

**Arlington Central School District  
Noxon Road Elementary School  
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*Kelly Murray Principal*

*Melissa Tirado Assistant to the Principal*

Dear Noxon Road Families,

I chose to send out the End of the Year Plans and 5th Grade Moving Up Ceremony information yesterday because to me, this Friday Family Letter needed to be utilized to echo Dr. Lyons' communication from earlier this week while also sharing my own personal reflection. If you have not read his letter, please see this link. [Dr. Lyons Important Message](#)

May 25th happened. A day where the private identity of Mr. George Floyd became public, and immediately the world began to talk openly about race and specifically, the implications of being a person of color in society. We now find quotes from famous African American leaders posted everywhere, we see people educating themselves about the history of racism in our country and we strive to "do our part" by sharing resources to engage in conversations with our children, in hopes that we can help them be the change that we know our world needs.

I have even found myself "discussing" through a group chat within my sphere of influence the question that I know many of you are asking...what can we do? If you're like my crew, your conversations may have ended with decisions to buy new books to educate yourselves or possibly even lead a book study within your community. Maybe you've found a cause to donate money to or joined in peaceful protests surrounding us, etc. So, why is it that despite our efforts, we all still know that none of this is enough? I decided to ask my friend who is an African-American mother of a nine year old son, although I knew that if I was asking, I better be ready to truly listen. Before asking, I thought about a time we sat together at my dinner table and I watched her scold her son for what she considered a lack of manners when he gave no eye contact when spoken to at the table (at 6 years old.) I remember asking her why she was being so strict with him as I reminded her that all kids behave that way sometimes. She responded that "my son walking down the street is different than your son walking down the street, his actions, choices and mere existence evoke a very different response than your son may receive....and that's why." I'll never forget that response and the story behind it and the raw truth within it. Now again, I braced myself for that truth, asking her a new question and here's my interpretation of what she had to say...

Maybe we still feel uncomfortable because our "support" is happening as a result of a single moment and possibly, before this moment, we grieved less, supported less, learned less, got uncomfortable less, took less risks and used our white voices less (despite the fact that centuries of systemic oppression have proven our voices to be influential and louder.) The conversation spurred me to read the work of Nesrine Malik and the following stuck with me:

"True solidarity, the one that helps in the long term rather than merely buys a sticking plaster for the short term, is in those moments. It is in the daily discomfort of taking risks, of challenging a system that subtly but emphatically excludes black people, when there is no reward for doing so, and of

making way and giving up space where it counts-at the table where power sits-and when no one can see you do it. Parting with money and sharing on social media is the easy bit. But the moments in between are the only ones that really matter.”

So what can we do now and in all “moments in between?” I find myself looking back at a letter that myself and our Building Equity Leaders sent to our community exactly a year ago, after an incident involving the use of a racial slur within our school. The message of that letter is summarized below as a reminder of what we as a school and community must commit to today, tomorrow and every “moment” in between.

- There is no place for racist, derogatory, discriminatory and/or biased words or actions within our school. In addition, we hold bystanders to the same accountability and expectations, arming them as agents of change, responsible for impacting their sphere of influence through their own initiative and upstanding words, actions and behaviors.
- As a school and community we must be dedicated to ensuring that all of our students know they are seen, they are heard, they are welcomed, they are included and they are safe.
- We must prepare ourselves to hear and understand words like implicit bias, marginalization, microaggression, educational equity, culturally responsive education and critical consciousness.
- We must unite as educators at school and at home to teach our children not to remain silent but give them the necessary tools as they become more aware and be prepared to handle acts of racism and injustice.
- If we haven't already, we must begin developmentally appropriate conversations with our children about the content of this message and join as a community to make one voice, loud, strong and clear, standing up for equity, kindness, inclusivity and the true meaning of “together.”
- Share with your children that we will not look away and we will not privilege intent over impact (<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/impact-intention-right-use-power-0731124>) when words are used as weapons and members of our human family are subjected to condemning speech or actions.
- Perhaps most importantly, I ask you to ask yourselves how you can spread our message, work through your own sphere of influence and if nothing else, remember that inaction is action and children are watching.

Many of our families that viewed my YouTube Morning Announcements earlier this week have sent kind and supportive messages, while also requesting additional resources. Beyond what Dr Lyons has provided in his letter, I'd like to extend the following links for support with conversations at home. Please reach out with any additional needs or feedback.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/parenting/kids-books-racism-protest.html>

Link to Book “Something Happened in My Town” [link](#)

*Dr. Murray*

