

The Challenge of Our Day – Creating The Same Team School

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All who are part of the school community including students, teachers, parents, administration and support staff are different, but we are all on the same team. Despite our differences, we can learn to treat each other with respect and even learn to value our uniqueness. It is imperative that we accept this reality and help youth see that we are all in this together.

Change will come in our schools when we increase our level of *expectations* and *standards* for how people treat each other. We have done this over the past several decades with racism. What was once accepted has become absurd. And because it is absurd within the minds of adult and student leaders, racism has been radically reduced over the past few decades. It is our task now to raise our standards and expectations once again concerning how people interact with each other, which will include but go far beyond the ignorance that is racism.

Decades from now people will scarcely believe that students were overtly cruel on the basis of height, weight, hair and clothing style and other physical features. In the near future it will be rare to harass others on the basis of sexual orientation as well. Students will see that when we are in this together, hurting one of us hurts all of us.

Although this positive vision can be difficult to picture for those of us who have seen and heard a great deal of negativity, it is historically proven that this type of change can happen. Today people can barely believe slavery took place and that the women's suffrage and civil rights movements were necessary. It is the stuff of history textbooks—abstract concepts rather than lessons in how far we can come.

Relative to the course of human history these events took place just minutes ago. What was then accepted has become absurd because common people adopted a higher vision for how we can be as a society. They adopted a higher vision and spoke up with simple words about what is right and fair. Our task is to ensure that our children and grandchildren will live in a world where even more people are able to develop their potential.

It has been said that people do not change. It is more accurate, however, to say that people can change in moments. It is the moments when they learn to see each other or themselves differently.

It is our task as those influencing the next generation to raise our standards and expectations. More importantly perhaps, it is our task to provide the necessary example. And while we can lament the fact that many young people do not learn at home what we believe they should, we must acknowledge the reality that if a young person does not learn something in the home then he must learn it outside of the home. Simply because we share the same space, it is a fact that regardless of

our differences, *all of us* are on the same team.