Dear SPS staff,

I am sure that all of us have been struggling with how to deal with our feelings of anger, weariness, frustration, and sadness. It has been a week of horrific images and a replay of many incidents in our country’s racist history. It has surfaced long standing trauma for many and brought up past scars of historical suffering and pain.

Some people would say they feel powerless and don’t know what to do. They are wrong. Every person has a responsibility, and is empowered, to make positive change. As educators, we must realize that this fight to become an anti-racist organization and to make sure our Black and Brown children and young people thrive is completely within our power. Each of us is empowered to change our practices, our activities, and our structures so African American boys and young men flourish. We must commit to this mission and dig in and do the hard work of undoing the legacies of racism in our system. If we do not take this most important moment to live out the values and commitments in our strategic plan, we will have failed. Public education is the mechanism that can make positive change for our city, our state, and our country.

We are all part of public education for varied reasons. I have to believe that SPS is full of educators, leaders, and staff who are hopeful for a better tomorrow. That we believe the next generation will be smarter and more compassionate and better than us. I have to believe that all of us want to work together to dismantle our racist practices, to center racial equity in all that we do, and to empower our young people to take the lead.
We have to believe in Black Excellence. We have to believe in each of our students. And together, we need to actively build a counter narrative to our current story about Black boys - a counter narrative to the racism and bias Black students experience every day. We need to be a school system that LOVES Black boys and youth and focuses not on fixing students, but on disrupting and fixing the racist systems that marginalize and limit them.

Finally, we must create a more powerful vision of what our society should be and can be. We cannot forget the atrocities we witnessed this week. To our staff and students of color, particularly our African American community, please know that we see you and we support you. Seattle Public Schools commits to do better by all of you.

Denise

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