

# LOCKLAND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## Lockland High School

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Lockland Local School District Families and Community Members:

June 3, 2020

Our school community and the communities that we serve are justifiably angered by the recent atrocities witnessed in our country. I can't adequately find the words to express the emotions felt as a result of the senseless harassment and murder of black Americans over the last several weeks. The murder of **Ahmaud Arbery** while running in Georgia, the killing of **Breonna Taylor** while sleeping in her home, the harassment of **Christopher Cooper** while bird watching in a public park and most recently the brutal murder of **George Floyd** in broad daylight, while in police custody, as others stood by and looked on as he pleaded for help. Of course, these are simply the most recent names and events. I could cite other instances that point to systemic racism in our society for pages. Unfortunately, it is the year 2020 and the narrative of our story today is not much different than it was in the 1960s.

It is a difficult to write this letter as a white, middle-class male in America. Capturing my thoughts and feelings inevitably creates the risk of appearing to be disingenuous. However, as a public educator who has spent 20 years serving diverse and underserved populations, I have learned the importance of speaking out and being heard when it is necessary. My experiences have taught me many things over the years; here are a few that I believe are applicable now:

- **I have come to the understanding that I will never truly understand.** I simply can't understand what it means for the color of my skin to create challenges in my life similar to those experienced by my black friends and colleagues and I will never be able to.
- **For those of us that teach and lead schools in America, it is NOT an option to be silent or complacent** when it comes to issues of equity, racism and the need for change in our country.
- **It is not fair, accurate or appropriate to claim that you "don't see color."** Everyone sees color...we should all see and appreciate the diverse cultures, backgrounds and people in our lives. It is natural to see color but it is essential to see everyone as people and not as a race.
- **You change the world by changing people's beliefs and behaviors.** Just as racism is a learned attribute (we all come into this world without that hate in our hearts), it can also be "unlearned." As an advocate for equity, I have learned time and time again that the best way to move minds is to focus on people, right versus wrong, inequities in our world and peace – not race.
- **It is not enough to not be racist we MUST be anti-racist.** Silence is complicity and lack of action is inexcusable. In order to change the narrative in our communities and our nation, we must not stand by quietly when we see inequity. We must use our voices. We must disrupt the systems that are contributing to the inequities and we must lobby for change.

While diversity and inclusion are amongst our core values in Lockland Schools, we are committed to moving forward with a newfound sense of urgency to truly listen, empathize with and support all of our students and families through continued and increased conversations about race, racism and equity through the sharing of our stories as a means to building a more caring community. While I write this today with anger about the state of affairs in our communities and nation, I am looking ahead with great hope that we will change the world for the better moving forward.

Respectfully,

Bob Longworth  
Superintendent

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