



**THE NEW INTERDISCIPLINARY SCHOOL
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June 8, 2020

Dear NIS Community,

NIS was established over 40 years ago with a commitment to the rights of every child, regardless of disability, ethnic background or socioeconomic status, to flourish within an inclusive, community-based therapeutic learning environment. In alignment with these beliefs, NIS stands proudly with our employees and the community in the fight for social justice, racial equality, and human dignity for all people.

The connection of our mission, historically and presently, to the plight of communities of color in our society unite us in purpose. PL 94-142, passed in 1975 and re-authorized as IDEA in 2005, guaranteed free and public education to each child with a disability. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provided federal protection against discrimination to minorities, paved the way for similar legal safeguards for people with disabilities and, specifically children in educational settings through IDEA. As we continue our mission to ensure equal access to inclusive education for the children, we cannot ignore the parallel fight against the injustices and indignities perpetuated by acts and attitudes of racism.

The horrific deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless others painfully remind us that, over a half-century since the passage of the Civil Rights Act, individual and systemic racism continue to plague our society. We write today to affirm that NIS stands proudly with our employees and the community in the fight for social justice, racial equality, and human dignity for all people. Our organization represents a diverse group of children and employees; through our diversity we are brighter, stronger, and possess greater potential for positive growth and transformative change. Together, we must help sustain an environment where every child, parent, and employee feels welcome, heard, valued and safe. When we succeed at this, we advance our ability to serve children, each other, and the betterment of society.

These times have become overwhelming for many, and unbearable for some. For those who need assistance, please seek support from loved ones, friends, and professionals. We directly impact change through our daily interactions with one another, and in the values embraced as a school. Create and encourage others to foster a sense of belonging. Be mindful of the words we choose and the attitudes they may reflect or imply. Listen empathically to the perspective and experiences of others. Contact local and state representatives to urge legislation advancing social justice, support organizations that advocate for civil rights, and join collective efforts to eliminate discrimination and structural racism.

Please know that NIS will continue to advocate for the educational rights of children, ensure respect and dignity for our employees, and support the advancement of equality and justice across society.

Be safe, strong, and contribute to positive progress,

Jay Silverstein

Jay Silverstein, Ph.D., Executive Director

Walter Stockton

Walter Stockton, President and CEO