



TO: Academy High families

FROM: John W. Carpenter, Head of School

RE: Statement of Support for 'Black Lives Matter'

DATE: October 23, 2020

Dear Academy High community,

The end of our First Quarter offers us time for reflection. While there is much to be proud of with regard to the School's progress this fall, there is one important area in which I fear the School has fallen short of its mission: Helping our students make sense of the larger events that have consumed our nation these last few months-- particularly the Black Lives Matter movement. What is happening at this moment in our country is of historic importance, and as a school we have not just a right but a responsibility to help students participate in these larger national conversations. Students look to adults in times of crisis to help them make sense of the world, and I worry that some families may have interpreted our silence to this point as an attempt to avoid this issue. Nothing could be further from the truth. When George Floyd died in the hands of Minneapolis police this May, Academy High was in the midst of transitioning between heads of school. Dr. Pascavage and I spoke this spring about the importance of Academy High issuing a formal declaration of support of Black Lives Matter, but in the final rush to the end of the school year and preparations for my arrival on July 1st this moment was lost. I deeply regret this, and want to offer now my sincere apologies to everyone who looked to the School to lead on this vitally important issue. Thankfully, Academy High is blessed with an incredible faculty whose care, courage, and commitment to our students and families remind me of my own responsibility to address important issues within our community.

Today offers us an opportunity to get it right: As a school charged with educating the next generation of leaders, we stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matters and our Black and Brown families during this time of great national, social, and political unrest. In doing so, Academy High joins over 1,200 fellow-member National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and countless public schools across the country who openly condemn racism and recognize that the senseless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and too many others are but the latest in a long series of outrages that have inflicted grief, anger, pain, and frustration across our communities. Our position also reflects our fundamental obligation to provide a physically, socially, and emotionally safe learning environment where each student feels fully seen, heard, and appreciated for who they are and what they bring to our school community. Academy High's vision statement reads, "We believe that by nurturing students to develop adventurous minds, bold spirits, and compassionate hearts, our students can change the world." This compassion begins with a

willingness to acknowledge and understand the lived experience of others through candid and sometimes difficult conversations around core issues that touch all of us, including race, class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and physical and mental ability.

These conversations are also important in providing students opportunities to develop critical thinking and cross-cultural competency, the first and last of our core 21st century '6 Cs' real-world skills that lie at the heart of our school program. Students arriving at college will enter a campus environment teeming with activism and debate, and as a college prep school we have an obligation to help prepare them to participate to these larger conversations. Restrictions on large group meetings this fall have limited our ability to host these important conversations, but we remain fully committed to helping our students practice the fine art of civil civic discourse. Every good independent school across the country has stepped up to meet their responsibility to help students navigate these troubling times we live in. Academy High will do no less.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John W. Carpenter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John W. Carpenter
Head of School