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On behalf of the Board of Education, we write as a show of our solidarity with our Black and Indigenous students, staff and families. But also, to make some hard commitments.

Like you, we have watched too many Black and Indigenous people die at the hands of police, both in the US and here in Canada. We recognize the pain and suffering that racism, in all its forms, creates.

Black lives matter. Indigenous lives matter.

At New Westminister Schools, we are proud of our commitment to inclusion and diversity, our efforts to move toward reconciliation and our work to create greater equity. Those are important values and actions. But that does not mean we don't also see that racism is at play in our schools. We recognize the overall existence of systemic racism, and the harmful impact it continues to have on our students, staff and the families in our community. We must be accountable and do the hard work to change that.

We are listening carefully right now. We hear what is being said, and we are here to learn and support when we can. It is where we must start. But it is also not enough.

We have a responsibility and an opportunity to do more than just listen and learn. We also have to find ways to apply those lessons. And we have to be part of creating meaningful action.

As people involved in influencing education, we must consider where we can be allies for our kids and our staff. And as allies we must look at the power we have to help change the systems that oppress those living in our community ... we have an obligation to seek opportunities to support the young people who are asking us to help lead them into a better future.

In the coming months we'll be doing more work to determine the most appropriate ways for our district to take action – including developing the framework of a policy that will move us beyond just the values of diversity and inclusion, and instead into a space where, at every level of this district, we are actively engaged in anti-racism work.

You can expect that members of our board will be reaching out in the Fall to help inform the policy development. You can expect there will be more actions to follow. You can expect we're in this for the long haul.

In the meantime we commit to continuing to listen and grow as we engage in a variety of learning opportunities. We will do this both as individuals and collectively ... looking at the roles we can each play in creating necessary and vital changes. And we take that responsibility very seriously, because our kids, our staff and our community deserve that.

On behalf of the Board of Education, we hope you will join us in this process,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is on the left and the second is on the right.

Anita Ansari and Gurveen Dhaliwal
Board Chair and Vice-Chair, New Westminister Schools