



# KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Committed to Excellence*

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*Dr. James J. Lavender  
Superintendent of Schools*

June 3, 2020

Dear Students, Parents, Faculty & Staff,

The abhorrent murder of George Floyd fills me with mixed and strong emotions. I am sad. I am angry. I am frustrated that I cannot explain nor make any sense as to why a white police officer would have knelt on the neck of an unarmed black man while he grasped for life. And, I am incensed by those who refused to intervene as Mr. Floyd desperately cried for help. I know you must have similar feelings.

Mr. Floyd's murder, and America's response to it, is a stinging reminder of America's legacy of racism and bigotry. History teaches us that it has been 244 years since we declared our independence from an oppressive monarchy. It has been 155 years since the end of the Civil War. And, it has been 56 years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Yet, despite the principles upon which our nation was founded – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – government, at all levels, continues to struggle to protect the inalienable rights of all men and women.

These tragic and traumatic events would ordinarily provide us an opportunity to bring our students together. An opportunity to help them process their feelings, organize their thoughts and seek support. While it is unfortunate that we cannot gather in person, there are ways we can engage, comfort and support one another during this difficult time.

### **How can I engage, comfort and support my child?**

Perhaps the most difficult part of the conversation is knowing where to start. I am providing you a few points to consider as we engage in this discussion. The following points were inspired by an article I read entitled, [How to talk to children about racism, brutality, and protests in the wake of Floyd's death.](#)

- Parents can start by having open and honest conversations with their children as early as eight years old to ensure that they are receiving accurate information and build self-awareness.
- Dust off the history books as it is difficult to talk about racism without understanding America's history of slavery and segregation.
- To better understand why people protest, children need to understand the concept of revolutions. America's revolutionary period, the Civil Rights Movement and the LGBTQ movement, provide plenty of examples of how protests were used to create change.
- Utilize helpful resources from credible sources, such as what has been provided below, to initiate dialogue and better understand the complexities of racism, bigotry and brutality.

*Home of the Dragons*

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## Helpful Resources

- **American School Counselor Association: [Race and Equity Resources](#)**  
School counselors are advocates for the equitable treatment of all students in school and in the community. The link above will provide you with position statements, articles and webinars to assist you at this time. Please continue to look upon our school counselors as a resource. Their contact information can be found [here](#).
- **National Museum of African American History Releases [“Talking About Race” Web Portal](#)**  
Sponsored by the Smithsonian, this portal helps explore issues of race, racism and social identity.
- **Child Mind Institute: [Talking to Kids About George Floyd, by Harold S. Koplewicz, MD.](#)**  
It is critically important that we talk to our children about racism, the death of George Floyd and the continued violence and protests that have spread across the country. The stress of the coronavirus crisis has already brought a feeling of hopelessness to American life — particularly for adolescents. This latest example of racial violence and division has not surprisingly resulted in aggression on our streets and in our national conversation.
- **PBS News Hour: [Death of George Floyd sets off massive protests](#)**  
Mr. Floyd’s death has set off widespread protest across the city of Minneapolis, including conflict between protesters and police and destruction of property.
- **USA Today: [George Floyd. Ahmaud Arbery. Breonna Taylor. What do we tell our children?](#)**  
Parents and educators struggle to answer the many questions being asked after the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor. Many white parents wonder whether to talk to their kids at all, while parents of color swallow their grief and fear to have “the talk” once again.
- **Podcasts:** Code Switch, an NPR podcast that explores race and culture identity in America  
Suggested Episodes: [The Limits of Empathy](#) (36 min.); [What About Your Friends](#) (50 min.).

## Kingsway’s Commitment to Access, Success and Equity

In September, Kingsway will enter its third year working closely with [Rowan CASE](#) as we explore issues of access, success & equity for all students. As part of the first two years of the work, administrators and faculty have engaged in implicit bias training and discussions centered on understanding who our students are, where they come from, and what they may bring with them that influences their experiences. An extension of this work is our “Student Voices” group, which is a group fully driven by the students with assistance from Rowan’s Doctoral students who are working on an action research project (which will continue into next year).

As we finish this second year and enter year three, we are at a “tipping point.” The Equity Committee will extend its work with a focus on three main categories: *Curriculum & Instruction Practices, Community Outreach, and Social-Emotional Learning*. The goal of these subgroups is to begin to take the understandings and the work to the larger faculty and larger community to improve upon the feeling of belonging of all our students. I will continue to keep our school community informed of our progress.



*Commitment to Excellence*

As a district, we recognize the importance of consistent reflection on current school policies and practices, and continuously work to improve so that every student feels safe and accepted on Kingsway's campus. As an organization, we will strive to be better. My hope is that America strives to be better and that every American uses their voice to dismantle the structures that define institutional and systemic racism in our society. We cannot ignore the racial, economic, political and social inequity plaguing many of our citizens and must work together to bring about meaningful change. I leave you with the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King who said, "The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people."

Very truly yours,



Dr. James J. Lavender  
Superintendent of Schools



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