

WAUSAU SCHOOL BOARD PRESS RELEASE RELATING TO EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Issued 6/9/20

Dear Wausau Families and Members of Our Community,

The mission of the Wausau School District is to advance student learning, achievement, and success of ALL students.

ALL means ALL. And so, it is with an unending commitment to our students, staff and community, amid feelings of anger, disappointment, embarrassment, grief --and hope--that we acknowledge the inequities that exist in our community, like so many other communities across this great nation. For generations, people of color have carried the burden of being mistreated, discriminated against, oppressed, hated, and murdered simply because of the color of their skin. As we mourn the death of George Floyd, and other senseless killings of people of color, we are compelled to recognize that people of color in our own community experience racism every day.

We must demand change. And changing behaviors starts with changing mindsets. Education is a critical factor in the development of a child's values, mindsets, and opportunities. More than 35% of the children in the Wausau School District are students of color, and we hold an absolute steadfast commitment to the education, safety, and the well-being of the whole child.

We consistently work to identify and address inequities in discipline data and educational opportunities, while providing a welcoming environment for all people of color in our District. We continue to drive efforts to be an inclusive educational community that molds contributing members of society and celebrates differences.

Although we continue to maintain safe physical distancing during these unprecedented times, we strive for social and emotional connectedness. We implore students, staff, and members of our community to take an active role in combating the immense injustices that individuals of color face across the globe, across our country, our region, and, as evidenced recently, right here in Wausau. It should not fall on communities of color to demand justice and equality; we must actively examine how disparities and injustices uniquely affect communities of color. And together, we must work to identify practices that have been deemed socially acceptable and change them. We want the best for our students. All our students.

One critical step is to empower our students, families, and staff and provide the tools necessary to effectuate this change. Recently, the Wausau School District sent out talking points and resources to families and staff to help support courageous conversations with children who need help to understand the riots and violence they see on TV and perhaps in their own community. All District staff, including school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, teachers, and administrators are here to offer support and ensure that all students are provided the environment and resources necessary to advance their learning, achievement, and success. Additional resources related to diversity and equity can be found on our website.

What happened to George Floyd was tragic, and grievously, a recurring story as systemic racism throughout society continues to unveil itself. We must stand up against it and unify in support of one another. We prioritize fostering a community of inclusivity, equality, and acceptance, especially during this extremely painful time in our nation. As a school district, we will continue to strive for change that promotes equity and respect, offers opportunity, and breaks down barriers for students of color.

We are committed to effective, sustained action that results in a safer, more unified, and equitable future. We affirm our commitment to our Mission statement: To advance student learning, achievement, and success. This means ALL students in the Wausau School District.