



NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 3, 2020

To: Nebraska Public School Superintendents, Non-Public School Superintendents, and ESU Administrators
CC: State Board of Education, Commissioner's Cabinet, and NDE Leadership

I am saddened by the events that recently occurred in Minneapolis with the senseless death of George Floyd and join those who express their concerns through peaceful means in public protest. I also recognize the protests over the past week are not simply in response to recent violence against the African American community, but they are a manifestation of frustrations spawned from generations of racism, disenfranchisement, and marginalization realized by many of our community members and students across the state.

The role of education is a system for change and improvement. As the pandemic continues to unfold, we see the power and place schools have in their communities. Standing idly by during this time is not responsible. We, in education, have an opportunity to hear voices that are too often excluded from developing education policies reflective of our diverse communities. We must create space to genuinely and intentionally embed racially diverse perspectives into our conversations and actions.

For the past three years, the Nebraska Department of Education has been highlighting “equity.” The events of the past few nights have clearly exhibited the need to move from aspirational messages of approaching equity to specific actions designed to identify and confront inequities.

One third of Nebraska students identify as a student of color. Our students across the state become our future teachers, leaders, businesspeople, policymakers, doctors, lawyers, police officers, and productive workforce overall. The conversation about racial inequities must occur everywhere to prepare our students in every corner of the state to better face the challenges of our nation. This cannot fall solely on those who have suffered discrimination but to all of us as educators and citizens of a peaceful state and nation. I encourage all Nebraskans to reflect and develop a critical consciousness and sense of responsibility for action for this generation of students and the generations that follow.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is committed to leading and supporting all Nebraskans in learning, earning, and living. This starts with an unabashed commitment to action for racial justice. Here's how we plan to do that in the education space:

1. Engage students, educators, families, and communities who are historically marginalized.
2. Promote active [anti-racist teaching and leading](#) and commit to culturally relevant standards, pedagogy, and materials.
3. Provide resources to support productive conversations and safe and welcoming environments at the classroom level.
4. Emphasize future investments to address trauma-informed care and restorative justice.
5. Continue to insist upon accountability for student group performance, and supporting schools in tailoring services for student groups.
6. Address the goal of racial parity at NDE and in the educator workforce statewide.

In the end, we are building a society everyday through the education of Nebraska's students. Our future is dependent upon the effort we put forth today.

Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education