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To the students, faculty, staff and families of E.O. Green Junior High School; the community of Oxnard, California:

Families United Against Hate has read, with great sadness, the story of the shooting death of 15 year old Lawrence King, killed by a bullet to the head by fellow classmate aged 14. The police have asked the press to respect the privacy of the families involved. Lawrence was reported to be a flamboyant young man who was perceived to be gay, and his shooter was reported to be greatly disturbed by Mr. King's gender bending dress and behavior. (At this time, the police are still investigating the situation, so all of this is speculation at this point.)

Since our mission is to provide support to families involved in hate crimes, our natural instinct was to stand by the King family at this time, and to help them sort through the tragic aftermath. But we also feel strongly that the shooter's family is in need of compassion and support.

We don't know the families involved, but we do know that this kind of violence, both emotional and physical, is frequently visited upon students perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, and we fully support programs that help overcome the prejudices that lead to this kind of discrimination and hate.

Again, there is much to learn about this situation. But as family advocates, what we do know is that there are at least two families now involved, and two young lives are now forever destroyed.

We understand that this has not yet been found to be a hate based incident, but the possibility that it may have been is enough to traumatize and raise fears that will affect a much larger community.

We urge schools to incorporate educational programs which will help alleviate hate. Time and again, these programs have been shown to be highly effective.

Our prayers and thoughts go out to these families and to the young man who is now being held on suspicion of murder. These kinds of incidents can be avoided with careful, compassionate education.

Please let us know if we can help in any way.

Sincerely,
Steve Schalchlin
For the Board of Families United Against Hate

Families United Against Hate (FUAH) provides support, guidance and assistance to individuals, families* and communities dealing with incidents based on bias; and to the people, organizations and agencies who serve and support them.

* We define family broadly to include biological, extended and chosen family.