

April 20, 2021

Dear Families,

Last year, a police officer put his knee on George Floyd's neck for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds, but to me, it felt like an eternity.

I felt pain and rage, deep in my bones. It wasn't a new feeling. I have felt that many times in my life, as a Black woman, sister, daughter, and mother to Black children—and as an educator who has served children of color in this city for more than 20 years.

That pain, rage, and fear has been present throughout the trial of the officer who killed George Floyd. I feel like I have been watching George Floyd die again and again, renewing the tragedy each time, as the jury and the nation have confronted what happened in the pursuit of justice for Mr. Floyd—and the family who is forced to go on without him.

And now, the first step toward justice has been served.

For me as a Black woman, for my brothers, for my mother and aunts who lost their brother to police violence, getting to justice is so important.

For our Black and brown children to know that they matter, the accountability this verdict represents is so important.

In a world that too often tells them otherwise, accountability in this moment tells the Black and brown children in our schools that their lives matter, and lifts up the importance of their futures.

This is what anchors the work we do in schools every day—why we are so focused on creating welcoming, loving environments for all our children. We want to make sure that each child doesn't just hear, but feels that they are important. We want them to feel that their teachers and school community value their past and present experiences, as well as their dreams for the future.

For more than 20 years, I have experienced the sensitivity and wisdom of children—they know what's going on, even those who may not be able to put it into words. They can feel the energy of the world around them. So we are making sure our schools are safe spaces for students to share their feelings. Every school is receiving resources to help facilitate open conversations and ensure our children have their questions heard.

We also have mental health support in place for our students, teachers and staff to help grapple with any feelings that emerge. Because while the individual who took George Floyd's life will be held accountable, we recognize that systemic racism, and the violence it fuels, is still creating tragedy and inequality across our country every single day. We are all part of the work to undo this harm and reach true justice.

As you take care of yourselves and your loved ones the best you can, know that we are here in your corner, affirming the importance of our children's future, each and every day. And that will never change.

In partnership,



Meisha Porter
New York City Schools Chancellor

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