

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE LIBERTY OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS DENOUNCING RACISM AND THEIR FAMILIES RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN UTAH SCHOOLS

~~The Utah State Board of Education calls on ourselves and on people everywhere to take action to create and maintain an environment of dignity and respect for all, to strive for a deeper understanding of individual differences, and to abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group. We commit to learn from the past, by focusing our efforts on building a brighter future for each student as we support families in the education of their children.~~

The Utah State Board of Education is deeply saddened by recent events evidencing racism and disregard for human rights, and by the associated violence, turmoil ~~and unrest.~~ We recognize, and unrest. We call on ourselves and on people everywhere to abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group, especially groups that have been historically marginalized, to take action to create and maintain an environment of dignity and respect for all, and to strive for understanding and equity. We commit to learn from the past, by focusing our efforts on building a brighter and equitable future for all students.

Recognizing our moral and legal obligations in educating our youth, and guided by the framework of the laws and administrative rules of the great state of Utah, we state and resolve as follows:

~~WHEREAS each individual has a liberty interest best supported by the right to the free exercise of conscience, protection of life, support of family (those who have the legal obligation and responsibility of others), and to assist in developing each student's unique potential; and~~

~~WHEREAS our constitutional republic is best represented by individuals with the autonomy to govern themselves free of indoctrination or coercion; and~~

WHEREAS racism in the past and the present is destructive to individuals and society as a whole; and

WHEREAS individuals have a fundamental responsibility to treat others with respect and civility, regardless of their race, or ethnicity ~~or home environment~~; and

WHEREAS Utah schools should be a place where all students feel safe; and are given equitable opportunities to succeed. Utah law provides that "every student in the public schools should have the opportunity to learn in an environment which is safe, conducive to the learning process, and free from unnecessary disruption" 53G-8-202; and "all students have the ability to learn and that each student departing the system will be prepared to achieve success" 53E-2-302; and

WHEREAS an educator may not: (1) “interfere with or discourage a student’s or colleague’s legitimate exercise of constitutional, legal, or civil rights” R277-515-3(4)(r); (2) “exclude a student from participating in any program or deny or grant any benefit to any student” on the basis of race, color and national origin; and (3) “engage in conduct that would encourage a student to develop a prejudice” R277-515-3(6)(c); and

~~(3) “engage in conduct that would encourage a student to develop a prejudice” R277-515-3(6)(c); and~~

~~WHEREAS programs, policies and curriculum should “respect, protect, and further the interests of parents in their children’s public education” 53E-2-201-2(a) no matter their race, ethnicity or home environment; and~~

~~WHEREAS racism is defined as: (1) prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group. (2) a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; and~~

WHEREAS promoting good character is one ~~way schools can support individual students while combatting destructive forces like~~ defense against racism. As contained in Utah Code: “Character education’ means reaffirming values and qualities of character which promote an upright and desirable citizenry.” 53G-10-204(1)(a) and “The continuous cultivation of an informed and virtuous citizenry among succeeding generations is essential to the state and the nation” 53E-2-201; and

~~WHEREAS racism in the past and the present is destructive to individuals and society as a whole; and~~

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WHEREAS programs, policies and curriculum should "respect, protect, and further the interests of parents in their children's public education" 53E-2-201-2(a) including parents of underrepresented races, or ethnicities; and

WHEREAS ~~racism can be unintentional,~~the need to recognize and identifying racism as eradicate its systemic institutionalization within the public education system is paramount to achieving equitable education access; and

WHEREAS students speaking a language other than English are ~~an issue does not necessarily mean~~asset for participating in a growing global economy, and USBE is committed to academic pathways for all students, yet our students learning English have proficiency rates of 2% in English with 35% making adequate progress on the 2020 World- Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA); and

WHEREAS the Utah Legislature has resolved that those involved in the act are racist or that any negative impactpublic education provide students with disability equitable access to the same educational experiences as all students, and yet students with disability who are Black had a 5.9% proficiency rate in math and 5.6% in English language arts compared to students with disability who are white with a 20.7% proficiency rate in math and 16.9% in English language arts for the 2017-18 school year.

