June 4, 2020

Dear Little Rock School District Family:

The last week has been challenging for the nation and for everyone in the Little Rock community. We want to acknowledge the range of emotions that our students, staff, and families may be experiencing, especially those in communities of color. Like many of you, we are saddened by the death of George Floyd and concerned about the protests underway across the county. We understand the frustrations and anger being expressed by our community and support the rights of those who choose to peacefully protest. Racial intolerance has no place in our community and certainly no place in our District. As a school district that has had a long history in the Civil Rights movement, we felt it important to let you know where we stand on these important issues.

We are heartened by the fact that so many community members, including our students, have been champions against racial injustice and prejudice. The events that have transpired in our community and our nation do not heal in a day or a week. Healing is a process that can only begin with continued open, productive, honest conversations, followed by a commitment to do and be better.

Yesterday we shared that we were made aware of an incident impacting the LRSD community involving an inappropriate social media post by two Little Rock School District students. The image and language used was offensive and does not represent our values. Over the past 24 hours we’ve tried to investigate this matter thoroughly. We have reviewed our policy and have sought advice from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to determine any potential disciplinary actions that need to occur. We’ve been provided case law that is *cited below that helps guide our actions on this matter. More importantly, as shared over this entire week through multiple messages, we have an obligation to continue cultural awareness training and professional development, and to seek ways to better provide ongoing support to our students. To that end, we have already begun the work with our LRSD team. We have reached out to our partner, the City of Little Rock, and we have also sought advice and support from Just Communities, an organization that works to ensure that “every person is valued, every voice is heard and that everyone has a fair chance to succeed”. Future planning will need to include our faith-based organizations because we know it will take all of us working together to lift our schools and communities.

Events like we have witnessed this entire week, as well as the social media post by two of our students, don’t just vanish and cannot be ignored. Now is the time to build bridges, to listen and to learn. No matter how challenging and uncomfortable the subject, we must continue educating our children and each other about our shared history. The Little Rock School District reaffirms its commitment to continue efforts to be a model of inclusivity and to ensure that we are a positive reflection of the communities we serve. We will need your help to do that and we will keep you informed as we generate our plans for the 2020-21 school year.

Sincerely,

Mike Poore
Superintendent of Schools

*Neal v. Efurd (W.D. Ark. Feb. 18, 2005)*