



Grand Haven Area Public Schools

PLEDGE FOR RACIAL EQUITY

The pledge aims to promote racial equity by encouraging collective action to build inclusive communities. This pledge acknowledges the need for cities, counties, school districts and organizational leaders to work on cultivating a trusting environment, where all ideas are welcome, and where residents and workspaces are empowered to openly talk about racial justice in efforts to dismantle institutional and structural racism.

The pledge serves a reminder of our commitment to achieving inclusive practices and procedures throughout our communities while supporting other jurisdictions to do the same. The persistent inequities across our country and state, remind us of the urgent need to address discriminatory practices in efforts to effectively promote equity within our communities, and reduce the gaps reflected in all indicators for success. As leaders of our communities, we recognize that we play a critical role in ensuring that equity is core to our cities, counties, schools and workplace culture. Moreover, we acknowledge that inclusive environments thrive in the innovation, creativity and broader perspectives that reside in diversity.

The pledge is embedded in the shared recognition that dismantling a system of advantage based on race is a multi-faceted task, and that we need to tackle it holistically to better engage and support all marginalized groups. We all have internalized racialized messages that shape biases at a personal/interpersonal level, and we all have a social responsibility to unlearn them. To do this, we believe that we need to address honestly and head-on the concerns and needs of all people. This means committing to three initial goals that we hope will catalyze further conversation and action around diversity, equity and inclusion within our communities.

1. WHEREAS, the Grand Haven Area Public Schools will continue to make our communities and workplaces trusting places by having complex, and sometimes difficult, conversations about racism, diversity, equity and inclusion: we will create and maintain environments, platforms and forums where our residents feel comfortable reaching out to their colleagues to gain greater awareness of each other's experiences and perspectives. By encouraging ongoing dialogues and not tolerating any incongruence with these values of openness, we are building trust, encouraging compassion and open-mindedness, and reinforcing our commitment to a culture of inclusivity that acknowledges racism as real and pursues equity through racially conscious approaches.

2. WHEREAS, the Grand Haven Area Public Schools will implement and expand implicit bias education: the field of implicit bias reminds us that we all have

unconscious biases. Implicit (unconscious) bias education enables individuals and institutions to begin recognizing, acknowledging, and therefore engaging in debiasing strategies to implement change. We will commit to rolling out and/or expanding implicit bias education within our local municipalities and institutions. By helping our employees and residents recognize their blind spots, we aim to facilitate more open and honest conversations and socially conscious steps for inclusive practices.

3. *WHEREAS, the Grand Haven Area Public School will share best—and unsuccessful—practices:* as many local jurisdictions are still developing their strategies and are at different stages in their journey of increasing racial consciousness and cultural awareness, we will commit to identifying our best successes or least successful initiatives strategies to share with others. We also pledge to create accountability systems within our communities and institutions to measure, monitor and evaluate our own progress, and to share regular updates with the *Equity Office of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights* in order to catalog effective programs and measurement practices. We believe that by sharing and learning with each other, we can strengthen our inclusive practices and commitment to better serve our communities.

We recognize that these three goals are not the complete answer, yet we believe they are important concrete steps toward building more equitable workplaces and communities. By working together toward achieving equity we can cultivate racially conscious change that anticipates unintended outcomes and does not rely on good intentions, but on the awareness that we all have work to do to dismantle systems of advantage, embedded in cultural mindsets and practices that sustain racial inequity.

We affirm that we value human diversity and inclusion in all its forms. We recognize that our communities have been impacted by racialized messages which contribute to the formation of unconscious biases. We are opposed to and will find ways to speak out against discrimination.

Adopted by the Board of Education of the Grand Haven Area Public Schools, Ottawa County, Michigan at the regular open public meeting thereof, held this 10th day of August 2020

ATTEST: Board of Education

John Siemion, President

Nichol Stack, Secretary