

June 2020

**Statement on behalf of Superintendent Scott Hawkins and the Woodford County Board of Education**

Our community, state, and country are in the midst of pain, unrest, and mourning over the recent and longstanding examples of systemic racism and severe injustices we have witnessed. We feel that remaining silent during this time would convey to our students, families, staff members, and community that we are fearful to speak up for and fight for what is right; this is not the case.

Woodford County Public Schools is a team of people who care deeply for all children. We know that our educators are willing to learn how to facilitate difficult discussions regarding matters of race, diversity, and systemic racism; we believe that it is our responsibility to equip our educators with the resources and professional development they need to feel confident in conducting these conversations. We must actively incorporate these extremely important topics into our classrooms and curriculum.

We strive to teach our students to respect one another, even in contrasting opinions, to value each other's differences, and to practice inclusivity so that every student knows they are a cherished member of our school community. In 2018, we established an Equity Team for the purpose of uncovering and discussing our areas of improvement for equity, diversity, and cultural responsiveness. Through this team, we conducted an equity audit with an outside agency, Whatever It Takes Consulting, Inc. The equity audit was a necessary step in continuing our work in creating a safe, welcoming environment in which all of our students are valued; however, this work has been especially important in ensuring that our minority students are respected and seen. We are reviewing our curriculum and content as well as our physical school buildings to ensure that we are culturally responsive and inclusive of the heritages of all our students. The work of the Equity Team also includes the following: bringing more diversity into our advanced courses and programs, creating opportunities for staff members to learn about and reflect on bias, visually represent the history of our schools and the culture of our students. (This entire Equity Team Action Plan may be found at [WoodfordSchools.org](http://WoodfordSchools.org).)

As we reflect on the plan we have in place and the goals that have been set by the Equity Team, we are excited to continue the hard but necessary work to make Woodford County Public Schools a more inclusive, culturally responsive organization. Due to the systemic racism in our country, this will be an enduring pledge to humbling and bettering ourselves and learning from each other. Daily, we will commit to do what is right because our students are worth it. They deserve to be loved, respected, and valued, regardless of their skin color, background, or any other factor. We must practice vulnerability, compassion, empathy, and understanding. We must love and support one another.

Though we may not have the perfect words for this time, we want to express our hearts and affirm that we will continue to do what is right for our students. We are eager to keep listening to and learning from our students, families, staff members, and community. We know that this will involve hard conversations, honesty, and authentic change, but we want to pledge to do our part to stop the systemic racism that is plaguing our nation.

When we say, “We Are Woodford,” we are saying that each and every person in our school community is part of our Woodford family; we are stronger together because of our differences.

Sincerely,

Scott Hawkins and the Woodford County Board of Education