WHEREAS students have a greater chance for academic success if they are reading at grade level, however, in the 2018-19 school year, the percent of students of color in Utah reading on grade level by grade 3 was intended28% or less compared to 53.4% of white students; and

~~WHEREAS education should create hope and inclusion while avoiding polemic or binary theories about race or ethnicity. We should look forward, not with despair and hopelessness, but with thoughtful optimism for continued, concerted efforts by educators, students, families and communities to live up to the ideals of equality and unity expressed in the United States Constitution, our Utah Constitution and Civil Rights laws;~~

~~NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we support the liberty interest of individual students and their families; and~~

~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Utah State Board of Education firmly denounces racism in any form, in our schools and in our education system; and~~

~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all of our policies, programs, and activities shall promote unity and civility by applying the characteristics found in Utah's Portrait of a Graduate namely, honesty, integrity, responsibility, hard work, resilience, lifelong learning, personal growth, service and respect to list a few. As we strive to develop these attributes in our educational~~

settings, we will be stronger as a society as we lift one another and work together. WHEREAS access to early learning resources is shown to increase a student's likelihood of long term academic success, however only 39% of students of color entered kindergarten grade ready for literacy compared to 66% of white students and 57% grade ready for numeracy compared to 80% of white students; and

WHEREAS the student population in Utah continues to grow more diverse and exposure to same-race teachers has been shown to improve student achievement outcomes and decrease discipline incidents, however Utah has less than 0.5% of teachers that are Black/African American, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander, 1% of teachers identify as Asian, and 3% of teachers that identify as Latino/Latinx, compared to 91% of teachers who identify as white; and

WHEREAS student proficiency in the core subjects of English language arts, math, and science are necessary for long-term academic and economic success, and students of color scored 28% or lower proficiency rates in all three subjects, on the 2018-19 RISE assessment, compared to an over 50% proficiency rate in the same three subjects for white students; and

WHEREAS a student that graduates from high school is less likely to go to prison, have greater financial stability, and have access to college or vocational education opportunities, and while graduation rates in Utah have maintained or increased overall, in 2019 students of color graduated at 79.4%, compared to white students who graduated at 89.7%; and

WHEREAS the ability to attend college has been shown to increase the likelihood of a student to achieve upward mobility and is the leading factor in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, and entrance to college is dependent on a student's ACT or SAT score, and for the 2019-20 school year in Utah 36% or less of students of color scored an 18 or higher on the ACT compared to 70.4% of white students; and

WHEREAS early college programs are a key indicator of a student's success in college and career readiness, however less than 30% of students of color were enrolled in an AP course with less than 20% of Native American students being enrolled compared to 40% of white students.

WHEREAS under Utah's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Utah State Board of Education is required to identify Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools with consistently underperforming student subgroups defined as students who are identified as economically disadvantaged, with disabilities, identified as student's learning English, or by major racial and ethnic groups, and just under half of all schools in Utah are currently identified as a TSI school; and

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WHEREAS Suspensions and expulsions can influence adverse outcomes across development, health, and education including increasing a student's likelihood to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not, and in Utah, students of color who represent 25% of the student population account for 41% of the suspensions and 57% of expulsions; and

WHEREAS mental health can affect a student's energy level, concentration, dependability, mental ability, and academic performance, and in Utah suicide is the leading cause of death among high school students, students of color report higher rates of self harm, suicide ideation, suicide planning, and attempted suicide than white students; and

WHEREAS significant gaps between the performance of students systemwide exists for students of color compared to their white peers, even in generously resourced schools.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education condemns, in the strongest possible terms, white supremacy culture, hate speech, hate crimes and violence in the service of hatred. These immoral ideologies and actions deserve no place in our country, state, and school system.

And be it Further resolved, that the starting point of our work in racial equity must be reflection and internal examination, whereby the board will look for ways to engage our members in open and courageous conversations on racism and inequity;

and be it Further resolved that the State Board of Education shall offer training to Board members to identify our own implicit biases so that we can perform our duties to the citizens of Utah without racial bias;

and be it Further resolved that the State Board of Education shall require training for all state employees and contractors working with the Department of Education to identify their own implicit biases so that they can perform their duties to the citizens of Utah without unconscious racial bias;

and be it Further resolved that the State Board of Education directs USBE staff to reexamine the current academic standards to make recommendations to the State Board of Education as necessary to eliminate bias and ensure that racism and the struggle for equity are accurately addressed;

and be it Further resolved that the State Board of Education directs the USBE staff to continue the practice of ensuring all state administered tests are free of racial bias;

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and be it Further resolved that the State Board of Education strongly recommends that all Utah school districts and charter schools begin a reflection and internal examination of their own policies and practices involving all members of their school community to examine all facets of the school's operations with a special emphasis on curriculum, hiring practices, staff development practices, and student discipline e.g. suspension/expulsion;

and be it Further resolved that the State Board of Education directs USBE staff to provide support for school districts and charter schools' reflection and internal examination, including assistance with identifying and sharing curricular models and resources approved by the State Board; promoting sessions to allow districts to share and collaborate on their actions; and to share progress in implementing these changes.

SIGNED THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION