



## Torrington Public Schools

Dear Families,

It was 57 years ago, during his memorable “I Have a Dream” speech that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” As a nation, we have watched the senseless and violent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, and we must acknowledge there is still much work to be done to address these issues.

Last Wednesday night, the protest in Coe Park reflected the outrage felt by citizens across the country and the world. Mayor Carbone, State Representative Michelle Cook, Chief Baldwin, Effie Lucas and Angaza Mwando a member of the Cultural Affairs Committee and the group *Our Culture is Beautiful*, along with many staff and students were present and echoed the message that we can and will do better. Chief Baldwin and his officers set a respectful tone while they interacted and supported participants. In an interview, Chief Baldwin acknowledged police officers throughout the nation need more training to continue to serve and support our communities. As a school district, we condemn all acts of hate, violence and senseless brutality. Our goal is to provide a welcoming and safe environment for all, while fostering an environment that encourages free speech and embraces the diversity of our community.

Last year, in his graduation speech, THS Teacher of the Year, Rick DuBois identified our diversity as our strength here at Torrington Public Schools. Students are exposed to different cultures and many languages which enhances their ability to begin to see themselves as a part of a global community. As a district, we strive to create a culture of respect, compassion and empathy. **Compassion** is the ability to feel for another living being. **Empathy** is the ability to not only understand another's feelings, to put yourself in their shoes and imagine what they're going through in that situation. We want our students to learn both empathy and compassion during their daily interactions in a supportive environment at school. Continued education is the key to creating these changes. While our staff has undergone unconscious bias and cultural awareness training, courageous conversations need to be ongoing for us to move forward and create the kinds of change that are necessary and meaningful.

We will continue to teach our students to accept people each other, to think critically, and to develop empathy and compassion. Those efforts will continue to strengthen our community and begin to build a brighter future for all our children. If we can achieve this, then as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said so eloquently so many years ago, “we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood (and sisterhood).”

Sincerely,

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