



401 McIntire Road, Room 329
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902-4596
Phone: (434) 296-5877 Fax: (434) 296-5805
www.k12albemarle.org

Dear Members of the Community:

He said that if something wasn't done and, in a hurry, to bring black people out of their long years of poverty, their long years of hurt and neglect, the whole world is doomed. "It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world, it's nonviolence or nonexistence."

Dr. Martin Luther King said those words the night before he was murdered more than 52 years ago. Now, Dr. King's sadly prophetic words again have come true following the murder of another black man.

The choice offered up by Dr. King has a special relevance to our public schools, the place in which the promises that all men are created equal and all men are entitled unencumbered, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, are to be fulfilled. For that to happen, all students and all employees are entitled in our schools to equal opportunity to learn, to grow, to meet their highest potential. And they are entitled to achieve these goals safely, enthusiastically, warmly.

As a society, in our hearts, we know how to get there. The challenge is whether it will come from respecting and understanding one another, from treating one another with dignity and kindness, from honoring the contributions that come from our differences, from joining together in high purpose or whether it will come after repeatedly reliving the death and destruction we have seen far too many times in our cities and towns.

In the midst of the darkness that unfolds every time we turn on the television, open a newspaper or visit a web site, there is light. Two weeks ago, many of our students who wrote one of the few anti-racism policies of any school division in the nation, joined by their peers, hosted a community town hall on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our Black and Latinx populations. One, Naquell Perry, was invited to speak at the Governor's news conference on racial justice and equality, making the encouraging point that he and his peers are the future. This past weekend, close to 100 of our students illustrated the saliency of this point by peacefully demonstrating in support of racial justice and equality.

One of our students said about our anti-racism policy, "we do not want to chop down racism, we want to pull it out by its roots." That policy requires every member of our school division to be trained in its implementation and this will begin in the near future when members of the School Board will devote an entire meeting to their own training.

The poet John Donne often is quoted for writing that "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." We are less today because of the unconscionable death of George Floyd and of so many other innocent people of color over the past few years.



The Albemarle County School Board and our school division rejects all forms of racism as destructive to our mission, values and goals. If we are to realize Dr. King's hope that "the dark clouds of racial prejudice.... and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities,

Equality, justice, decency, must prevail. In our schools, in our communities, in our nation.

Only then, as Dr. King said, will "the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

Please stay safe.

Jonno Alcaro
School Board Chair

Dr. Matthew Haas
Superintendent