



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING


GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 5, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent 

SUBJECT: Coming Together for Michigan Students and Educators

The recent killing of George Floyd was a tragedy. It is the latest in a long series of killings of African Americans—and particularly black men—in our country. It is an outrage and should be cause for pause, reflection, anger, and action.

No one person or group is responsible in our society for the racism that led to the killing of George Floyd—and of many others before him. That said, we are all responsible for reflecting upon how we might build a better world from this point forward.

Schools are but one part of a much larger world. Those like us who believe in schools—and especially in public schools—believe that schools can change lives...and do every day. We as educators must continue to re-think what we do in our schools to consider how we can help to root out racism. We need to go beyond tolerance and acceptance to inclusion. We need to recognize that difference is richness, and not stigma.

I want to bring together a group of educators this summer to help reflect upon how we as educators can become more inclusive in our work with children. At the same time, I want to reach out and engage students for their thoughts, so that we can better inform guidance about how educators work with the 1.5 million children in 831 school districts and thousands of schools across the state.

I am asking for your help in connecting me with educators and students to bring individual and collective experiences and wisdom to this conversation. I am looking for a representative group that reflects the diversity in this state – diversity of race, geography, ethnicity, culture, disability, and native language, among other characteristics. I am especially interested in connecting with educators and students who are already engaged in efforts to create more inclusive, more welcoming, less divisive local school communities.

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You are invited to suggest an educator and/or a student whom you think would be open, honest, constructive, and informative, and is willing and available over the summer to be included in this developing reflection. Please submit your recommendation(s) (names, contact information, and a bit of background on why you've made the recommendation) via [this survey form](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MDERacismAdvisoryGroup) by Friday, June 19. (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MDERacismAdvisoryGroup>)

Thank you for your commitment to this important and essential dialogue and, by extension, whatever guidance or other product that emanates therefrom. Thank you for your enduring commitment to our children. To paraphrase Robert Frost, "We have miles to go before we sleep." And to quote Frederick Douglass, "Those who profess to cherish freedom yet deprecate agitation want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

cc: Michigan Education Alliance
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors