



Building Bridges for today's students to cross into tomorrow's world with equity, innovation and optimism

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Susan Yom
Superintendent of Schools

September 27, 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians of the Nyack Public Schools,

It's been nearly a year and seven months since our school community experienced a series of deeply painful incidents involving hatred and bigotry. The unthinkable situation was another reminder that racism exists in our society and we must continue to stand resolutely against all acts of racism, as well as advocate for systemic changes in our spheres of influence.

During this time, our district has worked to ensure the safety of our students and protect them from harassment, bullying and/or discrimination in the future. Important steps have been taken to move us forward, to deepen and sustain anti-racism efforts and to embody the inclusivity we seek to build together in Rockland County.

Due to the advocacy and leadership of the Nyack Public Schools (NPS), including Joseph Sigillo, Director of Physical Education, Health, Wellness and Athletics, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Section I - the organization that oversees sports for roughly 80 high schools in the Lower Hudson Valley - recently implemented systemic changes to their policies and practices. Section I developed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy and partnered with InsideOutCoaching and the New York Giants to provide important training for coaches. [The DEI Policy provides guidance to districts](#) including specific guidelines for spectators, athletes and coaches in the event that there is an alleged incident of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination. Superintendents, principals and athletics directors are now required to sign a Section I pledge acknowledging their commitment to the aforementioned policy and guidelines in an effort to create a safe and supportive environment for all athletes, coaches, officials, spectators and staff.

In addition, the Pearl River School District has instituted new policies in the areas of DEI. In 2021, the Pearl River School District convened an Equity Task Force and [adopted its own DEI policy in 2022](#). A number of our Nyack coaches and student athletes have also participated in joint training with their athletic counterparts in Pearl River.

With these policies firmly in place, NPS administration and coaches scheduled meetings with all high school teams, as well as members of the NHS junior and senior classes and parent groups, to discuss a return for athletic activities at Pearl River. Starting today, Nyack High School and Nyack Middle School athletics teams will begin to return to the Pearl River School District for scheduled "away" games and competitions. This decision was made after consulting our student athletes, their families and our consideration of systemic changes to policies and procedures in Pearl River and at Section I. An overview of these changes was [presented](#) to our Board of Education at its meeting last night.

As a district, we will continue to work with Pearl River on event management. In addition, we currently intend to include the attendance of Nyack school counselors at "away" contests to support our students' social-emotional needs, as needed. Our student athletes have been instructed that they should promptly notify their coaches of any incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination, so that we can ensure that appropriate action is taken immediately. We are committed to supporting our students and staff; their resilience and strength inspire us every day.

Sincerely,

Susan Yom
Superintendent of Schools