



Superintendent

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Dear Hippo Nation,

The turmoil, pain, emotional unrest, and racial tension in our country and our community are troubling and unsettling. Citizens across the country and from all races and backgrounds are protesting not only the death of George Floyd but also police killings of many other unarmed Black people over time. Last week's events have once again exposed the ugly reality of the deep-rooted institutional racism in our country. Although Hutto takes pride in its sense of unity and community, we are not oblivious or detached from what is happening around us.

As the Superintendent for Hutto ISD, I believe that schools have an undeniable, pronounced responsibility to address race relations, systemic racism, and social justice. I believe our students need to see their teachers, administrators, staff, and school board members take leading roles against racism, anti-Blackness, anti-religious groups, anti-immigrants, bullying, disparity, evil, and hate. You can count on one actionable item from us - we will not remain silent. We will not walk away from the responsibilities our community has entrusted us to fulfill.

We recently created a Return to School Task Force to address the challenges of returning to school amidst a pandemic. Creating an action plan to address equity, racism, and inclusiveness along the lines of what is addressed in this letter will be part of what this task force tackles. However, we must recognize that substantial change takes commitment and time. As we work to meet the challenges of the current health crisis, which includes caring for our families, our youth, and our staff, we will not disregard the importance of listening to our students' voices. We know our students want nothing more than classrooms that are safe physically, socially, and emotionally; classrooms where respect and acceptance are the norms; and classrooms where love, care, and unconditional acceptance are a standard.

I am proud of our school district as a mother is proud of her children. But, parents can be proud of their children while still recognizing areas that need to be developed, habits that need to be reset, and beliefs and prejudices that need to be rejected. Hippo Nation still has much to be developed when it comes to understanding where we fall short. We have to understand it, and we have to get better. We have been and we will be better together!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Celina Estrada Thomas".

Celina Estrada Thomas, Ph.D.
Superintendent