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# Boston schools encourage unity for students, staff

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JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

**School Superintendent Tommy Chang.**

**By Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 09, 2016

The stunning finale to a divisive election season rippled through schools in Massachusetts and beyond Wednesday, prompting administrators to offer support for students, teachers, and families and to encourage unity and tolerance.

Boston Superintendent Tommy Chang, in a districtwide letter to teachers and parents, offered advice and resources in the wake of Republican Donald Trump's victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton. Chang also said counselors were available for students and staff who might have fears or concerns after Tuesday's vote.

School officials said they believed this was the first time the district had ever offered such support after an election.

"Our country is experiencing historic change today," Chang wrote in the [letter](#), posted on the district's website. "Many of our students and fellow educators are still processing the outcome."



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He added: "It is important today to be strong for our students and each other. We honor our democratic values and traditions, and we will carry on with our mission to educate, support and prepare our students for success."

Chang acknowledged that the coming days and weeks might be challenging for some and celebratory for others.

The Boston schools serve a large number of students who are minorities or are from immigrant

families or both, who school officials said might have been particularly concerned following Trump's win.

Chang also [tweeted](#) a supportive message to students Wednesday morning, saying "Students, we [heart emoji] you. You are intelligent & beautiful. We are here for you today & always. Please share your feelings today."

Palma McLaughlin said her 14-year-old daughter, a Boston schools student, was upset Wednesday morning about the election results, and "we had a long conversation."

McLaughlin said it was important for schools to help students process the election, but that it was also a job for parents and elected officials.

"I think this is a great opportunity for them to lead by example," she said.

Around the country, school leaders issued similar messages either to staff or to their entire school communities, including those in New York City, Ohio, [Illinois](#), and [Missouri](#).

Locally, Chelsea schools Superintendent Mary M. Bourque said in a [letter](#) written in both English and Spanish and posted on the school's website that now is a time for the nation to "heal."

"Without doubt, there has been so much fear and hate in this campaign that I feel compelled to simply and emphatically state to you that we, Chelsea educators, love this community," Bourque wrote. "We love our students and we love our families."

In Winchester, Superintendent Judith A. Evans wrote in an e-mailed letter to parents, "Whatever our personal feelings about the outcome, we know that [students] are watching, listening, and learning from our reactions to it."

"We must continue to prepare them to think for themselves, ask critical questions, treat others with respect, and embrace, celebrate, and value those who are different from us," Evans wrote.

At Phillips Academy in Andover, Head of School John Palfrey scrapped his planned topic for a weekly




“all school” meeting to address the election before an overflow crowd of students and staff.

“The thing that hurts the most about this election, for many people — and here, I speak for myself, too — is that too much of the rhetoric has been about exclusion, not inclusion; it has been about hate and not about love; it has been about putting some people above others,” Palfrey said, according to [a copy of his remarks](#).

“Let me make one thing perfectly clear: There is absolutely no place for that kind of divisive and hateful rhetoric at Andover,” he added. “We can disagree about laws and policies and politics — and, in fact, we must. But we cannot embrace the hateful aspects of the campaign we have just witnessed.”

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