

June 10, 2020

Dear Ridgefield Families,

As a father of two young boys, the past few weeks have shaken me in a way no other event has. The brutal and unconscionable killing of George Floyd has sparked protests, a collective call for equity, and an end to racism. *"Where you see wrong, or inequality, or injustice, speak out, because this is your country. This is your democracy. Make it. Protect it. Pass it on."* - Thurgood Marshall

Our district, like society as a whole, has a long way to go to ensure equitable opportunities for all. As you know, we are in the audacious pursuit of being the state's premier district. Foundational to that is the belief and commitment to providing a personalized learning experience for every student. To get to where we aspire, we must embrace and serve all learners. Serving all learners requires overt and consistent action to speak out against and eradicate all racist actions and behaviors. I was sharing with a school patron the other day that I keep a copy of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Why We Can't Wait" on my bookshelf. I read this book in college and it has stayed with me all these years. Watching the protests on television, I recently read Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" again. Sadly, it is as timely and pertinent as the day it was written in 1963. That is nearly sixty years ago. We can do better and we must do better!

Our District has not been stagnant in regards to our efforts to provide equitable opportunities for all students. The Ridgefield School Board adopted an [Equity Philosophy \(Policy 1910\)](#) in August 2018. This policy serves to guide our work daily. Additionally, the District launched an Equity and Engagement Committee two years ago. Some of the activities and outcomes from this work include:

- a partnership with Resolutions NW Educational Equity Training to increase our understanding of implicit/unconscious bias;
- social justice training with ESD 112;
- book studies (ex. Unconscious Bias in Schools);
- implementing the See Something, Say Something Initiative (from Teaching Tolerance) in our schools;
- participation as part of the first cohort in the statewide Inclusionary Practices Consortium, and more.

The coronavirus closure has highlighted obstacles that are not equitable and their impacts on each student. As I have shared previously, we are moving our Chromebook strategy to a 1:1 take home model for all students K-12 to reduce technology barriers that some students face. (K-2 students will keep their Chromebooks at school, but have the ability for those to go home in the event of any closure.)

In April, we began work to decluster our classrooms. The goal is to ensure that our K-6 classrooms reflect our school district's demographics. Declustering is an important outcome from our involvement in the statewide Inclusionary Practices Consortium referenced above.

Finally, while we hope for a traditional start of school, we are working hard to prepare for any necessary multi-modal learning plan with equity as the focus. The plan, which we continue to craft with members of administration and our teachers' association, seeks to provide additional support to our students most impacted by the school closures. We hope to have more information to share soon.

I'll close as I began; while our District continues to make strides, there is still more to be done. We are all the District and your voice matters. We are committed to continuing our efforts, and we must meet all forms of inequity and racism head-on with urgency. As Nelson Mandela so eloquently stated, "As long as poverty, injustice, and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest."

Sincerely,



Dr. Nathan McCann
Superintendent