

Dear Hiawatha Community School Families,

All of us are trying to make sense of the tragic event which occurred within our community this week. We once again find ourselves wrestling with the painful reality of losing another African American man, George Floyd, at the hands of the police. Seeing and hearing protesters marching through our neighborhood not too far away from our schools and our homes amplifies our feelings of anger, frustration, and hurt. I can't say I'm able to share something which can even start to touch on the magnitude of pain and suffering rippling through our society. But I do want to reach out to you.

Regardless of how close to home this tragedy was, it is sometimes difficult to find the words to explain this to ourselves and to our students. After speaking and exchanging messages with so many families closest to the Lake and Minnehaha area yesterday, I found myself once again understanding what makes our school such an amazing place. Each of the families I interacted with was heartbroken about what happened to Mr. Floyd while expressing how they were doing with regard to being so close to the protests. Believe me when I say, our staff would like nothing more than to see your children at school and help them process their feelings and questions.

As the Superintendent shared in his words at the Board Meeting this week, "Words are not enough, but words matter." One way you can make a difference each day is in the words we share with our children and making sure we do in fact talk.

Our Hiawatha school community is committed to raising resilient, empathetic, engaged citizens. Working together each day we strive to develop critical thinkers who are empowered to act responsibly with respect for self, community, and the world. This gives me hope.

Please utilize the linked resources to provide some guidance on how to support your students as they maneuver through the myriad of feelings they have right now.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support. We are stronger together. We do our children a disservice when they are not honored as human beings capable and deserving of these conversations. When done with compassion, love, an understanding of where they are as a person/their development, we are using our agency and building that of our children.

In Partnership,

Kevin Oldenburg - Principal

The following is borrowed from another Minneapolis principal colleague when supporting our children. Please use this as you see fit, and message me with any questions.

So what does that look like? For each of you, each child, it will look different, but here are some general tips:

- **Let their words and level of understanding guide you.** Consider what they should know/can handle at their age (see the resources below for ideas). And remember, our children often hear about things or sense our sorrow, so it is good to touch base in some way.
- **Listen**--honor their feelings and thoughts, remind them of strategies they've learned at school, re-visit some of the SEL lessons online.

- It is important to give them that **sense of agency**, so ask if there is something they would like to do in response to what happened. Share with them the work of leaders in our community to make a difference, particularly the strength and wisdom of Black leaders and people of color. Model for them that you are doing something and do something together.
- Please consider reading this book [Something Happened in Our Town](#)--it is appropriate for elementary aged children; however, it does require that you are there with them to process and be of support.
- And, as we have shared before, it is important to talk to our children about race and racism: [How to talk to kids about race and racism](#) & [PARENT'S GUIDE to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice](#)

Please feel free to reach out to us if your family would like any support. We know that this tragedy has touched many lives in unique ways.