

Resolution 1516R-001

By Director Larry Miller

WHEREAS, The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) boldly declared that, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship..."; and

WHEREAS, As a public school district, we are facilitators of the limitless growth potential of human beings. Our charge is to pour every ounce of creativity and energy that we have into the task of helping young people find and achieve their purpose. Our purpose must be guided by the belief that every human being deserves to live with dignity and that each of our students can leave his or her communities better than he or she found them; and

WHEREAS, The killing of unarmed Black men and women has left young people searching for answers to incredibly complicated and infuriating questions; and

WHEREAS, The extrajudicial killing of Black people in this country has deep roots in the dehumanizing system of white supremacy that once defined Black bodies as property and persisted in the form of lynchings during the 100 years of Jim Crow. The mob and the whip have been replaced by government sponsored "programs" like COINTELPRO, the war on drugs, mass incarceration, unjust policing, and structural policies that maintain racial segregation (redlining, urban renewal, and more) that exploit and oppress poor communities. Because these tragedies are not new and have lasting negative consequences for our communities, cities, and nation, we need to assert, over and over again, that the lives of Black people matter; and

WHEREAS, As WEB Du Bois stated, "The teachers of Black youth must believe in them. They must have faith in them and their community. They must trust them and encourage them and defend them." Right now that means affirming that we are committed to the emotional and physical safety of Black students. It means that our schools and classrooms must be safe spaces for dialogue and support on the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement and the efforts to reverse the school-to-prison pipeline; and

WHEREAS, We believe deeply that the lives of all people matter. As a school district and as educators our lives are constructed around this fact. Shouting loudly that "Black Lives Matter" does not negate our commitment to ALL of our students. In fact, we believe that challenging all of our students and colleagues to recognize the innate value of Black lives will help them grow and that the quality of life for all who live in our communities will improve when we value the lives of everyone. Since so many of our Black students struggle to trust that our society values them, we must affirm that their lives, specifically, matter; and

WHEREAS, Historically, when Black people have fought for a more democratic society, the lives of all people have improved. Each time barriers to Black people's potential have been erected, our whole society has suffered; and

WHEREAS, Educators knows that each of our students has different needs and that none of their lives end at our classroom doors. When our students are hungry or struggle emotionally, they don't learn as well as they otherwise could. When our students witness or experience violence, they suffer emotionally and physically. To maximize student potential, our school system must meet the needs of our students in different ways. Right now, it is especially important for Black students to know that we value them, no matter what the legal system and police actions tell them; and

WHEREAS, Problems in our schools mirror those in our society. Society is plagued with poverty, growing inequality, gun culture, and violence. For our schools to be safe and centers of respect for the educational process, students, staff, parents and community must all come together for the betterment of our students' future now; and

WHEREAS, The problems mirrored in schools can only be fully addressed with a united effort of community and school coming together; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That our district and schools and classrooms create safe space for dialog and support on issues faced in communities and schools related to policing, the educational process, and improving school safety; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That quality restorative justice practices be expanded and deepened district-wide, with the goal of training all staff in those practices; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the district create an advisory council — comprising community, parents, educators, and students — to assist in reviewing, strengthening, and creating curriculum and policy related to the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, the efforts to derail the school-to-prison pipeline, the broader historical experience of the Black community, and present schooling experience; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the above advisory council shall assist in implementing policy and curriculum and establishing quality dialog with staff, parents, students and community; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That student leaders of all types be called on to participate in advancing this discussion and implementation; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the effort include discussions of biases, racial micro-aggressions, school-wide data on race and discipline, fears, cultural ignorance, and stereotypes of Black youth; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That these discussions lead to training of school staffs in methods of de-escalation, mindfulness, creating a culture of trust, and cultural relevance; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That one of the goals of this process be to strengthen bringing community into our schools and to strengthen schools as centers of support for communities; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the district review its programs that may be contributing to unfair, unequal power relationships with community and school policing.

April 28, 2015