



Letter to the Success for All Community from Dr. Robert Slavin, Chairman of the Board

Susan Davis, my assistant, told me about going with her son to clear out his middle school locker, after three months of closure. He happened to run into his favorite history teacher. When she saw him, she burst into tears, and moved her face mask over her eyes.

I think we all feel like crying into our face masks these days. The Covid-19 pandemic was the beginning. In recent days, the police killing of George Floyd, and the marches and riots that have followed it, have made a nightmare into an outrage. But we know that this one event, grotesque as it is, is also a symbol of the racism that still permeates our society. Killings of unarmed, unresisting African Americans are all too common, and accountability is rare. I think every African American or Hispanic person, including my own children, has had an experience of “driving while black,” or otherwise being treated with suspicion or violence based on nothing more than the color of their skin. And this is of a piece with the many ways our society holds back members of disfavored minorities. It is no surprise that members of minority groups are disproportionately harmed by covid-19. It is no surprise that they are all too often targeted by law enforcement. All of these harms accumulate, and continue, one generation after another.

Success for All began as an attempt to solve one part of the inequity faced by minority children. The idea was to demonstrate that there is nothing wrong with the children in inner city schools that could not be solved with resources and practices that any school could adopt. And our schools have demonstrated, over and over, that using proven programs with dedicated educators, there is nothing that disadvantaged and minority children cannot achieve. The evidence has been clear from the beginning, published in top journals, celebrated in news reports, discussed in policy circles. If the achievement of disadvantaged and minority students mattered to our society, we and other providers of proven services to schools would be overwhelmed. Yet this is not what happens. Most American people, most American policy makers, most American policemen and policewomen, fervently believe in helping others. As individuals, we are the some of the kindest people on Earth. But somehow, as a society, we do not always act in kind ways.

I want to thank all of you for the work you do, showing your care, concern, and heroic dedication to the success of every child. We cannot fix our society all by ourselves, but we can create effective options, so that when good people decide that enough is enough, and want to make a real difference in the lives of children, we will be ready to help them achieve their purposes.

This is not easy work, and I am always astonished by how well you do it, in the face of great obstacles. But I know that what drives you is the mission we all share. Once you have seen one school demonstrate that every child can learn, then ten schools, then a hundred, it is impossible to be complacent in the face of our society’s unwillingness to see that every child is given every chance to succeed.

I’m proud to know all of you, and again, thank you for your part in our great common effort.

Bob