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Mid-Del Community:

Let me just start by saying that for more than a week, I've been trying to find the right words to express my grief, confusion, and dismay related to the death of George Floyd. During that time, we have all witnessed responses to that initial video that add layers to the pain we are all feeling. The death of George Floyd isn't simply an aberration; it's part of a larger trend going back centuries.

I've struggled since watching the video to find my voice. I don't have words to make everything better, and I don't want to make empty promises. But this isn't about my voice, or my comfort. Mid-Del serves over 14,000 students a year. We are part of one of the most diverse communities in the state. Our educators are here because we are proudly dedicated to the people we serve.

We stamp the words, "Mid-Del Schools: Safe, Challenged, and Ready" on just about every document and social media post that we release. That's who we aspire to be. To get closer to that goal, we all have to get better about reflecting on our own biases and working to eliminate them. We have to stand up and say something when we see someone in a position of authority misusing that power.

We don't have to share another person's experiences to empathize. We just have to listen and let our hearts be moved to make change. Listen to people and hear their stories. Seek to understand. Do something constructive to make the world a better place.

Oklahoma-born author Ralph Ellison wrote, *"America is woven of many strands. I would recognise them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one, and yet many. This is not prophecy, but description."* As with our district mission statement, Ellison's words are aspirational. So far as I can tell, we are still better at the "yet many" part than the "one" part. In spite of this - and of everything I've watched over the past couple of weeks - I believe that the "many strands" make us stronger and more beautiful.

I'm proud to work for a school board and a community that celebrates inclusion and promotes equity. We can always do more and be better though. Words matter, but actions matter more. How we treat each other is the truest measure of who we really are. Our schools must always be a safe place for all students to learn, to find their voices, and to use them with pride. As always, we welcome your input for ways to make our schools and district better, safer places for our students and staff.

Rick