

Dear Friends,

I am a white man and will never truly know the terror that the death of George Floyd and too many others stirs in the hearts of every black mother, father, sister and brother. I can only say my heart breaks to see another black man die while the people he should expect most to protect him ignored his cries for help. And as a white man with many black and brown family members, my fear has been reignited.

People in central Iowa, including the team at Des Moines Public Schools, have been working hard on issues of equity, but it is not enough. I stand with our students of color and the black community who peacefully protest for systemic change; to be accepted as individual persons with the same expectations of the community that I have; not as a threat to it, but as members of it. I certainly have that expectation for my black and brown nieces and nephews as well for the 20,600 students of color that I serve as an educator.

I stand with you not just in word, but in deed. If there is something that our school system is not doing – where I'm missing the mark – please talk to me. You can email me at [superintendent@dmschools.org](mailto:superintendent@dmschools.org).

We must speak the silent part out loud. Every day many of our neighbors, coworkers and students wake up knowing their day will be different than mine because of the color of their skin. This has always been unacceptable, and yet as a society we've allowed it to continue, content to simply be "not racist."

Many protest signs over the past few days have noted: Silence is Violence. I'm calling on our white community to be actively ANTI-racist. Call it out when you see a person of color being mistreated. Call it out when you're with a group of friends and someone makes a racist joke. Call it out in our businesses, neighborhoods, schools and even in our homes when it makes extended family dinners uncomfortable. Being an ally isn't just sharing memes and outrage on social media; it's taking action, listening to our brothers and sisters of color, and standing beside them.

We must all be a part of active change if we are to see any lasting change. Goodness knows we need it.

Dr. Thomas Ahart, Superintendent  
Des Moines Public Schools