

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Marnell A. Cooper
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer

December 14, 2015

Dear Parents, Families and Community Members,

As you are all aware, the trial of the first police officer in the death of Mr. Freddie Gray is drawing to a close, and a verdict could be rendered as early as this week. Like Mayor Rawlings-Blake and city police officials, I am very concerned about the possibility of civil disorders following announcement of the verdict. Like you, my paramount concern is for the safety and well-being of our students and school staff.

First and foremost, I want you to know that we are taking every precaution to ensure the security of our schools and the safe transportation of our students. I have been in frequent communication with Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and city agencies, and I can assure you that our schools and students have the full support of every resource in the district and the city.

I encourage you to think back to the events of last April, and the steps that many of our schools took to become safe havens for our kids and communities, as well as platforms for student voice. We plan to implement those steps in advance of the verdict, using this situation as an opportunity to help our students understand appropriate ways to express dissent and avoid being drawn into potentially violent situations through poor decision-making. We will mobilize our related service clinicians, guidance staff and support teams to provide assistance to schools as needed.

Beyond that, I need your help in preparing our students to act responsibly and safely in the event that disorders occur. Students need to understand that we support their right to express their emotions, and that we will facilitate opportunities for them to do so appropriately; however, we need to make it clear that student walkouts, vandalism, civil disorder, and any form of violence are not acceptable under any circumstances and that students who participate in such behaviors will face consequences. In all cases, we must emphasize that these constraints are based solely on our concern for their safety and well-being.

In closing, let me assure you that the district office and our schools will do everything in their power to maintain the safety and security of our schools and students. Please feel free to contact your child's principal and leadership team with questions, concerns and suggestions at any time.

With your help and support, I am confident that we will be successful in guiding our students safely through this potentially difficult period. Thank you for reinforcing this message with your children and community.

Sincerely,



Gregory E. Thornton, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer