

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Gregg J. Desto
Superintendent of Schools

Richard J. Mathieu
Director of Finance and Operations



68 Dudley-Oxford Road
Dudley, Massachusetts 01571
508-943-6888
Fax: 508-943-1077
www.dcrsd.org

Jody A. O'Brien
Administrator of Special Needs
Lorinda C. Allen
Director of Curriculum and Student Assessment
Karen A. Ares
STEAM Director

January 13, 2017

Dear Students:

Our school district family has had a very difficult week, and I wanted to reach out to you with a few thoughts while they are fresh in my mind. First, I want you to know how proud I am of you for the manner in which you have conducted yourselves during this incredibly difficult time. Whether you were close to Emily Dabrowski or not, as a school community, you have shown an admirable combination of compassion and strength. I am so proud of the way you have come together and taken care of one another throughout this ordeal.

Next, I can't help thinking about who Emily was as a person and what we may be able to learn from that. I never had a chance to get to know her well, but it seems she was a person who was truly living her life for the right reasons. She excelled in many important areas: academics, athletics, faith, family, friendship. Most importantly, she had the quality, uncommon not just in a teenager but in a person of any age, to put the needs of others before her own. Her dedication to the orphaned children of the poverty stricken nation of Haiti was amazing. Emily cared deeply for these children, and this, for me, is where the lesson begins.

We, students and adults, often live our lives in a state of hurried confusion. We are always busy, often too much so to spend quality time with our loved ones, and we have been conditioned to worry about a lot of superficial things. At times, it seems, we place excessive emphasis on how we look, what others think of us and what kind of "stuff" we have. Often, that leads to us being judgmental and unkind to one another. We say mean things, start false rumors and use social media as a weapon through which to wage battles with one another. I want to be clear: these issues are not restricted to teenagers. We adults do many of the same things. As I left St. Joseph's Church Wednesday morning, however, my thoughts were focused on how we can take what we learned from Emily's far too short life and apply it to make things better in the D-C Universe.

So I'm asking you to give some thought to the way you treat others. I'm asking you to understand that the things you do and say have a powerful impact on your peers. You can treat people with civility and respect and improve the quality of their lives, or you can be mean and hurtful and make their lives very difficult. I don't know the reason, but we all ended up in the same place at the same time in history. The way we treat each other makes that place and time (otherwise known as our lives) good or bad. Doesn't it make more sense to make it good?

Well, after what I have learned about Emily Dabrowski over the past few weeks, I am quite certain that she would want us to honor her memory by caring about one another. If we are able to do that, the D-C Universe can be a place apart from the sometimes judgmental, insensitive nature of the society in which we live.

We come in all shapes, sizes, races, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, academic levels and areas of interest. We are all from very different homes. Regardless, we all have a right to enjoy our time in the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District. Our district's *Guidelines for Civility* say that we will:

1. Treat one another with civility and respect.
2. Help others when we know they need it.
3. Seek help for ourselves when we need it.

That's as good a place to start as any. If you haven't been doing these things, give them a try. It will make our district a better place, and it might make you feel better, too.

If you yourself have been getting mistreated; if you've been on the receiving end of mean or rude behavior, hang in there and come to us for help. Don't suffer in silence. And never, ever give up...better times may be just around the next corner.

Remember, this school district, this community will be as enjoyable as we make it for one another. Do or say something nice for someone else today; maybe even someone who wouldn't expect it from you. Then do that again tomorrow. Repeat...

Mr. Desto

P.S. Don't forget to be good to your family, too. Always let them know where you are and how you're doing. When they text you, text them back right away. Nobody loves you more than they do – there's no sense in making them worry more than they already do.