

A Message from Superintendent Joe Gothard about the Death of George Floyd

George Floyd. It is important that I say his name. It is important that I say his name because his life matters. The legacy of his life and name matters. The brutal interaction that led to the death of Mr. Floyd was vile and disgusting. George Floyd. It is important that I continue to say your name.

I am outraged about the injustice I see against Black people, Black males in particular. I know this is not new, violence against Black people has existed during my entire lifetime, and many generations before. Yet, the injustice continues and leaves me concerned. Concerned for our students, our staff, our community, our world.

To our Black staff and leaders in SPPS, I am overwhelmed with emotion trying to say something, anything, that brings any semblance of comfort. I believe this is the time to share how we feel, how we hurt and express our desire for humane and decent treatment of our Black students and families, colleagues and friends, brothers and sisters.

To our White staff and leaders in SPPS, I believe you cannot sit in silence. To the committed allies in our SPPS community, of all races - speak up, speak out and remain vigilant in the fight against racial injustice. Support your colleagues, students and families. Though we are in the most unfortunate circumstances with distance learning, we must demonstrate a compassionate commitment to initiate connections. Connections that lead to healing and to initiate change.

SPPS is working in a distance learning environment to effectively create a support space for our students and our staff. I can assure you this is important and a priority.

As educators we see the beauty and potential in all of our young people. The dreams of our Black students must never be reduced by fear, intimidation, or our unwillingness to stand up for what is right.

As SPPS we stand against violence, discrimination and oppression in all forms. At the same time we stand together to support our students, staff and community to heal together even as we continue to demand justice.

Again I will say his name: George Floyd.

In partnership,

Dr. Joe Gothard, Superintendent
Saint Paul Public Schools