

April 16, 2021

To our students, families, staff and the greater Richfield community,

Throughout history, there have been times of increased struggle and heartache in the fight for social justice. The civil rights movement is not a chapter in History class. It is here and it is now.

As we read headline after headline about Black men and women being killed by police, about hate crimes towards the Asian community, about racial violence directed at the Latinx community, about increased violence experienced by members of the LGBTQIA+ community, about the continued exploitation of indigenous lands, about the continued discrimination experienced by members of our Muslim community, about the humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border and about the countless other acts of aggression toward marginalized people everywhere, we know that we still have a long, long way to go.

As educators, it is our job to support and empower students through these challenging times. To uplift them, to believe in them and to give them the tools they need to face the world as it is and to join us in the fight to make it a better place. We teach critical thinking, digital citizenship and other social-emotional skills that will help students now and into the future.

As a District, we will stand with our students and staff as they work for change. Whether that is through affinity groups, curriculum changes, policy updates or taking a knee at an athletic event. We will listen to and respect their voices when they tell us what they need or how we can do better.

We believe the rich and vibrant diversity of this community is one of our greatest strengths. But being a diverse community is more than just demographic data. It's people. And it takes work. It is taking time to build relationships, form bonds and truly get to know one another. It is having empathy for the experiences of others, no matter how different they may be from our own experiences. It is respect, compassion and understanding.

We are asking you to join us in this work. To make this world the place our children and grandchildren deserve, it will take all of us working together; students, families, school staff and community residents. All of us.

As we head into the next few weeks, there will be a verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial and we will learn more about the death of Daunte Wright. There will be protests and news reports. It will be overwhelming at times, especially for our Black students, families, staff and community members. We want you to know that we see you, we hear you and we support you.

As the civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer once said, “nobody’s free until everybody’s free.”

Sincerely,

Richfield Public Schools Leadership

Dr. Steven Unowsky, Superintendent  
Dr. Latanya Daniels, Assistant Superintendent  
Dr. Mary Clarkson, Executive Director of Special Programs  
Craig Holje, Chief Human Resources and Administrative Officer

Stacy Theien-Collins, Richfield High School Principal  
Maria Graver, Richfield High School Assistant Principal  
Carrie Vala, Richfield High School Assistant Principal  
Dr. Kasya Willhite, Director of Richfield College Experience Program  
Dr. Carlondrea Hines, Richfield Middle School Principal  
Ryan Finke, Richfield Middle School Assistant Principal  
Steven Flucas, Richfield Middle School Assistant Principal  
Colleen Mahoney, Centennial Elementary School Principal  
Marta Shahsavand, Richfield Dual Language School Principal  
Nancy Stachel, Sheridan Hills Elementary School Principal  
Amy Winter, Richfield STEM Elementary School Principal