



Colchester Public Schools

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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Colchester Schools Families,

Recent events, including the death of George Floyd, have made it difficult for our children and students to escape the violence shown on TV, the internet, and social media. It can be very difficult for young people to make sense of all of these events. It has also been difficult for adults to process, but we know that we have an obligation to our children to help them understand these events and learn from them. As a parent, I have taken the time to connect with my children about these issues to make sure they were able to talk through what they have seen or heard. I am encouraging you, parents and caregivers, to discuss these recent events with your children, and, as necessary, reach out to our support services for help (information below). In addition, I am asking all of our instructional staff to find teachable moments in the remaining weeks of school to help students discuss and process what is happening in an age-appropriate manner. In normal times, our schools provide a foundation for students to share their thoughts and concerns with peers and adults. With our physical separation this is difficult, but I want to assure you that our staff is ready to support the community. Please tell your children that they can contact any trusted adult in our district if they are seeking help, and you can do the same.

In the coming days and weeks, the District will work with our instructional staff and provide them with resources to support students process these events. Many resources are included at the end of this message. The District will also work collaboratively in the coming months with all stakeholders to determine how to embed meaningful conversation in our daily instruction and support the community as a whole. We welcome ideas for how Colchester Public Schools can further support our students and families in growing as a diverse community; look for opportunities for discussion starting this summer.

We are living in difficult times. However, respect for others and embracing diversity in our community, including diversity of thought, are some of our core values. Colchester's strength lies in its unity in community spirit, and we must teach children to be caring and tolerant. We are challenged now more than ever to feel connected to each other, and our children continue to face the challenges intensified by social distancing. My own four daughters are struggling with both the pandemic and the disturbing incidents that have occurred over the past week and months. So I share with you what I have shared with them: that it is important to remember we are not powerless during these challenging times. We can make change happen - both at the institutional level and at a personal level.

Please be safe.

Jeffrey E. Burt
Superintendent of Schools

Resources

CPS Mental Health Contacts:

Colchester Elementary School

- Kathy Wonderly, School Psychologist, kwonderly@colchesterct.org
- Amy Rau, Social Worker, arau@colchesterct.org

Jack Jackter Intermediate School

- Amy Leonard, School Psychologist, aleonard@colchesterct.org
- Meaghan Helmbrecht, Social Worker, mhelmbrecht@colchesterct.org
- Carissa Capozzi, Social Worker, ccapozzi@colchesterct.org

William J. Johnston Middle School

- Dr. Jennifer Korczak, School Psychologist, jkorczak@colchesterct.org
- Meg Lewis, School Counselor, mlewi51@colchesterct.org
- Michelle Yoder-Gerow, School Counselor, myode55@colchesterct.org
- Susan Silverman, Social Worker, ssilv52@colchesterct.org

Bacon Academy

- Julia Spencer, School Psychologist, jspencer@colchesterct.org
- Kellie Cirillo, Social Worker, kcirillo@colchesterct.org
- Jennifer Kutia, Social Worker, jkutia@colchesterct.org
- Cynthia Gillette, Social Worker, cgillette@colchesterct.org
- Melanie Wehrenberg (A-F), School Counselor, mwehrenberg@colchesterct.org
- Sharon Gagne (G-N), School Counselor, sgagn509@colchesterct.org
- Ashley Zaugg, (O-Z), School Counselor, azaugg@colchesterct.org
- Ronald Sefchik (9th Grade), School Counselor, rsefchik@colchesterct.org

Online Resources for Adults and Children:

[10 Tips for Helping Children Cope with Disaster](#)

The Children's Community School in Philadelphia resource page here:

<http://www.childrenscommunityschool.org/social-justice-resources/?fbclid=IwAR37PWDJSNV3HiG5Rp9sgezRAW80UtggMrCfntubK6euibscUgsw4607fAQ>

More Articles and Tips for Parents and Caregivers:

[Anti-Racism For Kids 101: Starting To Talk About Race](#)

[Here's How W. Kamau Bell Talks About Race With His Kids](#)

[100 Race-Conscious things you can say to your child to advance racial justice](#)

[Article on Raising Race-Conscious Children](#)

[4 Things We Should All Teach Kids About Racism Right Now](#)

Great Educational Podcast for Adults on the History of Race in America

[Seeing White Series on Scene On Radio](#)

For Teachers & Educators:

[Teaching Tolerance: Race & Ethnicity](#)

Books for Adults:

[So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo](#)

