



In this together: A message to our SDUC community

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
UNIVERSITY CITY
Transform the Life of Every Student Every Day!

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Dear University City Schools Community:

This is a traumatic and anguishing time for our students and families, for our community and for our country.

George Floyd's death while in the custody of Minneapolis police prompted so many emotions in me: anger, resentment, confusion, utter disbelief and simply disgust. This should not happen in 2020 to any human being, period.

Equally painful is the stress and trauma of police brutality during protesting and the raw emotions of fear and rage that arise from the chaos of looting - once again near our community. Not only am I processing horrific events that happened in the past week (some from just last night). I am also vividly recalling what happened in Ferguson nearly six years ago - a place where my mother lives just a few miles for the QuikTrip that burned to the ground on West Florissant Avenue. I am re-experiencing emotions from when Mike Brown was killed. I'm also processing what is happening now. And, to be honest, I'm somewhat numb.

I share these emotions with you because they are real and intense: A part of my humanity as a black woman and as a mother, and a part of my body's natural response to trauma and pain. I know how deeply this is causing turmoil for our students and families on so many emotional and physical levels. I know that you are hurting. And I am incredibly sad that COVID-19 has made it impossible for us to open our schools to your children as a place of emotional refuge and wellness. We've spent the past four years intentionally making our buildings safe spaces for our students to express their emotions and fears while confronting the stark harm of racism and trauma.

I am rooted in service to your children by the words of James Baldwin: "We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist."

Our reality remains. People of color and especially black people have not been valued as human beings in this country for centuries. Many of our students are not valued in our society despite their intelligence and great promise for our future. Again, now, more than ever, we must be strong and stay the course so that we can dismantle systems of oppression, racism, bigotry and sexism that plague our nation.

Please keep the Floyd family and our entire community in our thoughts. During these trying times, we must keep putting one foot in front of another in the spirit of love, equity and the vision of a brighter tomorrow. Please also remember to take care, and remind your children of the many practices they've learned in school about self care. Now is the time to put what they've learned to use for their own well-being. Also, I want to remind you about [The Peace Place](#), the District's hub of practical tools to help with mindfulness and relaxation.

Our school district remains your partner and your champion. I hold on to the vision that one day all of our children will be well.

In Service of Our Children,

Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, PHD, PHR
Superintendent

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