

August 26, 2020 - Dr. Jenkins' Letter to MMSD Families

Dear MMSD Community,

Today, I am writing to you with a heavy heart and with a wide array of emotions. In my thirty years as an educator, and 54 years of life, the horrifying events of racial injustice we have had to bear witness to this summer have been among the most challenging situations I have experienced. I have repeatedly stated "I don't want to have the same conversations about safety with my African American grandson that my mother had with me". We have to demand a just and equitable society for our children and the generations who follow!

We stand with the city of Kenosha, our community, and our nation in collective grief over the most recent shooting of Mr. Jacob Blake and other African Americans who have been brutalized or died in incidents resembling modern day lynchings this spring and summer. For them and future generations, we stand up for human decency, and reject the notion any human being should suffer such horrific treatment. In the midst of the global health pandemic (COVID-19), and during a highly stressful time, the trauma over these acts continues to impact us all. Our hearts, minds and souls are struggling to understand these tragedies and injustices.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." As illustrated by Dr. King's words, these terrible acts of violence contribute to our society's collective anxiety, pain and trauma. During these times, we continue to be inundated with depictions of brutality, while divisive comments provide various explanations or justifications. Unfortunately, what is lost in our often polarizing discussions is the need to advocate for human decency, kindness and compassion.

Last night, I was humbled to be included in a group of community leaders who came together as neighbors and community members who love the city of Madison and its people. We came together in peaceful collaboration as human beings striving to confront our history and walk forward in solidarity on new paths as our community and nation face unprecedented challenges.

We can no longer afford to stay silent. As we look toward a better tomorrow, it is time for all of us to find the inner courage to constructively advocate for human decency. We can no longer differentiate between who is worthy of our constitutional aims of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" based on identity or characteristics such as race, culture, religion, etc.

We see you. We hear you. We stand with you. As a school community we continue this journey together guided by the ideals of our strategic framework.

Sincerely,
Carlton D. Jenkins, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Madison Metropolitan School District