

## Board Meeting Recognition - Superintendent Lewandowski Remarks

- I invited Ms. Valerie Castile to our school board meeting to present her with a special recognition for contributions to our students and schools.
- It's hard to put into words my appreciation for Valerie. She has been a fierce ally and advocate for our students - and for all students.
- Valerie: As a white woman, I cannot imagine what you have gone through losing your Black son, Philando, to police violence. I know your son's career was centered on getting kids nutritious meals to be successful in school. He was beloved by the students he mentored and tutored - this is the memory we hold of him.
- Our relationship with Valerie started with one of our staff members' (Dave Williams) connections with the Philando Castile Relief Foundation. It was just over a year ago that the foundation made a generous donation of \$8,000 to help 287 families pay off meal debt. Valerie and her family members joined our students and food service staff at Ann Bremer Education Center to celebrate the donation and recognize the Castile family.
- But Valerie didn't forget about our students after that - she's kept them in her mind and heart.
- This winter, she advocated to include District 287 in a \$33,000 donation from PC for People that will bring internet hot spots and other technology equipment to students in need. These hot spots will go to 287 students who are homeless or whose families have unstable housing. The pandemic has changed all of us. We know that the internet connects young people to school, health care and mental health support, family and friends, and other social connections.
- I also recently learned that Valerie has been donating "Not Reaching" pouches to organizations that work with youth and student drivers. You may know that her son Philando was killed reaching for his identification. These pouches hold all registration information that needs to be shown in a traffic stop - it's a way to help keep Black people safe in their encounters with police and other entities.
- I know many people will benefit from your work. These are only a few of the ways you impact our community, and I know there are many, many others.
- As the world now watches, we hope to see justice brought for George Floyd, another Black man murdered by police. I can imagine the past year has brought many emotions to you and your family. The amount of good you have done after suffering an unspeakable tragedy is truly astounding. You've made it your life's work to serve our communities and young people. You are an admirable person and the type of human being we all should aspire to be.
- You are an honorary part of our District 287 family. We have a special "thank you" care package that you'll receive in the mail soon, with a poetry book from our students and several other small tokens of appreciation.
- On behalf of the school board and the entire District 287 community, we sincerely *thank you* for your graciousness and generosity.