

Statement from Tina Douglas, Interim Superintendent of San Dieguito Union High School District:

Last month, I communicated with you all that one of our initiatives for this quarter is to enhance our relationship with our community and to engage in more active, thoughtful, and productive dialogue focused on improving equity and inclusion in our district. We've recently taken another step in our equity journey by hosting 10 local Jewish leaders from Jewish Federation of San Diego County, Anti-Defamation League, Hillel of San Diego, Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center and local congregations for a listening and learning session with all 10 of our school principals earlier this week, and while the purpose of the meeting was to learn more about how we can all collaborate to recognize and combat antisemitism and discrimination in all its forms, every person that was present in that meeting came away with so much more.

This listening and learning session indeed helped identify ways that we can become better allies in providing a safe learning environment for not just our Jewish students, but for all students. It also led to an understanding that we all - the entire SDUHSD community - need to find ways to be more empathetic to our neighbors. Our words and actions have the ability to affect more people than intended, so it's important that we consider the impact of our words as we model civil discourse for our students. A desire to have our individual voices heard above all others can lead to minimizing the voice of others. But it also important for us to speak up and avoid becoming complacent, which can lead to the types of discriminatory and hateful incidents and rhetoric that we have seen rise across the country. I am extremely grateful to Jason Nevarez, Senior Rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel, and Heidi Gantwerk, President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of San Diego County, for starting the dialogue with our district leaders, and this partnership will continue as we work at our school sites to help combat antisemitism and divisive language and actions in our school community.

Finally, I would like to thank these Jewish community leaders who alongside Rabbi Nevarez and Heidi Gantwerk collaborated with our group: Rabbi Alexis Berk (Temple Solel), Rabbi David Kornberg (Congregation Beth Am), Rabbi Ron Shulman (Congregation Beth El), Sara Brown (Holocaust and Genocide Educator), Betzy Lynch (CEO Lawrence Family JCC), Karen Parry (Executive Director, Hillel of San Diego), Fabienne Perlov (Regional Director, ADL San Diego) and Rachel Sato (ADL San Diego - Education).