

June 2, 2020

Dear Vermont Education Community:

In light of the killing of George Floyd, another instance of police violence against a person of color, we write to reaffirm the Agency of Education's commitment to social justice and equity literacy statewide. We firmly believe in our collective responsibility to create an anti-racist education system and commit to supporting districts and schools in Vermont in their own efforts to confront racism and create learning environments that are just, inclusive and equitable.

We recognize that the pursuit of racial equity is a process and journey that requires ownership and self-reflection. We also recognize that education has the enormous power to liberate, but due to the ingrained systems of white supremacy, has too often reinforced systems of oppression in the United States. Finally, we recognize that we at AOE, as part of Vermont's collective education system, have more work to do to advance the cause of equity and inclusion.

The AOE will continue to do all we can to support efforts incorporating diverse experiences and perspectives within teaching materials and assist with providing training to educators so that they incorporate materials that support racial equity in their pedagogy.

We are committed to continue work that supports inclusivity and anti-racism in Vermont education. This past school year, AOE awarded several school districts and supervisory unions with state funds to work toward greater equity literacy within their local systems. Many of these grant-funded projects are consortia-based, bringing together teachers across different schools within a region to receive professional learning and training on culturally responsive teaching practices; safe, inclusive and equitable learning environments; and developing local equity leadership within the district. Collaborative partnerships with entities such as the Vermont Coalition of Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools and creative use of programs such as the Title IV Indian Education Program supporting Abenaki students are a central component of many funded projects.

The Agency is a committed partner in the work of Vermont's [Act 1 of 2019, An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools](#). The legislation charges a Working Group with recommending education standards that recognize the history, contributions, and perspectives of diverse ethnic groups and social groups to the State Board of Education. To meet this charge, the Working Group comprehensively reviews SBE standards and rules that require change or wholesale rewriting to meet the intent of the law. The COVID-19 crisis and response have had an impact on the work, but the Working Group has recently met and will be recommencing their review and



recommendation process in earnest. We anticipate the critical recommendations needed to improve our curricula and pedagogy statewide to be ready for initial dissemination in the coming months.

In conclusion, we want to again reaffirm our strong commitment to Vermont's students, particularly our students who feel disenfranchised, overlooked, or alienated from school and our existing education system. We commit to ensuring that all students are educated in a more inclusive, global format that includes learning about social injustice and systemic racism. It is only through such a dedicated, collective approach that we can hope to see a brighter future for all.

Sincerely,

Dan French  
Secretary  
Vermont Agency of Education

Heather Bouchey  
Deputy Secretary  
Vermont Agency of Education

