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June 2, 2020

Dear Pennsbury School District Community,

Our community, like cities all around our country, is reeling from the senseless murder of George Floyd and the pain and anguish felt by the Floyd family, who lost a beloved family member, and anyone who has ever felt oppressed or marginalized. As former President Barack Obama wrote this weekend, "This shouldn't be 'normal' in 2020 America. It can't be 'normal.' If we want our children to grow up in a nation that lives up to its highest ideals, we can and must be better."

Former NBA star, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, wrote an *LA Times* opinion piece this weekend entitled, *Don't understand the protests? What you're seeing is people pushed to the edge*. In it, he wrote, "Racism in America is like dust in the air. It seems invisible — even if you're choking on it — until you let the sun in. Then you see it's everywhere. As long as we keep shining that light, we have a chance of cleaning it wherever it lands. But we have to stay vigilant, because it's always still in the air."

We must be better and we must be vigilant when it comes to systemic racism and bias. We have to name these things, acknowledge them, and begin to do the deep work of transformation. We must provide ongoing support for our students to maximize the learning potential of the issues for which people are peacefully protesting.

As a District, we have spent the past two years working with leaders throughout the school system to develop cultural proficiency through book study and trainings with notable leaders on issues of race. It has been the hope that this work would empower our leaders to support staff and students in their respective schools. Some great work in our schools has developed as a result of this focus. However, "hope," while critical, is not a strong enough emotion. We *must* be better. We will continue this work to ensure every student benefits equitably from the education we promise to provide.

As a parent, I also recognize that our children are struggling to make sense of what they see in the news; i.e., images of violence that are hard to explain because the actions are in response to generations of oppression which our children may not understand. With the hope of trying to teach our children to learn to appreciate the concept of otherness, I share the following resources that differentiate for student ages:

MISSION

Recognizing our proud traditions and diverse community, the Pennsbury School District prepares all students to become creative, ethical, and critical thinkers for lifelong success in a global society.

Community Letter

June 2, 2020

Page 2

[The Cultural Proficiency Framework](#)

Kids in the House

<https://www.kidsinthehouse.com/blogs/mercedes-samudio/diversity-matters-helping-children-develop-cultural-competence>

Teaching Tolerance

<https://www.tolerance.org/moment/racism-and-police-violence>

Embrace Race: 31 children's books to support conversations on race, racism and resistance

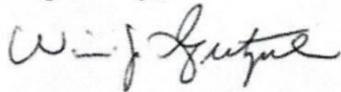
<https://www.embracerace.org/resources/26-childrens-books-to-support-conversations-on-race-racism-resistance>

Teaching Tolerance

[Beyond the Golden Rule](#)

Borrowing from a recent message sent by the President of Bucknell University, "The onus is on us to transform the institution, the community and the nation. Each of us bears that responsibility differently, but our collective investment is what a community requires. I look forward to the days when we are back together, here, and can work together to build that better community, that better nation and that better [Pennsbury]." If your child needs further support in any way, please email the principal and/or counselor at your child's school.

Respectfully,



William J. Gretzula, Ed.D.
District Superintendent
Pennsbury School District