Dear Glen Ridge School Community,

In the wake of the recent murder of George Floyd and the many historical and present-day acts of violence against African-American men and women, the Glen Ridge Public Schools wants to reaffirm our support of Black Lives Matter and all those who advocate for the changes that will put an end to those tragedies. As educators, we have a unique role to play in the battle for social justice, equity of opportunity, and reaffirmation of the dignity of all people—especially those who have been marginalized and brutalized on the basis of race. That role includes teaching the lessons of history, especially lessons pertaining to groups that have been left out of America’s story in the past. It also includes reinforcing all the themes that we have traditionally grouped under the heading of “character education”, including tolerance, kindness, empathy, respect for differences, and constructive resolution of conflict.

As protests take place across the country, our administrators and teachers are working together to find age-appropriate ways of discussing them with our students. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to your building administrators.

Over the past several years, we have provided training opportunities to help our faculty and administrators confront implicit bias and make our schools more welcoming for students and teachers of color. We have joined “CJ Pride” a group of human resources professionals and administrators from many New Jersey districts who have come together to increase the pool of qualified minority teaching candidates. We have also had conversations with minority parents to hear and discuss their concerns. We pledge to continue and increase those efforts.

The Floyd murder has brought us face to face, once again, with the reality that not all Americans—including some in positions of authority—respect the sanctity of every American’s life. The COVID-19 crisis has brought us face to face with the reality that many of our children have been denied the equity of opportunity that makes it possible for them to succeed in school and beyond. We stand with the individuals and groups dedicated to increasing equity of opportunity for every child, as well as those confronting and combating institutional and societal racism. As educators, parents, and community members, we will continue to make both parts of our core mission. We will move forward, mindful of the observation made by Frederick Douglass over one hundred years ago: “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dirk Phillips
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