



June 1, 2020

Dear Families,

What a sad time to be writing to you. Our country is experiencing a global pandemic, an economic recession stretches ahead of us and the racial injustice within our criminal justice system, our economic system, and our health care system, has led and continues to lead to the disproportionate loss of innocent lives within our black communities and all our communities of color. This cannot and should not be tolerated. Some are asking why such a reaction of this magnitude now. Many are screaming in anger and in pain that they have been fighting this fight for centuries.

My hope is that this time will be different. That we focus on the need to not let this expression of outrage be for naught and to use this moment to actually make the changes in all our systems that so desperately need to be made. So often these protests have not changed a thing and we quiet down and wait for the next injustice. We swallow the narrative that it is just a few bad apples in our police force or in our schools, or in our workplace. This is a false narrative. Racism is woven into the structure of our institutions and systems. We need to fight for the systemic changes that make these injustices impossible and hold those who engage in them accountable. We cannot deny the need, we cannot rationalize the need, and we all have a responsibility to act. No matter your political perspective, what is happening in our country to our people of color within every system is wrong and needs to be righted. We cannot have our families of color have to fear the systems that are supposed to protect them. We have to use this moment of rage and anger to make change. Racism is everywhere and experienced by our families of color every day. This is reality.

We within TPA are beginning to go through a period of self-examination to make sure that we are not implicitly or explicitly working with our youth and families with bias and inequity. We are challenging each other and we are examining ourselves. I have personally found it difficult to entertain that there was racism within our structure. Certainly we are better than that. But I know that I am wrong and that we need to engage in this process of examination to ensure that we uphold and exhibit equity in all our practices. This is a necessary process for us to engage in

not once or twice, but always and through an on going practice of reflection, education, collaboration, and change. Everyone needs to affect the spaces and communities they occupy to do better. And we must do so in a way that helps us come together, and does not divide us further. That is the place from which hope for a better future can live.

My initial intent in writing this final school update letter to you was to say goodbye to you all with blessings and gratitude. My heart is aching for so many reasons but I am trying not to let it cloud the beauty that I see within our community and our students. I am proud to have been part of this community, I am grateful for having had the privilege of knowing you and working with you all, and I am confident that TPA will continue the values and mission that have guided us for so many years. The pandemic has brought out the best in all of us and while it has distanced us physically from each other, it has brought us closer as a community. We certainly appreciate all the support our families have been providing to our students as they work through their school day. Dr. Laura Phillips, our founder, would have been proud to see where we have come and I am sure that I will be equally proud many years from now, when I see where Nicole and our school community have traveled. They say the sign of a good leader is that they leave an organization that can run without him or her or them. I am not sure this is of my doing, but I know we have so much talent, commitment, and goodness in the TPA community, that I know this will be the case.

It is hard for me to leave this community at a time of crises, but it is also important to know when it is time for one to leave an institution and to turn its leadership over to new energy, new ideas, and new vision. It is with this knowledge that I say farewell and express, once again, my deep love for you all.

Esther