took place on the San Dieguito Academy's campus at the end of last school year. I want to share with you the action that we have taken and continue to take to address the situation.

Last May, a group of students created the image of a swastika in a human formation on the athletic field. This image was seen and captured by a fellow student, who is Jewish, while flying a plane overhead at the time. Deeply and understandably alarmed by the image, the student's family reported the incident to the San Dieguito Academy administration. However, and unfortunately, the incident was not brought to the attention of the San Dieguito Union High School District administrators until late last month. I share this point not to deflect responsibility but to clarify that there was a clear and unacceptable breakdown in communication between the school and the District.

Once I became aware of the image, we took action to work with the families of the students involved and immediately launched an investigation, which is still ongoing. Additionally, we have reviewed and amplified our efforts to remind all students and staff that hate in any form will not be tolerated on our campuses. We are working to ensure that students impacted by this incident feel safe and supported, and that important lessons are learned.

We are understandably hearing from people asking why it took us so long to address the situation – an incident that occurred at the end of May – and why we are not being more transparent with the community. The moment the situation came to the attention of the District, we worked with the family to gather facts, examine the breakdown in internal communication, and initiated an investigation so that all concerns could be addressed. Due to privacy and confidentiality laws, there are certain details that we are not permitted to share, but I want to reiterate the District's support for the student who witnessed the hateful symbol, support for the safety of the Jewish community, as well as our continued support for the safety and security of all students on our campuses.

Those who are outraged, please know that I hear you. We all know, or should know, that the image of a swastika is hateful and hurtful and creation of this image is a call to action for our District to double down

on our efforts to call out hate when we see it. Please be on the lookout for future communications from our district about opportunities to engage with our Jewish community as we heal.

The District respects the rights of all students in our community to practice and observe their religious beliefs, holidays, and traditions. As the Jewish High Holy Days are approaching, with Rosh Hashanah next week and Yom Kippur the week after that, I want to remind all of our students that they are supported in participating in religious holidays as they so choose, free from impacts on school work or athletics.

Let this incident serve as a reminder and lesson for our students and community that we must respect one another. We will remain vigilant in our efforts to create, nurture, and uphold school environments that are free from hate in all forms and we thank our school community for joining us in this effort.

Sincerely,

Anne L. Staffieri, Ed.D
SDUHSD Superintendent