



## WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future*

### **Civil Rights Leader to Address Race & Equality at Westwood Schools Conference**

*Event to feature Students of Color Sharing their Experiences*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 23, 2018**

Westwood, MA—This year, the Westwood Public Schools identified a “Healthy and Supported School Community” as an important component of its district improvement strategy. One element of creating that kind of community is implementing programs and instructional practices that recognize and support the needs of students and families in an increasingly diverse community.

On **November 26, 2018**, Westwood teachers, administrators, staff and students will engage in courageous conversations as part of a professional development day headlined by National Black Justice Coalition Executive Director [David Johns](#), who led the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans during the Obama Administration. The opening session will feature students of color from the Westwood Public Schools sharing their feelings about being minority students in a predominantly white school system.

The event takes place at Westwood High School (200 Nahatan Street). Media is invited to record the opening session from 8:30 to 10:15 a.m. Interviews with and photographs of participating students will be allowed.

“Last month, Mr. Johns came to Westwood and spent a day with students of color, some of whom come from Boston as part of the METCO program. He learned about their experiences and prepared them to share their thoughts with the teachers and staff,” said Sheryl Goodloe, director of Westwood’s METCO program. “It was an incredible experience for the students, and they have been working hard on the presentations they will make on Monday.”

In 2017, Goodloe attended the METCO Directors’ Association Educators Conference where Johns gave the keynote address. That experience prompted her to ask Johns to come to Westwood for this year’s professional development day. All Westwood staff receive a full day of professional development each fall.

“Our teachers and parents tell me they want all students to feel welcome and included in our schools,” said Westwood Schools Superintendent Emily Parks. “That is why we have initiated projects like Inclusive Schools Week, peer leader training at the middle school through the ADL’s World of Difference program, the high school’s Let’s Talk About Race group and Courageous Conversations. Our job as educators is to prepare our students to thrive in an increasingly diverse world.”

Later this school year, Westwood will hold parent forums on the topics of “Talking About Race with our Children” and “Preventing Biased-Based Bullying.”

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