

A message from Mary Jane Burke, Marin County Superintendent of Schools

June 1, 2020

Dear Marin County Community,

For the past two months, our county has come together to focus on health and safety related issues to pandemic guidelines and interventions. However, the troubling events of recent days also demand our attention and thoughtful response as a community. We each have a role to play to combat the tragedies that have unfolded in Minnesota and Georgia. This is a call to action to educate friends, neighbors, colleagues and children, to voice our outrage regarding injustice, and to demand respect for every human being regardless of race, ethnicity, and economic status.

Through the ongoing collaboration of law enforcement, schools and community agencies through the School and Law Enforcement Partnership, we jointly take the lead in publicly denouncing the actions of the police officer and resulting death of George Floyd. As demonstrated time and again in Marin County, our law enforcement officers have standards that require a higher level of integrity, fairness, compassion, and a duty to intervene should an injustice be witnessed. This stance is expressed in the May 29 article in the Marin IJ, "[Marin Chiefs appalled at how officer used force.](#)"

Teachers, support staff, administrators, and law enforcement officers participate in ongoing cultural competency trainings to identify and understand the structures that support racial profiling and to hold ourselves to a higher standard through anti-bias training in order to promote respectful, inclusive, and equitable practices. Thousands of individuals in Marin County have been trained to know how to recognize bias in themselves and in others, and to know how to work toward eliminating bias with their voices. It is time for us to use the tools we have learned to take action.

Now is the time that we all should join together to do our part. Peaceful protests showing solidarity in our commitment to "be the change" are critical. There is no room for violent and destructive behavior that is occurring across the United States.

The first step we can take is to educate and raise our voices on behalf of our children. As adults, we are horrified to see the violent and unnecessary media footage. Can you imagine how the children are feeling? It is our job to model what a unified America must embody and teach our children to embrace the task of making equity a human right.

How can you make a difference to curtail racism and injustice?

1. Talk to your children with compassion about the pent-up frustration of the protesters so they know and understand the actions they are witnessing are a direct result of historical injustices.
  - [Teaching Tolerance provides resources for talking to kids about race and racism](#)
  - [HealthyChildren.org – Talking to Children about Racial Bias](#)
  - [Know your rights: Protester's Rights](#)
2. Read books together as a family to support conversations on race, racism, and resistance.
  - [Embrace Race: Read-aloud books for raising a brave generation](#)
  - [27 Books to help you talk to your kids about racism](#)

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3. Speak up when you are witness to an injustice or some form of racism. Silence only serves to support and promote deplorable acts.
  - [Six Steps to Speak Up](#)
4. Volunteering in diverse settings can help build a cultural competency and build a more inclusive society. Consider local opportunities that can build relationships and support people in need.
  - [Marin County Volunteering](#)
  - [SF Marin Food Bank](#)
5. Educate yourself through the eyes of those most impacted:
  - [Black parents describe “The Talk” they give to their children about police](#)
  - [Black Parents Know about “The Talk” – White Parents, It’s Your Turn](#)
  - [Raising Race Conscious Children](#)
  - [A Conversation on Race](#) - A series of short films about identity in America

Please continue this conversation and take action. Contact the Marin County Office of Education (Marin COE) with your questions, recommendations, and actions for our community. Mary Jane Burke [superintendentsoffice@marinschools.org](mailto:superintendentsoffice@marinschools.org) or on Twitter [@burkmaryjane](https://twitter.com/burkmaryjane). Get these and more resources by following the Marin COE on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/marincoe>.