

Dear SWES Families,

I am following up on the Superintendent's recent communication (attached below) on behalf of the Needham Administration. We are all reaching out to share our personal sadness and outrage about not only the recent tragic and senseless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, but also for so many more Americans who experience racially motivated violence or bias.

As a school community, we stand united with all of our students and families who are feeling the tremendous weight of these tragedies. I ask that SWES families come together and find comfort in knowing that we are not alone in this; we stand together as an educational community, and we are committed to making our world a more kind, just and inclusive community for all of our students, families and staff.

I'd like to specifically address the first bullet in the letter about the opportunities for dialogue and engagement for students, their families, and staff.

Our school counselors, Margaret Petrovich and Meg Flatley, and I are working with teachers to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities to address the current news. We met with all staff this afternoon to process our own reactions to this weekend's news and discussed how we will address concerns from our students if and when they arise. We acknowledged that not all children will be aware of these events and we will immediately respond to the natural curiosity of children as appropriate. We will continue to answer questions that any students ask while following these overall guidelines:

- *Answer simply and age appropriately*
- *Be honest and if you don't know an answer to a question, say you don't know but let them know you will try to find out more information*
- *Acknowledge the child's feelings*
- *Acknowledge your own feelings*
- *Ask if the child would like to talk a little more about this after the class (then, if you do talk to them after class, ask talk about who they can talk to at home about their concern)*

We also are planning age-appropriate class discussions that will take place later this week.

A number of parents have reached out to us asking for resources and guidance in how to talk to children about what is happening in cities across the country, including Boston. This [article](#) is one I found very helpful and we will share other resources with you at this week's [Parent Forum](#) on Wednesday. We are extending the forum by a half hour so we can address the original agenda items (update on remote learning, summer resources for families and closure meetings) for the first 45 minutes and then shift to a discussion about how to talk to children about racially motivated violence and its aftermath at 3:45 to 4:30. Our school counselors and other staff will be joining us, and as usual, a recording of the forum will be emailed to all families afterward.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Michael

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