



WOODBURY CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Leader in Personalizing Education

Dear Woodbury School Community,

The past 3 months have been extraordinarily challenging for all of us. This horrific pandemic has forced us to change how we live and learn. Our community has worked together to adjust to this new reality in an inspiring way and it shows the true character of our district.

Unfortunately, while we have had to combat COVID-19, our country is still combating the ugly legacy of racism and discrimination. I am greatly saddened by the tragic events happening across our country. Once again, we are dealing with another senseless killing of an unarmed black man at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. There are many reacting in anger and frustration. This is a direct reflection of the pain that many are feeling over injustices that are playing out over and over again in our society.

The recent deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and most recently George Floyd are disturbing reminders that equality in America is still a work in progress for black and brown people. Watching the recent video of George Floyd was deeply troubling for me to see and has left an indelible image in my memory, memories that will soon not be forgotten. Moreover, I am extremely concerned about the impact these incidents and subsequent images have on our students who are trying to make sense of a world where these tragedies continue to happen and the aftermath of events that follow. Protest and demonstration are integral in the fight against racism and I am encouraging our students to find ways to peacefully demonstrate and protest indifference.

Recent events remind us of how important our own policies, practices and beliefs are in our schools and in the community at large. I am extremely proud to serve in such a diverse district that is rich in tradition and actively seeks to address the needs of all our students of color and the supports they require to be successful. During this my first year as Superintendent, I have learned a lot about Woodbury and I am thankful for our partnership with the Woodbury Police Department, Chief Ryan and the men that support our schools in their roles as School Resource Officers.

Whenever we experience tragedies like the deaths of George Floyd and others, we often ask ourselves - what can I do? How do I process this information and help the students in my life process this information? More intentionally how can we support our African American students and families in a better and more authentic way moving forward. I don't profess to have all the answers to these most challenging issues but I do know that we all; administrators, teachers, parents, students and community stakeholders must stand together and break the cycle of racism and injustice to ensure that it never permeates our school community.



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If you're a student, in need of support we have adult leaders you can talk to about these difficult times, please reach out to your school leader, teacher or well trusted adult if you are in need of assistance.

To move this work forward in August of 2019 the district formed the Race and Equity Committee (REAC), a diverse group of educators and community members working together to address inequities within the district. We pledge to carry out the full function of this group and engage our entire community in courageous conversations around race and equity. If you are a parent or a staff member who is looking to join this committee, please reach out to shoffman@woodburysch.com.

We look forward to continuing this important work with all who are committed to address these systemic issues as they require urgency and action immediately. The possibility of change and progress is anchored in hope for the future and all of us working together to hold this system accountable for failing at the basic tenets of human decency, compassion and justice. Remember we are "Better, together."

Sincerely submitted,

Andrew T Bell Sr.
Superintendent