



ARLINGTON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Brendan Lyons, Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Arlington Community,

For the past three years, Arlington has committed itself as a district to studying, reflecting, and acting upon the principles of equity. We have listened to the voices of our students and parents. We have heard the voices of our faculty and staff. We have formed building and district-wide committees, as well as student equity teams at our middle schools and high school. We have examined inequities, such as enrollment in honors and AP classes, where our students of color are underrepresented. We have begun to scrutinize the systems that lead to inequities and to dismantle those systems which act as barriers to our students. We are reviewing our curriculum and our Code of Conduct to ensure that all students feel included, valued, and respected. I am proud of our work to date.

However, as a citizen of the United States watching and listening to the events that unfold around us, and as a human being and your superintendent, I am also ashamed. I am personally ashamed that the murder of George Floyd was what drove me to think more urgently about our work, when I knew intellectually that his death was only one in a long history of similar incidents involving black men. Frankly, I was able to temper my urgency because what happened to George Floyd is highly unlikely to happen to me or my son, simply because we are white.

Yet, as educators, we often espouse that we love students like they were our own children. Both George Floyd and the police officer who killed him were once someone's students. They sat in classrooms just like our students today and they were likely loved by their teachers, administrators and school staff as their own. If we truly think of all our students as our own, how can we not see the need for urgency? How can we not ensure that our systems are unbiased and supportive to all? How can we not have difficult, candid, and age-appropriate conversations with our students about race, bias and hatred? Ultimately, words and feelings are not adequate; our schools must be fully committed to social justice and eradicating racism through education.

I know that many of our students are struggling with the traumatic events going on around us. Please know that they and you are not alone. Please reach out to your child's principal, social worker, school psychologist, or school counselor for assistance. I have included a few links below that might be helpful in having conversations about race with your child.

[Racism and Violence: How to Help Kids Handle the News](#)

[Talking To Kids About Race](#)

[National Museum of African American History and Culture Talking About Race Portal](#)

On Saturday, June 6 at 10:00am, Sesame Street is hosting a town hall special: [Coming Together: Standing Up to Racism](#).

Finally, we must collectively remain steadfast in educating and empowering our students to embrace our diversity. Our hope lies in our schools and communities working together to eradicate bias and racism in all of their forms. Our children are counting on us.

Sincerely,

Brendan Lyons, Ed.D.

Our mission is to empower all students to be self-directed, lifelong learners, who willingly contribute to their community and lead passionate, purposeful lives.