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J. Warren Killam School

A T.R.R.F.C.C. Place to Be!

June 2, 2020

Dear Families of the Killam Community,

Like you, I spent this past weekend watching the developments around the country and world, surrounding the tragic death of George Floyd. His death represents one of many senseless atrocities in recent years. Usually I write my letters tailored to our students, yet today, I am writing this for an adult audience. In my attempt to process what I was witnessing, I experienced deep emotions: intense sadness, anger, frustration, and a general sense of heartbrokenness quickly followed by questions. I ask myself, “how can I engage with my community in speaking out and changing what is a basic matter of humanity?” Watching the peaceful protests, the rioting, and the outspoken support for our citizens of color are truly impacting the way that I think about democracy. I am writing today to express my support for all people of color, for like many, I can no longer remain silent in my thinking. I am thinking about our families in our own community, our families who live in Boston, and our families who have experienced an intense feeling of not belonging at some point in their lives. My heart and mind is with you.

I fully recognize that as a white woman who is in a position of power, I have privilege and a platform. I will never experience the fear or concerns of our black community. I also fully acknowledge that I have much work to do and continue for myself. I am writing to say I am committed to this work and doing better. I ask for unity right now in supporting our community members of color. Explaining the unexplainable in what is happening or the deep-rooted systemic racism in our county is heartbreaking, extremely challenging, and essential. I have hope that together our combined dialogue will lead to peaceful change recognizing basic human rights that transcend politics and individuals. Please join me in this work for we must start supporting our children’s thinking and action in their formative years.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela stated “racism must be opposed by all means that humanity has at its disposal.” The question is how do we do this? We start by committing ourselves and reflecting on how we can be a catalyst for change. Then we raise awareness in our children. As adults and as educators, we do not have all the answers or words, but we can have conversations, show compassion, teach empathy, promote hope, and work on building the social-awareness skills that are necessary in nurturing strong minds. While we work to build skills in our classrooms about asking questions, welcoming everyone, and having difficult conversations, we are fully aware that we are just touching the surface of the real work that needs to be done—learning to be anti-racist. Yesterday, our school psychologist, Mrs. Alice Gomez-Salemi, shared resources on your child’s Google Classroom about a picture book you can read with your child entitled *The Name Jar* about teaching tolerance and accepting diversity. She also shared this [link](#) to an NPR podcast [Talking Race with Young Children](#) that may help you start the conversation at home. We must help each other and our children process what is happening. We must listen intently, process from each point of view, and respond openly and honestly in developmentally appropriate ways. None of us have all the answers, yet I ask you to join me in being part of the change and initiating the dialogue.

Thank you,

Sarah Leveque, Principal