



THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

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ROBERT W. RUNCIE
Superintendent of Schools

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Broward County, Florida**

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June 1, 2020

Statement from Superintendent Robert W. Runcie

Issues of policing, race and equity are at the forefront of our national news and community dialogue. During the last few weeks of our current COVID-19 pandemic, we have been outraged at what the entire world has witnessed repeatedly on televised news cycles and social media outlets, resulting in stress and trauma for so many of our students, teachers, parents and community – the tragic and brutal murders of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia; and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky. Additionally, there are the racially-motivated behaviors and actions of Amy Cooper, who last week called police on a black man in New York City’s Central Park during an encounter involving her unleashed dog, and Patricia Ripley, who drowned her autistic son in a Miami canal last week and first blamed it on two black men. These incidents, as well as the many thousands of others, committed on people of color that have been captured on video or personally witnessed rekindle feelings of anger, anxiety and fear due to historical and generational racism and oppression.

Our youth have been watching all of this and are looking for ways to process the violence, loss and fear that they are experiencing. Broward County Public Schools will continue to provide a structured forum for our students’ young voices. We encourage our students to use their voices to promote positive change in our communities and nation. Some of our strategies in support of this goal include:

- The Office of Academics provides supplemental materials for programs, such as our Social Justice Debate Initiative.
- The Office of Student Support Initiatives & Recovery provides resources, articles and activities on our website Young Voices Matter, found on the Department of Equity & Diversity at www.youngvoicesmatter.net.
- Over 1,000 individuals have participated in “Courageous Conversations About Race,” including our teachers, administrators, School Board members, and non-instructional support staff, such as campus security staff, food service workers, bus driver and others.

- We have established *Equity Liaisons* in every school and academic department. They provide support for developing and implementing culturally responsive practices, implicit bias, trauma informed approaches, such as youth mental health first aid and social emotional learning strategies.
- Our school social workers, family therapists, counselors and school psychologists provide support and services to assist with the trauma associated with these and other issues.

I believe in the courage of our young people to seek truth and justice in our country and to take on our most pressing challenges, such as reforming our criminal justice system, having a national conversation to change the narrative and myths about black and brown people, and addressing inequities in education and healthcare.

Change is never easy, but it is surely possible.