

April 28, 2021 Board Statement

Before we start tonight's meeting, there's an elephant in the room that must be addressed.

Over the past week, our district has received a lot of public attention. Poor phrasing in an email resulted in an invitation coming across as an insult. Our students were the first to call attention to it and they were right to do so. The leadership response was swift and direct. An apology. An explanation. But we understand that all of these caused harm that needs repair. Tonight we confirm our commitment to racial justice and continuing the work of anti-racism.

Now this week, some are telling us that these efforts are not enough and that there needs to be consequences and more accountability.

Tonight, the Piedmont Board of Education again affirms what we testified to last summer, when we passed a board resolution condemning institutional and systemic racism. In the resolution, we committed to doing anti-racist work as individuals and as a Board. We committed to keeping anti-racist values at the forefront of our work and to embed these values into our decisions, our actions, our policies, and our procedures.

Our students have made it clear that anti-racism calls for truth and integrity. Our principals understand that the work of anti-racism requires the courage to show up and step outside of comfort zones, and that despite the best intentions, sometimes things go wrong. And over the past week, we have all experienced the painful reality that mistakes on the road to becoming anti-racist can invite hasty judgment.

We acknowledge that damage has been done. Yet we ask this community—our students and their families, our educators and administrators—to commit to the anti-racism journey with us in solidarity. This commitment means that we walk in tandem and in support of each other despite the difficulties. It means that a misstep is an opportunity to learn and provide support. It means calling each other in rather than calling each other out.

If we silence those who take risks and make mistakes along the way, we discourage others from stepping forward to enter into this important work, at a time when all of our words are so highly charged and under such scrutiny.

We are just beginning our journey to becoming an anti-racist district. It will be a long one and if we are determined to realize success then we must commit to staying the course. Later this evening, we will introduce our new director of diversity, equity and inclusion. She will lead our district's efforts to implement our racial and educational equity policies. However, we do not expect her to shoulder this work alone. All of us have a responsibility and a role to play in anti-racist work. We will learn together how to do the work and we will work together to get it done. Let's commit to learning from each other and moving forward.

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