

June 2, 2020

Dear Farmington Families,

We are writing to check in with all members of our school district community. Recent events and other similar events have resulted in feelings of outrage, despair and hopelessness. Images of the horrific circumstances surrounding the tragic death of George Floyd are truly devastating. As a school district community, we stand united against any form of racism, racial violence or social injustice. Typically, we would be together during a challenging time like this, and we would work with our students and families to provide support, care and guidance. In addition, we would join together to process our feelings as well as the recent events, and we would discuss ways to individually and collectively promote social justice, empathy and equity. What weighs on our minds most is that we have received messages from families within our school district community expressing deep hurt, fear and worry and we are not together to comfort and support one another. As educators, we cherish the gift of contributing to a more equitable, connected and caring society where all people are worthy of compassion, dignity, and empathy. When we, along with all of you and our students, openly and authentically share our feelings, stories and perspectives with one another, our empathy grows and our understanding of one another deepens. Kindness, care and unity prevail when we know and understand one another more deeply.

We will continue our collective equity work with urgency knowing that our actions will have a ripple effect that will create better outcomes for our students and society. This school year, we launched a new webpage on our website that is focused on inclusivity and anti-racism through our [equity work](#). At this week's Board meeting, our Board Chair Ellen Siuta asked for a moment of silence to reflect upon the ongoing unrest in response to the horrific and senseless death of George Floyd. She asked our community to help our Nation seek much needed change. The following quote from Michelle Obama was shared at our meeting:

“Like so many of you, I’m pained by these recent tragedies ... Race and racism is a reality that so many of us grow up learning to just deal with. But if we ever hope to move past it, it can’t just be on people of color to deal with it. It’s up to all of us—Black, white, everyone—no matter how well-meaning we think we might be, to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting it out. It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose lives are different from our own. It ends with justice, compassion, and empathy that manifests in our lives and on our streets. I pray we all have the strength for that journey, just as I pray for the souls and the families of those who were taken from us.”

Her words reflect the need for each one of us to be active contributors in this vital work. At the same meeting, we shared a summer curriculum project that was part of our 2020-2021 budget. The summer work focuses upon viewing our curriculum through the lens of social justice and equity. This work will heighten our focus on all voices and perspectives being represented within our curriculum. Earlier this week, we sent out a letter to our faculty and staff about recent events to ensure our students were being provided much needed support. Although we have made progress as a school district, there is still a great deal of work ahead of us. It is with passion and urgency that we continue to engage in this important work together and on behalf of our students.

We also celebrated students from the Class of 2020 at our Board meeting on Monday. As we highlighted each student, themes of social justice, inclusivity, service to others, and academic excellence emerged. We are all seeking hope during this troubling time and our students provided that much needed hope through their commitment to making a positive impact locally and nationally in the areas of social justice, inclusivity and service to others. We know that so many of our students and families are hurting. Please know we are here for you and we stand together and united against racism, racial violence or social injustice. We also stand united in supporting and caring for one another. We will end our letter with a quote from IAR Principal, Nilda Irizarry, who recently received the CAS First Year Principal of the Year recognition:

“All I know is how to love more deeply during moments like this, but love will not be enough. As a school leader, I am devoted to continuing our conversations about race and equity and analyzing how it impacts our work with all students at IAR. In all we do, we will seek to recognize and value the underrepresented, to illuminate and acknowledge all identities, and to implement and enact anti-racist ideology, policies, and practices. While it may not be enough, it is a much needed start.”

Ms. Irizarry’s words represent the school district’s collective commitments to all members of the Farmington community. Please let your child’s teacher know if your child is experiencing heightened fear or worry during this time of unrest. We want to provide resources and support to you and your family. We have included some links below to help you navigate this challenging and troubling time. The following [link](#) highlights one of our own Farmington families. We extend our deepest appreciation to Sarah Smith (Farmington parent) for sharing her family’s story and for stepping forward to provide support to others. Again, when we, along with all of you and our students, openly and authentically share our feelings, stories and perspectives with one another, our empathy grows and our understanding of one another deepens creating a more compassionate and inclusive society for all people.

Sincerely,

Farmington Board of Education Members
Kathy Greider, Superintendent of Schools

Resources for Families:

[Parent Toolkit](#)

[Talking to Young Children](#)

[How to talk to your children about riots and protests](#)

[Teaching Tolerance](#)

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement developed a guide -- [Talking to Kids about Tragedies](#) (Such as Shootings and Terror Attacks) in the News – which helps explain for parents and guardians the importance of discussing the event with children and helps inform parents of common questions children ask in the aftermath of tragic events.