June 3, 2020

Dear Hazel Park Schools Students, Families, Teachers and Community,

I have struggled to find the right words to describe the despair and frustration I feel in knowing that so much racist violence continues to extend across America. The murder of George Floyd has unleashed the pent-up pain of centuries, as have the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Stephon Clark and Breonna Taylor. We hold a too-long list of others in our hearts. All of this murder and violence towards our Black neighbors has rattled my ethnic, degreed core and where I thought I had a decent grasp of the racial divide, it is dawning on me that I still have much to learn.

Indeed, these tragic events serve as a reminder that as a school district we still have work to do in increasing awareness in our students of the importance of embracing an inclusive society. We have a responsibility to continue to foster a deeper understanding of equity and tolerance of differences, as well as empathy and acceptance for all. Further, we have the crucial responsibility to encourage in our students the importance of taking those qualities into the world so that they can lead by example and inspire others.

Every day, our team wakes up ready to help all students and their families—and on the hardest days we cling even more dearly to that purpose. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of these victims and extends to all people of color and beyond. This deadly violence affects us all and reinforces our purpose to persevere in building an educated, culturally-proficient, and globally-aware community who acknowledge our own bias and seek to eradicate them in ourselves and our communities.

While I have been here at Hazel Park Schools, we have huddled, we have consoled, we have stood up to violence and aggression in all of its forms. And as a leader, I am vowing to face our student’s pain over witnessing these savage days with purpose by asking that we all stay focused on clear goals for ensuring equity, inclusion and the celebration of diversity. We need to support each other as we learn about the destructive impact of our biased words and actions. Racism has no place in our schools, our community, or our world. We must stand together for the rights of all.

As Hazel Park Schools’ Student Council President, Jordan Aliff said to his peers recently, “This is the time to keep pushing and to fight for hope like the fierce Vikings we are.”
As a school district we will continue to collaborate with community partners, such as the past year’s training with Dr. Jay Marks and our newly-won initiative that we have already begun as a Tier Three Partnership Academy with the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center and the Great Lakes Equity Center.

This partnership seeks to:

- Improve distribution of effective teachers and principals;
- Improve school engagement, environment, and school safety, as well as family and community engagement in schools;
- Increase and support data-based decision making related to use of research-based, culturally responsive curricula and instructional practices in classrooms, schools, and districts;
- Build coalitions between higher education, PreK-12 systems, communities, and families;
- Promote equity by addressing needs of historically underserved students, including students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds;
- Address the disproportionate representation of minority students in special, gifted, and advanced placement (AP) programs as well as STEM education;
- Support, develop, and disseminate effective approaches to school dropout prevention and reentry.

It is hard to see now, but the day will come for healing—and our district will devote our hearts, hands and resources to that journey. This morning, our leadership team started work on an even deeper level to help identify what we can do as a district. And in that spirit, we commit to our original strategic plan goal of embracing diversity and fostering a positive school climate in Hazel Park Schools that will turn the pain we are all experiencing into better days for everyone but most importantly for our students and all stakeholders.

With Students In Mind,

Dr. Amy Y. Kruppe,
Superintendent
P.S. Talking with your children about racism can be difficult. I am providing a few resources here, and our school and district equity teams will work to share more resources with you in the coming days.


Talking to kids about racism in the media. - Dr. Kira Banks on YouTube

How to talk to kids about race and racism. - Parent Toolkit

How to talk to your children about protests and racism. - CNN


Today: How to talk to kids about racism, protests and injustice.