

11.6.2020

Dear Charter Arts community,

As a school, we value the variety of diverse backgrounds and perspectives that makes us unique. Our students look to us for care, support, and unwavering commitment to help them navigate these current times as they work to process their lived experiences and our world as it evolves before their eyes.

This week, I have had many honest conversations with students, employees, and members of the Black Student Union (previously the African American Achievement [3A] club) at Charter Arts. Together, we have reflected on the ways that words and actions may or may not have intent to harm, are always interpreted from multiple perspectives and viewpoints given one's experiences, and ultimately how those words and actions have impact - whether intentionally or unintentionally. As a school that believes in the value of restorative practices, we have held, and will continue to have, restorative conversations and listening circles to work on developing shared understanding and improving our relationships and commitment to one another.

I want to take this important opportunity to affirm that we are committed to embracing and supporting all of our students, employees, and community members. While we think of ourselves as an inclusive organization, we need to do a better job of supporting our students of color. We know and believe that Black lives matter and believe this to be a human rights issue rather than a political issue.

Since June when our School Board adopted our resolution on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), we have been working to educate ourselves in anti-racism to continue to improve the educational experience and environment at Charter Arts. To that end, this summer we began working with a diversity consultant, expanded the reach of our job postings to recruit more diverse applicants, and initiated discussions with our leadership team to review areas of growth in curriculum and instruction. We are currently finalizing a contract to secure additional professional learning for our employees related to EDI, have scheduled a [Wednesday Lunch and Learn Art Series](#) for students and staff that includes diverse perspectives in the arts, and are in the final stages of planning our EDI focus groups, which are slated to take place later this month.

If you are still interested in participating in our upcoming EDI focus groups, please complete [THIS](#) survey. Depending on interest, additional groups may be added in December. If you have already completed this survey, there is no need to do it again - we will be in contact with you soon.

We want Charter Arts to be a welcoming and safe environment for our students, and as the new Superintendent & CEO at Charter Arts, I am committed to improving our school in both the short and long term - with you. I am

Mission Statement

The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts provides a unique environment that fosters a creative, rigorous academic approach to learning and a development of talents in the arts. Built on passion, discipline and a commitment to excellence, this integrative educational experience inspires all students to believe in who they are and in what they can accomplish.

extremely proud that we have fostered an environment in which our students are empowered to advocate for themselves, and I am happy that we were able to work through difficult conversations together this week. To continue our commitment to inclusion, we will need to continue to have courageous and challenging conversations rooted in trust and respect. An intentionality of honoring our diverse perspectives to enrich our academic experience is a collective effort, and I look forward to working through this with you, our students, families, and staff, to advance this work - together and united.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carise Comstock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Carise Comstock, Ed.D.
Superintendent & CEO