



June 2nd, 2020

The Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Superintendents Association, and the Vermont Principals' Association strongly condemn the systemic violence, societal marginalization and oppression that has been put upon Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) since the founding of this country.

Our Associations condemn the recent killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and believe that these murders affirm the need for nationwide action to end systemic racial violence. These most recent atrocities point to a much larger implicit and explicit marginalizing that is not new nor isolated to law enforcement.

As leaders of Vermont's education systems, we recognize that public education in general, and public education in Vermont, is not immune to systemic oppression and racism. In Vermont schools, there is evidence that students of color are disproportionately subjected to exclusionary discipline, receive less educational opportunity and experience curriculum that is not representative of their culture and does not do justice to the persecution of their forebears throughout the course of American history.

As leaders of Vermont's education systems, we have a duty to recognize and address our biases and engage in necessary conversations about Vermont schools' complicity in systemic racism. We have a duty to support and stand with our faculty, staff, and students of color. We have a duty to prepare our students to confront injustice, participate in civil discourse, and participate in the ongoing effort to truly realize *liberty and justice for all*.

In January of 2018, our Associations adopted a working definition of educational equity:

Educational equity means that each student receives the resources and educational opportunities they need to learn and thrive.

- *Equity means that a student's success is not predicted nor predetermined by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, family economics, class, geography, disability, language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or initial proficiencies.*
- *Equity means that every school provides high quality curriculum, programs, teachers and administrators, extracurricular activities and support services.*
- *Equity goes beyond formal equality where all students are treated the same.*

- *Achieving equity may require an unequal distribution of resources and services.*
- *Equity involves disrupting inequitable practices, acknowledging biases, employing practices that reflect the reality that all students will learn, and creating inclusive multicultural school environments for adults and children.*

This definition, along with the equity ethos of each of our associations' mission statements call upon us to build upon our recent efforts and to do more and do better going forward. Over the past several years, our associations have taken steps to more fully realize the implicit and explicit biases within our organizations and schools, and provide anti-racist professional learning opportunities for our members. We collectively recognize the need for our associations to do more to advance this work and to center the importance of antiracism and equity in our processes, collaborations, and leadership.

Our efforts must grow and continue, therefore we commit to the following concrete actions:

- All employees of our Associations' will participate in ongoing implicit bias, equity, and diversity training.
- We will promote and support implicit bias training for all faculty and staff in Vermont public schools, including athletic and co-curricular personnel, and officials across the state (see [H.714 of 2020](#)).
- We will offer and promote professional learning for school leaders and school board members that include but will not be limited to: Equity Literacy, Curriculum Audits, Review Protocols for Examining Bias in School Policies and Procedures, Culturally Responsive Instruction and School Culture, Student Leadership and Voice, and Examining Power and Privilege in Schools.

Instances of violent deaths suffered at the hands of racism are always reprehensible. We are lifted by the hope that larger numbers of previously unaware or unaffected members of our communities will recognize our shared responsibility in taking an active role in anti-bias, anti-racism action for a more equitable, just, and safe place for all of our students to grow and thrive.

Sincerely,



Sue Ceglowski
Vermont School
Boards Assoc.



Jeffrey Francis
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Jay Nichols
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