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Learning Begins Now, Stop the Ignorance
Juneteenth
Friday, June 19, 2020

Good afternoon

On this celebration of Juneteenth, thank you to the High School East African American Culture Club for their efforts in setting up today's march, for ensuring their voices would be heard. Thank you Machayla for the invitation to join all of you. I am honored to stand together with our students this afternoon.

During the past few months life was put on hold in the midst of a pandemic as a new virus was streaking across the country. But in the midst of this pandemic, our nation has experienced unconscionable tragedies as we have borne witness to the senseless and needless killing of black Americans, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks and with the death of George Floyd broadcast and replayed, leaving an indelible imprint on our collective being. The shock and the atrocity of his death, at the hands of someone sworn to serve and to protect, has galvanized the resolve for us to come together to make real change – to address this virus of racism, this plague that has infected our country for more than 400 years since 1619. Today, and every day forward, we must and will stand up and declare, in words and our actions, that Black Lives Matter.

Our school district is entrusted with the education of more than 11,000 students each year. While we meet the state mandated requirements for content and curricula, we must and will do more.

The history that we teach to our students, across the grade level continuum must be an authentic reflection of our history, Black history is our history, and we must and will do more.

This summer, as a school district, we will undertake a full review of our enacted curriculum, to go beyond the framework of the Amistad curricula, with expanded requirements for teachers and students, and we must and will continue to do more.

Our school district has been recognized as a National District of Character, seventeen of our schools have been recognized as National Schools of Character, and we must and will do more.

It is not enough to admire what we have accomplished in the past while there is still so much that must be done, and we must and will do more.

Cherry Hill needs to be recognized as a district and a community that is anti-racist, where people are overt and direct in addressing racist language and racist behavior, where microaggressions and macroaggressions simply are not welcome or permitted, and we must and will do more.

I am grateful to Chief Monaghan, and the Cherry Hill Police Department for continuing to demonstrate in their actions their commitment to our students, our schools, and our community. We have worked together to enhance these relationships, students and teachers, children and adults, police and families, and we must and will do more.

I hope that you will all reflect on the words you hear today, on the images that you see and the solidarity that we share. This must remain part of the foundation of who we are as a community and a school district, and we must and will do more.

I am counting on our students to continue to be leaders, to use their voices and embrace their strength to make change to be a part of the solution in our community, making Cherry Hill better, seizing this opportunity to learn, and we must and will do more.

We must listen to our students, we must hear them, we must honor and understand how we can support them to make this change, and we must do more.

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We WILL do more. WE MUST.