

Resolution on George Floyd and Systemic Racism

July 21, 2020

A RESOLUTION of the Osseo Area School District Board of Education to honor the life of George Floyd and stand for justice; to declare the commitment of the board to identify and eliminate any and all practices within our school district community rooted in implicit bias, discrimination, systemic racism, and/or implications of oppression contrary to our mission; and to support Black lives thereby improving the lives of all students.

WHEREAS, on May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered in police custody after a police officer knelt on Mr. Floyd's neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds while Mr. Floyd was handcuffed, lying face down, pleading "I can't breathe" and calling for his mom; and

WHEREAS, the Independent School District 279 School Board denounces this tragic murder by these police officers and also the unacceptable loss of all Black lives, such as Philando Castile, Jamar Clark, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others, that we are called upon to be visible in our support for our community and, more importantly, in our resolve to work for change; and

WHEREAS, our public schools are facilitators of the limitless growth potential of all people, with the charge to instill in our youth a belief that every person deserves to live with dignity, be valued for their humanity, and be treated ethically; and

WHEREAS, it is essential for our education system to teach the experiences, honor the history, and highlight the contributions of Black people; and

WHEREAS, stating that Black lives are valued does not negate our commitment to all members of our community, but rather elevates the importance of the lives of Black people, and affirming that their lives, specifically, matter; and

WHEREAS, throughout our nation's history, systemic racism and injustice have led to deepening racial disparities across all sectors of society and have lasting impacts collectively for our communities, cities, and nation; and

WHEREAS, Black community members continue to experience microaggressions, racial profiling, hate incidents, and racial bias in all systems and institutions including institutions of learning; and

WHEREAS, discrimination, bias and racist incidents against black, brown, and indigenous students harm them mentally, physically, and academically; and

WHEREAS, ISD 279-Osseo Area Schools is the fifth-largest school district in the state, and serves the fourth-largest number of students of color with a self-reporting population of 24.4% Black, 16.2% Asian, 9% Hispanic/Latino; 6.3% two or more races, and 1.9% Indigenous; and

WHEREAS, School Board Policy 203 states the school board has the responsibility to ensure the board advances and supports the mission of Osseo Area Schools to inspire and prepare all students with the confidence, courage and competence to achieve their dreams; contribute to community; and engage in a lifetime of learning; and

WHEREAS, the Board distinguishes that while the mission supports all students, we cannot ignore the systemic racism Black and brown students face, and we are committed to fostering an environment where Black and brown students' voices and experiences are valued; and

WHEREAS, Osseo Area Schools prohibits racism in any form and is committed to examining our own practices, procedures, and policies to identify structural racism that is embedded and perpetuated in the educational system; and

WHEREAS, the problems of society are mirrored in schools, and these problems can only be fully addressed with a united effort of community and school coming together for the betterment of our students' future; and

WHEREAS, schools should be places for the practice of equity, for the building of understanding, and for active engagement of all in creating pathways to freedom and justice for all people; and

WHEREAS, School Board Policy 413 affirms the pivotal role education plays in helping students realize the value of individual differences as well as the human dignity and worth common to all people; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Independent School District 279 School Board sends condolences and support to the family of George Floyd and stands with the thousands in our country and around the world, including members of the school district community, who have engaged in peaceful protests to affirm that Black lives matter and to call for an end to the social injustice and systemic racism that permeates the fabric of our society; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board is dedicated to our mission, which requires our adherence to policies and practices that promote equity, fairness, access and an inclusive environment of mutual respect for all members of the Osseo Area Schools community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Independent School District 279 School Board that the following actions be taken to support Black students, Indigenous students and students of color:

1. Honor George Floyd's life at the August 25, 2020, School Board meeting with 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silence throughout the district, and promote this action to our school district community, which will allow our community to come together to heal and unify our district.
2. Join cities, counties, and states across the country in affirming a commitment to the safety and well-being of Black people, to combating hate crimes and institutional racism, and to an education free from discrimination.
3. Continue efforts to provide a safe and welcoming school environment for each and every student, working with community and other government agencies.

4. Issue a statement from the school board affirming the board's commitment to support Black, Indigenous, and other families, students and employees of color.
5. Elevate the voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color to help dismantle systemic racism in our school district. An example is creating a document that explains how and when system-level decisions, e.g., budget and curriculum adoption, are made so that stakeholders have a clearer idea of how they can influence those decisions.
6. Establish a Black, Indigenous and other parent/guardian of color partner committee with the power to address structural, racial inequity in our district; this committee will have the influence to operate on a zero-tolerance policy regarding racism, implicit bias, discrimination, structural and system inequities. The board will support the suggestions of this committee to implement accountable actions, provide solutions and guide curriculum, culture, and equitable budget priorities, as well as disciplinary practices, strategic priorities, etc.
7. Implement a student cabinet to provide feedback and input to the superintendent and board that is reflective of the demographics of our district.
8. Ensure there is adequate initial and ongoing support for the new Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Achievement.
9. Commit to conducting listening sessions and engaging with our school community to have difficult racial discussions and to reach solutions and address priorities together.
10. Commit to a cultural audit every year, including the school board.
11. Create space to engage students, parents, staff, and our community regarding student resource officers.
12. Require board members and all leaders to address racial disparities directly in every policy, including training and accountability.
13. Identify ways to contract equitably in areas of construction, purchasing, transportation, etc. to ensure we are inclusive and reflective of our demographics.
14. Recognize and communicate the importance of Juneteenth in American History annually in the schools and district.
15. Sponsor minimally one training or districtwide event recognizing Black lives, equity, and inclusion to include a regional and/or national culturally responsive presenter.