

## **Statement on Systemic Racism in the United States and the Commitment of the MSD Washington Township Board of Education to Address Racial Disparities and Inequities Among Our Students and Employees of Color**

Recently, we have learned about or witnessed violent and fatal acts toward Black U.S. citizens across our country, highlighting the racism and unjust violence that has plagued our communities of color for centuries. These most recent acts have galvanized citizens of all races, ages, genders and nationalities to fill the streets in protest, remove monuments, and insist on meetings with policy makers and leaders to express their frustration and demand change.

Witnessing these acts of protests have emboldened many to have critical and difficult conversations on racism, implicit bias and the racial injustices that continue to exist in our nation. Private businesses and governmental entities, like our Board of Education, have been challenged to review, identify and eliminate their laws, policies, procedures, practices, and cultures that perpetuate individual and systemic racism and commence to understand and address the realities of implicit bias and privilege.

We, the members of the MSD Washington Township Board of Education, recognize that, as a school district, we also need to address racial disparities and inequities among our students and our employees of color. Over the last few years, the Board, Administration and school employees have had difficult conversations and professional development regarding racism and implicit bias in an attempt to understand each other, our students and other stakeholders of color. We have conducted a districtwide equity evaluation in order to identify areas where a deeper understanding and work is needed. This work must and will continue.

To demonstrate our commitment, two of the four goals in the District's new 5-year strategic plan were developed with a racial equity lens. This new plan has been drafted over the last 10 months and will be finalized this summer. The two goals are briefly summarized below:

1. Create an equitable educational environment that inspires and empowers all students - including all racial, English Language Learner and special education subgroups - to increase their academic success and social emotional learning skills;
2. Strive to retain and hire a high-quality diverse staff that is representative and supportive of all students and families served.

In addition to approving the new strategic plan and holding ourselves accountable for reaching those goals, we will continuously review our District policies and practices through a racial equity lens and ensure they are applied our employees, students and families, including our police department, in an equitable and anti-racist manner.

Further, with our community's recent passage of the operating referendum, the District will have additional resources needed to continue the professional development, programming and staffing necessary as we work to eliminate racial disparities for all students and employees.

We are committed to listening and learning from each other, our staff, students, families and residents. We want to do our part to eliminate the racial disparities and inequities in our district in order to better serve all of our students, employees and our entire Washington Township community.