

Statement on George Floyd Killing

June 01, 2020

By Felton Williams, Ph.D.
Board of Education President

The death of George Floyd, and the subsequent violence across our nation and in our communities, have deeply upset all of us in the Long Beach Unified School District. On behalf of our Board of Education, I want our students, alumni, families, employees and community partners to know that we stand with you during this national crisis, and we condemn the horrific murder of George Floyd. Even as we all continue to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, we must now help our young people cope, heal and learn in the face of heightened tensions and added uncertainties.

Long Beach's educational system – including our partners in higher education – serve as an anchor of opportunity and stability during troubled times. For thousands of students and their families, we provide a path out of poverty. We offer the antidote to ignorance, prejudice and fear, which threaten America's long-term health more than any virus.

As we have for the past 10 weeks of unprecedented school closures, we will continue to teach our students remotely, feed our families, provide internet access, and support students' emotional wellbeing despite the looming threat of deep budget cuts.

For decades, we have worked hard in local schools to ensure equity among our diverse student population. We are keenly aware of the pernicious societal inequities that can make learning difficult even during the best of times. The death of George Floyd, and the disproportional effect of the coronavirus among minority populations, have laid bare many of these inequities.

In our school district, 85 percent of our students are students of color. That is one of the things that makes LBUSD such a special place. Among our student body, 14 percent of our students are African-American, and a significant proportion of our African American students live below the federal poverty level. Despite these challenges, our African American students graduate at rates higher than the state average for all students combined, and multiple schools across LBUSD have closed the achievement gap between African American students and their counterparts. African American students from across our high schools regularly attend the top colleges and universities across the nation and use the Long Beach College Promise as a pathway to college completion. We are proud of our students' achievements, and we know that they and their classmates of all colors will go on to help make our world a better place.

We acknowledge this crisis as a painful reminder of how much more work needs to be done. At the same time, we double our resolve to continue serving as a beacon of learning, tolerance and hope.

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