

***“How long do you want me to wait for your progress?” - James Baldwin***

Enough. I have seen and had enough. I was outraged as I watched coverage of the horrific murder of George Floyd in my hometown of Minneapolis. I am disgusted and condemn the injustices that continue for all people, especially my African-American brothers and sisters, who once again woke to unspeakable violence. When is it going to stop? Mr. Floyd’s murder follows other recent murders of Black people, at a time when so many Black people were already disproportionately bearing the burden, and struggling with loss, illness, and economic devastation of decades of intentional and unintentional structural racism and now, this worldwide pandemic. We cannot look away any longer. We must confront this head on.

Now is the time for us to take responsibility, step up, and lead. At the Boston Public Schools (BPS), we are profoundly committed to ensuring every one of our students is seen, heard, educated, and loved. We are working everyday to meet our students’ individual and unique needs, and directing our resources to those who need them most. We have been examining every policy, curriculum, strategy, and decision through an equity lens this past year and we are committed to eliminating the systemic barriers in our own existing policies and practices.

We are doing everything it takes so each child and each staff member in each school is respected, every difference is honored, all cultures and languages are celebrated, and everyone has a true home in our school buildings. But that is just the beginning of the change we must forge together, because it is the adults who create the conditions in which children succeed and we must support each other as we work together to support our children, their families, and our entire community. We are looked upon to lead and we must lean into this moment and lead courageously.

I am grateful for the leadership of Mayor Walsh who released [this video message](#), and organized a vigil service at City Hall with religion leaders from across Boston on Saturday. As we come together as a community and process our shared feelings of frustration, anger, and profound sadness, we must provide safe spaces for our students, staff, and families to discuss their emotions, receive support, and be together in community.

We need your partnership, and I ask you to join me in answering this call to action. But first, I hope you will take the time you need to take care of yourself, and tend to the health and well-being of your families. BPS and the City of Boston have counseling and other supports available for all staff. More information is available [here](#).

There are also comprehensive supports available for students through their school or through BPS. You can learn more [here](#). BPS and our schools will be hosting a series of affinity groups to gather virtually to have thoughtfully facilitated, open conversations, and identify areas where we need to do more work. It is important to create safe spaces where Central Office and school-based staff of common racial and ethnic identities can connect, reflect, share resources, and hone and accelerate our individual and collective anti-racism efforts. Details will be provided shortly through the Central Office listserv or from your school leader.

We will also provide resources to schools to hold age-appropriate discussions with students. I will send a letter to our families and middle and high school students later today offering our support, and letting them know that many of our educators will create opportunities for those discussions. If you have ideas

about other steps BPS can take to support our staff, students and families in the coming days and weeks, please write to [communications@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:communications@bostonpublicschools.org).

I look forward to your valuable input and partnership as we help our community heal and continue our pursuit of peace, justice and equity. We are each challenged to find ways to respond in our hearts and out in the world, while ensuring that we value our own safety, and the safety of those we love, including and especially our Black and Brown students.

It is understandable to feel a sense of hopelessness or of being overwhelmed by it all, but with our collective spirit and by joining hands, we can and will not only get through this but together build a fairer and more just tomorrow.

Be safe. Peace.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda".

Brenda

