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June 9, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

The Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Administrators of California stand united with students, staff, families, and the Black community who experience racial bias, hatred, violence, and discrimination. Words are insufficient to express the pain, helplessness, and anger many are feeling. Our hearts go out to the children, who have been trying to process this at home.

With equity, tolerance, respect, and justice as a few of our association's core values, SELPA leaders work to ensure anti-racism is explicitly and implicitly embedded in our schools, communities, and relationships. We believe it is our moral duty as educators to recognize racism, name it for what it is, and be courageous in honest conversations with our students, families, and colleagues about fighting racism, injustice, and inequality.

SELPA leaders are prepared to respond with boldness and conviction in addressing the systemic bias and institutional racism that exists in many parts of society.

SELPA leaders are committed to engaging in work that provides access, creates opportunities, and focuses on inclusion for all children. This work includes an explicit acknowledgment that the lives of our Black children are exponentially impacted by institutional racism and discrimination, which must be stopped. As educational leaders, we believe it is our responsibility to lead the work for social justice.

While we do not have all of the answers, we are committed to making change. We must all come together as a people. We must embrace civic learning and empower young people to understand the mechanisms of their government. And, when we look back to 2020, may we find that our call to action resulted in a tipping point toward making our society more loving, tolerant and just.

Ending racism is a shared burden all educational leaders carry. Advocating that Black lives matter, giving priority to the lives that have been marginalized and brutalized, is embedded in our knowledge that all children matter. We lend not only our words of support but our commitment to roll up our sleeves and do the work.

We are the passionate voices for change. Our children are counting on us. The future depends on how we respond at this moment. We must make our voices heard. As a united people, we must make a change for the better.

Today, we reflect, and we mourn for George Floyd, his family, and too many others whose lives and whose stories were needlessly cut short by unnecessary police violence. Tomorrow, we will summon the strength to carry on and truly become the change we wish to see in our lives and the lives of our children.

We are ALL in this together!

Susan Coston, Chair