

FEARLESS  THINKERS  
SINCE 1885

June 4, 2020

Dear Students, Parents & Families,

The past ten days have been trying times for our country. I am sure many of you, like me, have been grappling with emotions ranging from despair to fear to outrage.

Last week the death toll of COVID-19 in the United States surpassed 100,000. This virus has changed the way the world has operated. I know that scientists and medical professionals are working to eradicate the disease from our world. In the meantime, we will continue to operate in this new normal.

On May 25, George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police officers. Americans have expressed their outrage through protests, riots, and demonstrations, in cities and towns across the United States, including here in Yellow Springs. But unlike our current health situation, I am not sure our country or communities will recover from an event like the death of George Floyd. Or Ahmaud Arbery. Or Breonna Taylor. Or Philando Castile. Or Samuel Dubose. Or Timothy Thomas. This list could go on. This cannot be our normal.

Educators are often told not to talk about politics or highly controversial public events. Some argue that we teach all children and our own personal beliefs should not get in the way. But teaching is a personal act. Education is not neutral. How do we teach our children if we cannot talk to them openly and honestly about issues and problems they see with their own eyes? We cannot be neutral about the death of another person of color at the hands of law enforcement. We cannot be neutral about the injustices that we see, about the injustices in a system of which we are a part, about the injustices our very own fearless thinkers of color face every day. Honoring the humanity in all of us is our responsibility. Teaching children to be better humans, through word and action, is our responsibility. The teachers, staff, and administrators take very seriously the responsibility to teach the children of Yellow Springs to be future ‘upstanders,’ activists, and empowered, engaged citizens.

I have done much personal reflection this week, and personally, here are things I know for sure:

- I have absolutely no insight into the black experience or the experience of being a person of color in the United States.
- I can be an ally.
- I can act from my position of privilege and use my voice.
- I can educate myself to become actively “anti-racist” (Kendi, 2019) in thought, word, and action.

Professionally, here are things I know for sure:

- It is the absolute responsibility of Yellow Springs Schools to look inward, examine, and then dismantle any practices that reinforce racist attitudes and beliefs, however unintended and unconscious they may be.
- It is the calling of Yellow Springs Schools, stemming from the social activist history of this village, that we lead this work.
- It is the duty of Yellow Springs Schools to teach our students, through the power of inquiry, to be change agents in the world in which we live.

Our children are watching. The words we speak and the actions we take reflect to them what we value. We believe that in our schools, we are growing “fearless thinkers”. As the adults in their lives, we must be brave and fearless in our thinking as well. We must begin to have difficult conversations in our homes and in our communities. We must model for them that when we encounter injustices, we must act. We must commit to educating ourselves, to deepen our understanding of the experiences of others, to become anti-racist allies.

This summer, many teachers and staff members will participate in a book study to begin the work to address the biases that exist in our thinking so that we might better serve all the students in our community. Later this summer, I will invite you to join us in this work: a community-based book study so that we might begin to enact change beginning right here in our village.

As always, thank you for your support of Yellow Springs Schools. We cannot do it without you.

Stay safe. Stay strong. Stay courageous. Stay fearless.

Best,



Dr. Terri L. Holden  
Superintendent

