

A note to SPS students from Superintendent Juneau



Office of Public Affairs
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To: Office of Public Affairs



Dear SPS Students:

I want you to know that as the leader of this school district, I see you, I believe in you, and I am with you.

This country has a long history of oppressing people of color, especially Black and African American people. The last couple of weeks, we have seen these demonstrations of systemic racism on full display across our country, to the point of murder of Black people. I share in the horror and sadness of the violence displayed by the police systems across the country, and by some officers here in our own city.

Our schools should be places where young people from every background, skin color, zip code, and country come to learn and feel empowered. The Seattle Public Schools strategic plan, *Seattle Excellence*, the document which guides the decisions made for the district, is focused on fixing the systems in education to undo the legacy of racism in public education. The systems and structures built in the founding of this country were put in place to keep certain voices quiet, and for far too long, those systems have been successful. I want you to know that the leadership of the school district is committed to lifting up the voices of each and every one of you. Each of you come into our schools with your own story, strengths, and needs, and we are here to support you and help you succeed in your goals; not to fix you, not to change you, not to assimilate you.

To our Black students: as a Native woman, our histories and present-day experiences are interwoven. We come from communities of resistance and resilience. We come from greatness and strong communities rich with culture. Despite their best efforts, we ARE still here. Please know that I stand with you during this time and will continue to fight for a more just tomorrow, for a better future for you.

This last week may turn out to be one of the biggest moments toward racial equality in this country's history. You are our current and future leaders. It has been a powerful experience watching you take to the streets and making your voices heard. I stand alongside each and every one of you. We must all work to create a more powerful vision of what society should and can be – and this work begins with us by naming and dismantling anti-Black racist practices in education and empowering you to take the lead. I am here to lead this work in Seattle Public Schools.

Very few things about the year 2020 have turned out the way we envisioned or planned for. To this year's high school seniors, especially, I know this is not how you hoped to spend your last year with SPS. I have seen so many examples of leadership and courage among the young people in Seattle, I am optimistic for the future of Seattle, and the world, and I know you will go on to create and do amazing things.

I hope we will be able to be together in person soon.

Thank you for your resilience and spirit.

Denise

Denise Juneau
Superintendent

