**Statement in Response to the Death of George Floyd**

June 16, 2020

Dear ASD Community,

The Anchorage School Board joins with those in our community and our nation who are saddened and outraged by the incomprehensible death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His is one of many deaths of other Black Americans who have died as a result of excessive police force. These acts of violence have become all too common and are fueled by systemic racism and reckless disregard for human life. These deaths have been devastating to witness, and we remain concerned for the lasting impact they may have on all of us, most importantly our young people.

The Anchorage School Board remains committed to the health and safety of ***all*** of our students. However, this moment in our national consciousness compels us to reassure our black and brown students and families that their lives and experiences matter! Collectively, we condemn the long history of racism, injustice, and inequities in our community and across our country.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his ‘Letter from a Birmingham Jail, *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”*

This situation requires that we speak out, stand up, and take action against any form of racism, injustice, or abuse of power that threatens the success and safety of any student.

More than reactively condemning these repeated tragedies, we will do all we can to prevent the next one. We are prepared to push back against hatred, discrimination, and violence. The equity work in our district must boldly continue within our schools and take further actions to ensure justice and better outcomes for all students. To this end, we commit to:

* Developing anti-racism policy that will translate into programs and practices that will eradicate injustice and discrimination in our schools. This will include an ongoing review of our current policies and educational approaches to ensure all students have opportunities to learn about each other, to respect each other, to value each other, and to create a more equitable and kinder world;
* Drafting and enacting an equity policy that represents collective goals and guides our District’s equity work;
* Ensuring that our students have safe learning environments and systems of support that are equitable and free of racial and other forms of discrimination;

* Monitoring our instructional outcomes and systems of support to identify opportunities and removing any barriers that intentionally or unintentionally impact the opportunities of students based on the color of their skin.

* Listening to community voices to understand concerns and hopes for just and equitable education. With these voices in mind, we will then work together toward progress that will promote our mutual and interdependent goal to educate all students for success in life;
* Pushing back against hatred, discrimination, and violence;
* Making certain that the most vulnerable and underrepresented in our care learn and thrive in an environment that is just, free of fear, and filled with opportunities and systems designed to lift them up.

Finally, we extend care and empathy to all who are experiencing anger, heartbreak, fear, and trauma, as they process Mr. Floyd’s death. We know that many are mourning with a sorrowful truth that it could one day be their own loved one who is killed. We commit to listening and learning from those who experience racism and will take responsibility for our own actions and inactions in allowing racial injustice in our learning community. But we cannot do it alone. We invite the community to partner with us as we work to improve our educational system. There is a way forward – a path filled with hope, and together we can press on toward a more peaceful and just future.

Sincerely,

Elisa Vakalis, President

Margo Bellamy, Vice President

Andy Holleman, Clerk

Starr Marsett, Treasurer

Alisha Hilde

Dave Donley

Deena Mitchell