January 30, 2017

Dear Seattle Public School families:

I recognize these are stressful times for many of our families. Last week, President Trump executed two executive orders related to immigration. While there are a number of implications, the two most publicized have caused many Seattle citizens to respond. One of the orders restricts citizens from seven Muslim majority counties from entering the United States and the other reflects his campaign promise to build a wall on our southern border. These actions have heightened a sense of anxiety for both families and students, particularly when one of the orders resulted in detainment of numerous people over the weekend.

Seattle Public Schools is home to students from 147 counties of origin and speak 143 languages/dialects. Our diversity is our strength. The detainment and potential exclusion of our Muslim, Mexican and Latino neighbors, co-workers, and families has tested our resolve. As I communicated in a November message after the election and most recently in a letter celebrating Martin Luther King Jr., the district is steadfast in our mission, priorities, and values. Seattle Public Schools is committed to educating children regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, country of origin, or a student’s immigration status. We will do whatever it takes to make sure every student thrives and I want to reassure you, we will do everything within our power to make sure that all of our children are safe, honored, and respected while in our care.

Actions we are taking

- The district is working closely with the City of Seattle, Seattle Education Association, families, and community partners to provide resources and supports to ensure all of our families and students feel safe and welcomed in their school communities.
- We have hosted or supported numerous events for families so they know their rights.
- Seattle Public Schools has articulated our response to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and shared this information with school staff. Key points include:
  - The District will never ask for or record information regarding student or family immigration status.
  - If an agent from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) requests information about a student, or requests access to a school building or District property, staff will refer the agent to the SPS Office of the General Counsel.
  - General Counsel will review credentials, submission of written authority to conduct action, and determine whether to grant approval of access or not.
- We are also providing training and resources for staff on immigration rights and supports for undocumented, mixed status, refugee, and immigrant families.
- Finally, we are continuing to work with staff to ensure inclusive, safe, and welcoming environments for every child in our care.
Our commitment to the well-being of each and every student is stronger than ever. We are committed to building school communities where all students, families, and staff are safe, respected, and engaged. We expect everyone to be treated positively, without fear of bullying or intimidation. If students or families ever have concerns, they should be raised with teachers and the school principal. Concerns can also be sent to the Office of Student Civil Rights at OSCR@seattleschools.org.

In closing, I call upon all of us to remember what makes America special – it is our diversity; it is our deep sense of justice; our fundamental belief in personal liberty; and it is our willingness to stand for and with those in need.

We believe in our constitution and the freedoms, protections, and opportunities it provides. Together, we must defend the values we hold dearly and stand for each other. I stand for all of our students. Thank you for standing with me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Larry Nyland

Superintendent
Seattle Public Schools