

June 5, 2020

Dear Southwest Schools Community,

Like many of you, I have watched the disturbing images of George Floyd's tragic and senseless death. Also, like many of you, I am still having difficulty processing what I saw. I have questions. The first question is, "How can a human being be treated like this?" The questions that immediately follow are: "Why does this keep happening?"; "When will it stop?"; and "What will it take for this to stop?" These questions are a few of many painful thoughts and questions that many others and I have. I know that I am not alone in experiencing this wide range of emotions, including grief, outrage, frustration, and others. And, there are undoubtedly many of you, our staff, students, and families who are struggling to process these feelings. Please know that although school is not physically in session, we are still here to provide support.

Mr. Floyd's loss of life in itself is unbelievably sad and tragic. Compounding the tragedy is the fact that this death was entirely preventable. His life was taken by individuals whose responsibility it was to serve and protect.

This act of violence and the many other similar acts of violence continue to create a massive divide in our society, which we as a national community can no longer tolerate as our status quo. Please know that Southwest Schools places diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of how we work to meet our mission for our students, staff, state, and country.

We must do all we can to ensure those values are furthered not just in our schools, but also in our society. Racism, inequality, and violence directed at specific groups in our communities and nation are unacceptable, and we cannot remain silent. We condemn racism and violence in the strongest terms. These concepts are in direct opposition to the values of Southwest Schools and a democratic society.

Southwest Schools is committed to continuing our mission of serving and educating every student in an inclusive and welcoming environment free from racism and violence. We are also committed to having critical conversations about race and equity and being agents of change. As educators, we work to break down barriers and create opportunities for all students – and this is especially true for our students who have been underserved.

For our students and staff members who have not experienced the benefits and privileges of the majority culture, we are committed to disrupting these current realities you experience every day. Our hearts break with you, we hear you, we stand with you, and we are grateful for you.



For our students, you represent the optimism in the country that will ensure the fair treatment of all people. You represent a spirit of understanding, mutual respect, and hope; hope that our history does not have to define our destiny; hope that you will be the generation committed to breaking down the systems of racial injustice and oppression. Racism, bigotry, and violence does not have to be the “normal” that you accept. The nation is challenging us now more than ever to amplify our voices to define a new “normal” for this country. Together, we all will make this nation a strong and vibrant society where everyone is valued with words and actions.

We all stand together for change.

Most sincerely,

Janelle James
Superintendent of Schools

