



# Eau Claire School Board - Equity Statement

March 1, 2021

The Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) is committed to eliminating the systemic racism present in our society and schools while building an equitable and inclusive school community. The ECASD acknowledges the historical pervasiveness in the events in our state and nation and we must create real and sustainable action to change the inequities present in our local systems. Our predominantly White privileged perspective, culture, and system is failing our students and families of color. We will increase equity, access, and opportunity by dismantling systemic barriers to full participation for our marginalized students. In doing so, the ECASD is committed to anti-racist and anti-oppression work, racial justice and equity, and system-wide change to mitigate the inequities we have allowed to happen.

## **Our Shared Understanding**

The ECASD understands that oppression is manifested in racism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, ageism, ableism, and other forms of systemic and social exclusion. We understand that there are similarities, intersections, and differences between these and other forms of oppression and the ways in which they manifest themselves. In particular, patterns of racism against Black and Indigenous People of Color have permeated our society and our public schools. As noted in a report by The Civil Rights Project<sup>1</sup>, Black high school students in Wisconsin are suspended at a higher rate than anywhere else in the country, and Wisconsin has the second-highest disparity in suspension rates between White and Black elementary school students. For years in the ECASD we have fostered organizational policies and practices that have created an achievement gap leaving behind our students of color compared to their White peers. Examples and measures include lower test scores, less access to advanced coursework, less participation in extracurricular activities, and lower graduation rates. Conversely, the ECASD has over-identified students of color who are more likely to have disciplinary referrals and more likely to be identified as needing special education services. We acknowledge the systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally such that inequity and injustice result, and we are committed to dismantling these systems.

## **Our Commitment**

The Core Values of the ECASD are honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, courage, and justice, and we recognize that these core values have not been equitably applied to all students. As we move forward, we will adhere to these core values and use our collective privilege to end systems of oppression. We will ensure our students of color and other marginalized students feel safe, welcomed, included, valued, represented, and supported in our school community with equitable access and opportunities for success.

The ECASD will explicitly recognize, examine, and address the systemic manifestations of oppression and racism in our district, in all aspects of its governance policies, processes, practices, and outcomes. The ECASD will use a lens of equity in all decision-making and at all levels, where equity means ensuring opportunities for learning and experiences for all students and especially for students who have been historically marginalized.

The ECASD will invite, support, and collaborate with marginalized populations in our district and surrounding communities, and create relationships and allyship based on respect, inclusion, trust, consistency, and accountability. We welcome the ways this diversity will deepen our shared understanding of the applications of our work, and we will work to amplify and prioritize these authentic voices.

The ECASD as a predominantly White system of administrators and educators, make changes in the core organizational structures, institutional practices, and professional behaviors/actions of all privileged voices within our system; knowing that White people are the beneficiaries of racial inequality. We recognize that the responsibility of being part of the solution requires us all to hold ourselves accountable. We will add our voices to the collective call to action to ensure optimum organizational effectiveness and accountability to students we serve.

The ECASD will begin a continuous and ongoing process of professional development for all ECASD administrators, leaders, educators, and staff to consider the significance of individual racial identities and privilege when it comes to engaging in equity work. Personal growth and self-reflection are a practice of unlearning and relearning, which is both a career-long and life-long process. All staff need to be aware of the multiple identities represented in our district and their unique perspectives, experiences, and needs.

The ECASD will seek out and increase hiring of a diverse staff, including active recruitment of underrepresented groups and more equitable hiring practices, so that the diversity in our district staff and leadership is reflective of the diversity of the students we serve.

The ECASD will create school culture and climate where discriminatory or oppressive behaviors are not tolerated. Simultaneously, the ECASD is committed to purposeful and proactive strategies and changes to facilitate a shift in organizational culture to ensure that issues of oppression will be addressed, and clear mechanisms will be identified to actively engage and interact throughout the process.

As we move forward in our shared understanding and district commitments, we understand that genuine growth in this work related to equity, diversity, and inclusion will push us, will be challenging, and it may be uncomfortable. We work towards change not to feel better, but to *do* better. We understand that if we are not helping to dismantle oppressive systems then we are complicit in them. We commit to real conversations, real action, and real change. And we commit to moving forward and ensuring that we are true to our values and to positive change and growth.

Signed,

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Dr. Tim Nordin, President

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Dr. Lori Bica, Vice-President

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Josh Clements

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Aaron Harder

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Dr. Marquell Johnson

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Phil Lyons

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Erica Zerr

1. Losen, D. J, Hodson, C. L, Keith II, M. A, Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap? *UCLA: The Civil Rights Project / Proyecto Derechos Civiles*. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2t36g571>