

June 3, 2020

Dear Newtown Community,

The last week has been difficult for many Americans who witnessed the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, followed by images of violence in response to this tragedy. As adults, many of us struggle with issues that have brought us to this place – racism, injustice, and lack of compassion for our fellow human beings.

Children may be concerned and confused by unfolding events, troubling images, and civil unrest. As the Commissioner of Education, Miguel Cardona, commented recently, “As adults and educators, we must be proactive about making this a teachable moment by addressing issues of racism and inequity head-on.” If we were in school, we would offer opportunities for students to have a voice and share their feelings, or to seek out trusted adults. Although we are apart, we want you to know that we are here if your children would like to speak to counselors, social workers, or school psychologists. We have also included resources for you (below) that will help initiate discussions with children and address many of these sensitive issues.

As a Nation, we must do better. Within our own school community, we need to ensure that students, staff members, and families feel valued, safe, and supported. We must live by our core values – caring, respect, diversity - and be empowered to stand up for others when our beliefs are not upheld. While COVID put some things on hold temporarily, we are planning to initiate a community conversation on issues of race, diversity, and equity. We will send out details in the next two weeks. I have spoken to parents, staff, students, and State leaders who are willing to begin a serious dialogue on these topics as they impact our school and our community. We hope you can join us.

Respectfully,

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent

<https://www.tolerance.org/topics/race-ethnicity>

<http://www.edchange.org/publications/Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf>

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/how-white-parents-can-use-media-to-raise-anti-racist-kids>