



# The Taft School

June 1, 2020

To the Entire Taft Community:

On Saturday morning, after watching the news of the protests across the nation following the killing of George Floyd, I sent a note (see below) to the faculty to remind them that even as we have been a remote school for two months and even as the spring term has ended, our commitment to our core values of equity, inclusion and respect does not end. Systemic racism — evident in the recent killings of unarmed black men and women including George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor — is a terrible reality that we will continue to educate around and against at Taft.

[Our work in affirming the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) is foundational and ongoing, and it informs what we do everywhere and at all times. And this hard and vital work is written into our most important documents, which guide our practices and breathe the deepest meaning into the school's mission.

Finally, my note to faculty was a reminder that we are privileged to teach at a school with extraordinary students—bright, committed, passionate—and we have been trusted to shape a generation of leaders who will be part of creating a more just and equitable world.

At moments like this, with our nation in terrible pain, we have to be crystal clear in our beliefs: that every member of our school and nation deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and equity. Racism, in all its forms, runs completely counter to all we stand for and will never be tolerated at Taft. As a school, we stand in solidarity with those who are disproportionately impacted by systemic racism. And our work in crafting community, where we are all connected to and accepting of each other, never ends.

Sincerely,

William R. MacMullen '78  
Headmaster

*The following message was emailed to all Taft faculty on Saturday, May 30.*

Colleagues:

A thousand times this spring I have longed for our campus community—for the simple, powerful fact that we live and learn together, on a small and intimate campus, where we can teach students every hour of the day and on every corner of campus, where we support each other as colleagues, and where we have opportunity to gather regularly as a school.

And as I watched the news last night and found myself troubled past sleep, and saw a nation already fatigued and fragile by the pandemic, convulse in protest at the latest example of police

brutality and the death of George Floyd, I thought: I wish we were together as a school.

If we were, we would do what we have always done at times like this in our service to students and our mission. We would have come together, with our diverse perspectives and experiences, as we have at other times when we experienced shared pain and confusion. We would have found ways in the classrooms, dorms, hallways and offices to talk with and listen to students. We would have seized teaching moments. We would have listened deeply.

And we would have affirmed our core values: service, respect, inclusion, equity, kindness, integrity.

We would have gathered in the faculty room and in Bingham and pointed to the most precious and enduring beliefs we hold and which serve as institutionally foundational.

We would have pointed to our DEI statement. Taft, we would remind ourselves, is an “intentionally diverse institution whose members work to acknowledge, respect and empathize with people of all identifiers.” We would identify, affirm and deepen the myriad ways we work to “foster these habits and dispositions in accordance with Taft’s mission to educate the whole student.” We would remind ourselves that this is shared work and how all “community members participate in and support equity and inclusion programming.” We would “strive to understand and combat symptoms and causes of systematic oppression” within and outside the academic curriculum. And everywhere on campus we would challenge ourselves to “affirm and honor the lived experiences of others.”

We would have pointed to the Portrait of the Graduate, the document which for twenty years has guided so much of our work. In it, we identify the skills, habits of mind and qualities we hope to create in our students through their entire experience at Taft, such that when they walk off the stage with a diploma in hand, they look like the portrait. We want them to be able to “consider a range of perspectives in order to develop a worldview that helps create a compassionate, inclusive and socially just community.” We hope that their days at Taft have led to the desire to “respect each individual by authentically, actively and engaging with diversity.” We have worked, as teachers, coaches, advisors, dorm parents, and directors, to instill practice such that they “reflect regularly...leading to a greater awareness of themselves as individuals and of their place in the world.”

We would have said that we are a community based on some shared values and beliefs, and perhaps most foundational is the belief that every member of our school—and nation and globe—deserved to be included, respected and valued. We would have said, “These things we believe in. Towards these beliefs we have shaped the educational experience. And to these values we must all be committed.”

All this I say now, and all this I would have said had we been in Bingham and all of us were gathered.

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