

CCS Unity

Jun 8, 2020,

10:07 AM

CCS Director

<director@clevelandschools.org>

to CCS

Cleveland City Schools Family,

As the Director of Schools, I applaud the rights of peaceful protestors to promote democracy and share their voice. I stand by our employees and students who feel the need to be heard by those of us in leadership. I've said it before and I'll say it again - public schools are one of the cornerstones of our democracy. We as a school system must be committed to continue to do better and be better when it comes to how we interact with and educate all of our students.

During my career I've had the opportunity to teach and lead students and staff of all races, creeds, and nationalities. Moreover, I am now honored to serve as the leader of Cleveland City Schools, one of the more diverse school systems in our state. I don't know how to say this any other way than this - our aim in the world of education must be to serve every student equally. That means in the classroom, on the athletic team, in the band room, and everywhere else associated with a school system. Our unwavering objective must be to ensure every student feels they have a voice and that they are educated to a high level by every teacher and staff member they encounter each day.

While I hope and pray we meet this goal, I know we probably fall short of this far too often. However, In our system, we are working toward this on multiple fronts. First, we are working to fully implement our [Capturing Kids Hearts](#) initiative on a K-12 level over the coming years. Capturing Kids Hearts is already in place now at the middle and high school and we are seeing amazing results. We must fully understand that before we can capture a student's mind, we

must first capture their heart. In addition, our [LeadWorthy](#) courses at the high school are teaching students how to use their voice to be a real change in the world. Secondly, we must reform our student discipline procedures. The days of moving too quickly toward exclusionary discipline have passed. We are committed as a system to implementing the [Tennessee Behavior Supports Model](#) along with [Restorative Justice](#). Moreover, staff will be trained on these models and on [Adverse Child Experiences](#) to be better equipped on how to handle tough issues. We must do all we can to end the pipeline that too often leads students, especially black and latino students, to out of school suspension and/or expulsion. Finally, we must do a better job of ensuring all students have access to a quality education. We must also ensure all students are expected, and required, to do high quality work. The achievement gaps between our various subgroups must be closed and this is a priority for our system. These items, and much more, are part of our 2020-2025 strategic plan approved by the school board at our last board meeting. This plan has incorporated input from a wide variety of stakeholders in our community and will be posted to our website soon.

As a school system, we must also do a better job of recruiting and hiring quality minority teachers, school administrators, and district leaders. Our students deserve to see more professional role models in our schools that look like them. Next year we are creating a Staff Diversity Advisory Committee to tackle this issue. We must reconfigure the model for how we recruit new employees and actively seek out more minority candidates to work in our school system. We also are committed to a “Grow Your Own” program to create a pipeline for paraprofessionals and current students to enter the teaching profession.

I look forward to working with you on these initiatives over the coming months and years as part of our new strategic plan. Together we can be the change we want to see in the world. Thank you for your commitment to our students, our community, and each other as we move forward. Have a great summer and I look forward to seeing you again soon!

Sincerely,

Dr. Dyer