



PORT TOWNSEND

School District

LEARNING THROUGH A SENSE OF PLACE

Superintendent
Dr. John A. Polm, Jr.

Board of Directors
Jennifer James-Wilson, Chair
Nathanael O'Hara
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Dear Families and Community,

The following days of protests have been incredibly frustrating and scary. I am sure many of you join me in struggling to deal with the disparities that continue to exist in our society. I am saddened by the death of George Floyd, and I send my condolences to his family. Given the disturbing news, and the institutionalized racism that continues to persist in our society, the recent protests are understandable. However, I wish they were peaceful. As an educator I am committed to equity, and to help empower a new generation of young people in an inclusive public education system. Public schools too must continue to confront the ways many in our society perpetuate racism.

I have encouraged our teachers and counselors to be sensitive to the concerns of students around racial equity and social justice. Over the last few years our school district has provided our teachers and school board with cultural sensitivity training in partnership with the Jamestown S'klallam tribe. Each year our teachers have regular training on culturally responsive teaching, and we regularly review data on racial disparities in our educational outcome for our students. We know there is more work to do.

I recently attended a training session with [Jahmad Canley](#). He discussed "privilege", in terms of not making things easy, but instead - not making things harder. I think of what it is about my cultural situation that does not make things harder. That is, I speak English, which is the language of our culture. If I did not speak English, things would be harder. It is my "privilege" to be a native English speaker. I am white, which also does not make it harder. I still have to work at things, so I don't think things are easy. But, I do not have to overcome prejudices of others like an Indigenous man, a black man or Latino man might.

Many of us have privilege. Many of our neighbors do not have that same privilege. As you talk with your own students, perhaps this concept might be helpful. Below are some resources you may want to explore with your student at home to help them better understand what is happening right now. Our young people are the future. We can have a kinder and more inclusive society where all people are free from violence.

Here are some resources for your consideration, to use on your own or with your children:

- Teaching Tolerance: [Teaching About Race, Racism and Police Violence](#)
- Seattle Public Libraries [Race and Social Justice books for kids K-5](#)
- New York Times: [An Antiracist Reading List](#)
- Your Kids Aren't Too Young to Talk About Race: [Resource Roundup](#)
- Anti-Defamation League: lessons, table talks, and books:
 - Table Talk: [George Floyd, Racism, and Law Enforcement](#)
 - [Middle School Level lessons](#)
- 100 Race Conscious [Things You Can Say to Your Child – Conversation Starters](#)
- NPR: [How White Parents Can Talk About Race](#)

Sincerely,

John Polm
Superintendent
Port Townsend School District