



**UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
RESOLUTION NO. 2021-01**

**DENOUNCING RACISM AND EMBRACING EQUITY
IN UTAH SCHOOLS**

The Utah State Board of Education is deeply saddened by recent events evidencing racism and disregard for human rights, and by the associated violence, turmoil and societal unrest. We call on ourselves and on people everywhere to abandon attitudes of prejudice against any group, to take action to create and maintain an environment of dignity and respect for all, and to strive for understanding. We commit to learn from the past but will focus our efforts on building a bright and equitable future.

Recognizing our moral and legal obligations to educate our students as we assist in developing each student's unique potential, while being guided by the laws and administrative rules of the great state of Utah, we state and resolve as follows:

WHEREAS racism in the past and the present is destructive to individuals and society as a whole; and

WHEREAS individuals have a fundamental responsibility to treat others with respect and civility, regardless of their race or ethnicity; and

WHEREAS Utah schools should be a place where all students feel safe and are given equitable opportunities to succeed. Utah law provides that "every student in the public schools should have the opportunity to learn in an environment which is safe, conducive to the learning process, and free from unnecessary disruption" 53G-8-202; and "all students have the ability to learn and that each student departing the system will be prepared to achieve success" 53E-2-302; and

WHEREAS an educator may not: (1) "interfere with or discourage a student's or colleague's legitimate exercise of constitutional, legal, or civil rights" R277-515-3(4)(r); (2) "exclude a student from participating in any program or deny or grant any benefit to any student" on the basis of race, color and national origin; (3) "engage in conduct that would encourage a student to develop a prejudice" R277-515-3(6)(c); and

WHEREAS promoting good character is one defense against racism. As contained in Utah Code: "Character education means reaffirming values and qualities of character which promote an upright and desirable citizenry" 53G-10-204(1)(a), and "The continuous cultivation of an informed and virtuous citizenry among succeeding generations is essential to the state and the nation" 53E-2-201; and

WHEREAS programs, policies and curriculum should "respect, protect, and further the interests of parents in their children's public education" 53E-2-201-2(a) no matter their race, color or national origin; and

WHEREAS disparities in educational programs and outcomes for underserved groups, including students of color, exist under our current education system; and

WHEREAS racism can be unconscious or unintentional, and identifying racism as an issue does not necessarily mean that those involved in the act are racist or that any negative impact was intended; and

WHEREAS education should create hope and inclusion while avoiding divisive theories about race or ethnicity. We should look forward, not with despair and hopelessness, but with thoughtful optimism for continued, concerted efforts by educators, students, families and communities to live up to the ideals of equality and unity expressed in the United States Constitution, the Utah Constitution, and civil rights laws;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Utah State Board of Education firmly denounces racism in any form in our schools and in our education system and embraces principles of equity and justice for all;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all of our policies, programs, and activities shall promote unity and civility among diverse groups. The Utah State Board of Education commits to identify and examine issues of race, ethnicity, and color and the effect they have on the education system and community and to understand and correct any inequities; and recognizes that the starting point of this work of racial equity must be a reflection and internal examination, whereby the Board will look for ways to engage our members in open and courageous conversations on racism and inequity.

As stated in our Portrait of a Graduate, we will show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures and traditions. Our actions will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are together.

ADOPTED THIS 6th DAY OF JANUARY 2021.



Mark Huntsman, Board Chair