

Edwardsville High School Administration Responds to Offensive Social Media Posts, Conflicts on Tuesday

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EDWARDSVILLE - An announcement was delivered to the student body, faculty and staff of Edwardsville High School from Principal Dennis Cramsey after some offensive student social media posts caused disruptions and conflicts.

This was a statement issued Wednesday morning:

Good morning,

"The regular morning announcements will not be read this morning. If you need to know all of the great things that are happening at EHS or when your club meets next, go to the Edwardsville High School web site to read the daily announcements.

This morning I want to address a very serious issue. Yesterday, a few students expressed racist remarks that offended many people including myself. To make the problem worse, some students responded to the inappropriate posts and statements through physical violence or by making negative comments in their response to the social media posts. To make the issue even worse, we had adults, some who do not live in our community, spread untruthful statements about incidents occurring yesterday.

"I do not condone any racist statements and I will not tolerate such racist behavior. I will not tolerate the use of the "N" word being used in any situation, in any conversation or in any setting at EHS. The "N" word has no home at EHS! I will also not tolerate students who respond to negative comments by fighting. It is so unfortunate that a few students who engaged in this egregious behavior have painted our entire school in such a bad light. Yesterday, some people chose to go to social media to describe what they thought occurred. Most of the information that was posted online was not accurate. We all need to think about what we post and re-post on social media. We have and will continue to address the behavior exhibited by students yesterday. School consequences will be harsh and swift.

"I encourage all students to report, not react, to negative posts that target any individual or group of people. While there is no question that the acts of a few students were racially motivated, I am asking you to think beyond the black and white image we often think of when we picture racism. We need to understand that our comments, whether intended to harm or with no intention to harm another person, can bring injury and insult to a person. We need to understand that in this school we have a diverse population that not only includes black and white students but also Hispanic, Pacific Islanders, Asian, students of two races or more and other races attending, learning, and living together at EHS. We need to also expand our thinking about how we treat all people at EHS and in the world."

The statement continued: "In addition to racial diversity, we have straight, gay, and lesbian, transgender, and other LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff. We have Christians, Muslim, and Jewish students and faculty and staff among other people of various faiths. We have a diverse population and that should make us stronger, not tear us apart.

"I realize this announcement, in itself, will not solve some of the underlying issues, such as racism, that exist in our society. And, because racism exists in our society, racism exists within our school. All of us need to call out racism when we see or hear it and work together daily to eliminate racist incidents from our school. It is not OK to laugh at a racist joke or a joke targeted toward any group of people. We need to find that inner strength to stand up and speak out when we witness injustices occurring on a daily basis.

"In the coming days, I am committed to developing strategies and activities that will attack racism and continue to make EHS a better place. I will be asking students, faculty, staff, and parents to become a part of this movement. We are currently planning an amazing assembly called Breakdown STL for February. The initial planning of the assembly began way before yesterday's events. We will place great emphasis on growing an open mind to understand, accept and embrace diversity in all situations and environments. Right now, we need to heal. We can do that by making a commitment that racism has no home at EHS. It will take courage and thoughtful actions to ensure that racist acts are called out when they occur. Again, I know that this single announcement does not fix the damage done yesterday and in the past, but it is a start - a start to a BETTER EHS. Join me today by making the commitment to a BETTER EHS.

Lastly, I want to repeat and bring perfect clarity to my main points:

- I will not tolerate disrespect, including racism at EHS. Let me be clear, any student who makes racial statements or engages in racist acts will receive harsh and swift consequences.
- I expect all of us to demonstrate respect for one another regardless of our differences.
- I will not tolerate fighting at EHS. Going forward, any student who engages in a fight will receive strong consequences and face arrest by the Edwardsville Police Department.
- I will not tolerate social media posts that disrupt our school day, regardless of what time of day the post occurs. You are responsible for everything you post on social media.
- I encourage you to make a commitment to make A BETTER EHS.
- I encourage you to demonstrate the courage to call out and to report any racist actions.
- I encourage you to expand your open-mindedness to accept all groups of people regardless of their race, gender, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation. You will be hearing more about how we make A BETTER EHS in the coming days, weeks, and months. And with that let's go out and make today the best day ever by making A BETTER EHS.