

SPEECH BY PRINCIPAL OF CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Dennis Prager, Principal at a High School in Toronto, on the first day of classes in 2012

To: The students and faculty of our High School.

I am your new Principal, and honoured to be so. There is no greater calling than to teach young people. I would like to apprise you of some important changes coming to our school. I am making these changes because I am convinced that most of the ideas that have dominated public education in Canada have worked against you, against your teachers, against your parents, and against our country.

First, this school will no longer honour race or ethnicity. I could not care less if your racial makeup is black, brown, red, yellow, or white. I could not care less if your origins are African, Latin American, Asian or European or if your ancestors arrived here on the Mayflower, leaky SE Asian refugee ships or on slave ships. The only identity I care about, the only one this school will recognise, is your individual identity - your character, your scholarship, your humanity. And the only national identity this school will care about is Canadian. This is a Canadian public school and Canadian public schools were created to make better Canadians.

If you wish to affirm an ethnic, racial, religious identity through your school, you will have to go to another one. We will end all ethnicity - race - and non-Canadian-nationality-based celebrations. They undermine the motto of Canada. Everyone is equal, coast to coast and this school will be guided by Canadian values. That includes all after-school clubs.

I will not authorise clubs that divide students based on any identities. This includes gender, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, or whatever else may become in vogue in a society divided by political correctness. Your clubs will be based on interests and passions - not blood, ethnic, tribal, racial or other physically defined ties. Those clubs just cultivate narcissism - an unhealthy preoccupation with the self - while the purpose of education is to get you to think beyond yourself.

So we will have clubs that transport you to the wonders and glories of art, music, sport, debating, astronomy, languages you do not already speak, math, carpentry, and many many more. If the only extracurricular activities you can imagine being interested in are those based on ethnic or racial or sexual identity, that means that little outside of yourself really interests you and that means you don't belong in this school.

Second, I am not interested in whether or not English is your native language. My only interest in terms of language is that you leave this school speaking and writing English as fluently as possible. The English language has united Canadian citizens for more than 200 years, and it will unite us at this school. It is one of the indispensable reasons this country of immigrants has always come to be one country.

If you leave this school without excellent English-language skills, your teachers and I will have been remiss in our duty to ensure that you are prepared to compete successfully in the Canadian employment market. You will learn other languages here - it is deplorable that most Canadians only speak English. But if you want classes taught in your native language rather than in English, this is not the school for you.

Third, because I regard learning as a sacred endeavour, everything in this school will reflect learning's elevated status. This means, among other things, that you and your teachers will dress accordingly. Many people in our society dress more formally for a meal at a nice restaurant than they do for church or school. Those people have their priorities backwards. Therefore, there will be a formal dress code at this school.

Fourth, no obscene language will be tolerated anywhere on this school's property - whether in class, in the hallways or at athletic events. If you can't speak without using the "F-word," you can't speak. By obscene language I mean the words banned by the Federal Communications Commission plus epithets such as the "N-word," even when used by one black student to address another, or "bitch", even when addressed by a girl to a girlfriend. It is my intent that by the time you leave this school, you will be among the few of your age to distinguish instinctively between the elevated and the degraded, the holy and the obscene, the educated and the non-educated.

Fifth, we will end all self-esteem programmes. In this school, self-esteem will be attained in only one way - the way people attain it will be by earning it from their fellow students and teachers. One immediate consequence of this is that there will be only one class valedictorian, not eight.

Sixth, and last, I am reorienting the school programme toward academics, scholarship, and away from politics and propaganda. No more time will be devoted to scaring you about smoking and caffeine, or terrifying you about sexual harassment or global warming. No more semesters will be devoted to condom-wearing and teaching you to regard sexual relations as only, or primarily, a health issue. There will be no more attempts to convince you that you are a victim because you are not white, or not male, or not heterosexual, or not Christian. We will have failed, if any one of you graduates from this school does not consider himself or herself inordinately lucky - lucky to be alive, lucky to be well educated, and lucky to be a Canadian.

Now, please stand and join me in singing, OH CANADA to the only flag in Canada. As many of you may not know the words, your teachers will gladly hand them out to you.