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YCS is grounded in ensuring that students and staff move from diversity to belonging, to inclusion, to equity, and eventually have racial equity. This year, we provided ongoing professional development training for all district staff regarding diversity, yet, we know that we need more as we enter the 2020-21 school year. At YCS, we expect more from the adults responsible for the education of all of our students. We will continue to embrace diversity and ensure that our district has intentionally moved to a level of EVERY person having a sense of belonging. This is very important to us all at YCS. As first learners, we must dive deeply into this important work. We are asking all YCS staff and stakeholders to move beyond being allies to becoming co-conspirators in this critical work. We will do this by ensuring and honoring student, staff, and family VOICE. We will also continue to develop members in our organization from Board members to staff and students on becoming culturally proficient. We will ask our staff to move beyond these commitments to intentional ACTION!

Without action for social justice, mere acknowledgment becomes a particularly cynical form of white privilege. At YCS, we are unapologetically committed to the full implementation of the following Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices. Here are the action statements that YCS District Administrators and staff are committed to for the 20-21 school year:

- School Board will continue their Culturally Responsive Teaching / Practices Work with Dr. Dorinda Carter-Andrews
 - Board Relations
 - Policy
 - Equity Plan
- YCS Staff will Continue our District-wide Collective Work with Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz on the Archeology of Self and Racial Identity
 - Tools for Talking about Race with Students, Staff, and Community
 - The Negative Impact of White Privilege Trauma in Our Black and Brown Children
 - How to Challenge and Abolish Institutional Racism
 - On Becoming a Co-Conspirator
- YCS Staff will Continue our District-Wide Social Justice Freedom School and the WISD Responsive Teaching Institute (RTI) Work with Dr. Shayla Reese Griffin
 - Abolitionist Teaching Practices
 - Interrupting Individual Racism
- We will Implement a Superintendent Student Advisory Council
 - Youth Voice
 - Review our Practices and Procedures



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- We will Implement a WISD & YCS Youth RTI Council
 - Finding the Power of Youth Voice
 - Youth Voice as An Agent for Change
- We will Implement a Peer to Peer Youth Mentoring RTI Program
 - Peer Mentorship Program in Every School
 - Youth Helping Youth to Thrive
- We will Continue to Develop a Strong Intentional Home School & Family Relationships Based on Acknowledging their Voice
 - Ensure that all Parent Engagement Efforts Intentionally Develop a Strong Sense of Belonging by Conducting Parent Engagement Activities that are Done *WITH* Families and NOT, TO, or *FOR* Them.
 - Host the First F.A.C.E. Conference

Furthermore, our vision and commitment to deep equity work regarding *excellence*, *voice*, and *access* at YCS benefits greatly from having a racially and ethnically diverse student population and a workforce that is receptive to learning, growing, and intentionally becoming culturally proficient. It is our moral responsibility as a learning institution to ensure that all of our staff, district's educational programs, and resources, intentionally prepare all students to become lifelong learners of equity, become true co-conspirators for change, and be prepared to succeed in a diverse, global economy upon graduation.

At YCS we define *Culturally Proficiency* as a mindset, a world view, and a way an individual or an organization makes assumptions for effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse learning environments. *Cultural Proficiency* it's a process that we must trust, believe in, and live through our actions daily. At YCS we are committed to deep equity work regarding *excellence*, *voice*, and *access* by strategically focusing on the right work, at the right time, for the right common purpose:

- We strive to serve the needs of ALL students, with an emphasis on those historically underserved.
- We strive to ensure access to educational opportunities intended to result in high achievement for each and every student.
- We strive to assist our students (and adults) to understand and value their own culture, their racial identity, and value and respect the cultures of those around them.
- We strive to examine our values, beliefs, practices, and policies about how we interact with students, families, and our community.

At YCS, Culturally Proficient Instruction is a way of thinking and teaching in which our teachers engage in daily practices that provide equitable outcomes for all learners. It involves the active pursuit of multiple



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perspectives, in and out of the classroom, and it recognizes how our culture influences our understanding, beliefs, and perspectives, and as a result, our teachers embrace and enhance learning for all learners. Gary Howard addresses these concepts in his book - We Can't Teach What We Don't Know. Here are a few of his quotes that we should reflect on and confidently change for the better:

- As White educators, we need to understand that we cannot fully know or experience the struggles of our black and brown students and colleagues, but we can become intentional co-conspirators that work to create an empathetic learning environment in which their stories and experiences can be acknowledged, valued, heard, seen, and shared respectfully.
- Transformationist Whites challenge the legitimacy of White dominance. Through their willingness to probe the deeper terrain of racial identity, transformative Whites become more self-reflective, authentic, and antiracist in their understanding of their own whiteness.
- Empathy begins with seeing others in their own light rather than through our projections of them in our light.
- Empathy actually opened the door of personal and professional growth for White educators in our district, enhanced our effectiveness as teachers, and relieved us of the illusion that we alone have the right answers for other people's children.

We understand that this is a journey and we are committed to the journey and believe it is certainly one worth taking. We will take action together, noting that we are truly "Stronger Together"!

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support of our students,

Alena Zachery-Ross
Superintendent of Schools
Ypsilanti Community Schools