June 3, 2020

Dear Fellow Counselors,

Given the recent events unfolding in American communities, the NJSCA felt the need to reach out for a number of reasons. First and foremost, NJSCA unequivocally condemns the racism, bigotry, and violence that are prevalent in our society, and recognizes that we all have a part to play in stopping the cycle of hatred. Silence is not an option. We need to do better, and we need to teach the students of New Jersey how to peacefully fight the injustices that they encounter in the world. Our parent organization, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), has published an Anti-Racism Statement to which we, at the state level, are also committed to upholding.

All School Counselors have a responsibility to proactively reach out to students of color, to, in the immediate moment, help ensure their sense of safety and security and address the trauma they may be experiencing. Any student with a parent or other relative in law enforcement may also be impacted by the weekend's events. Our long-term responsibility is to teach all students that tolerating injustice, including but not limited to racism, is unacceptable. We need to model and foster empathy. We encourage you to start those difficult conversations with your students-- which are all the more difficult now that the students are not directly in front of you-- and have put together a brief list of resources and articles for School Counselors as they tackle this task.

- ASCA Race Relations Resources
- Counseling Minority Groups in a Time of Racial Unrest: An InfoGraphic from Bradley University
- Don't Say Nothing Silence speaks volumes. Our students are listening, from Teaching Tolerance
- Facilitating Critical Conversations With Students from Teaching Tolerance
- There Is No Apolitical Classroom: Resources for Teaching in These Times from the National Council of Teachers of English

We also acknowledge that counselors of color are facing an entirely different level of personal and professional upheaval in the current climate of racial unrest. We encourage you to seek support if, how, and when you need it. You cannot pour from an empty cup. If there is any way that NJSCA can assist, please reach out and let us know. We see you, we are here for you, and we are listening.

Respectfully,

Jim Lukach, Executive Director
Jillian Shadis, President
Fred Douglas, President-Elect
Jessica Smedley, President-Elect-Elect

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