

Littleton Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Littleton Public Schools Hold Staff Training on Diversity, Inclusion

LITTLETON -- Superintendent Kelly Clenchy and the Littleton Public Schools would like to inform residents about ongoing efforts to address inequality and diversity within our school community and beyond.

Last month, about 30 staff members took part in “Let’s Talk About Race and Equity,” a two-day professional development program led by teachers Susan Harvey and Heidi MacGregor. Participants read excerpts from “EveryDay AntiRacism: Getting Real About Race in School,” by Mica Pollock, and reviewed resources from justice organizations.

Teachers and administrators discussed how they address race and equity in their buildings and coached one another through difficult scenarios that have occurred in their careers.

“Conversations around race and inequality have escalated around the world. it’s not exclusively an issue in Littleton,” MacGregor said. “As educators, we have a responsibility to recognize how we can do better, then take action.”

Superintendent Clenchy reaffirmed Littleton Public Schools' commitment to diversity last summer, at a time when people across the country were protesting systemic racism and police brutality. The next day, the district’s “Positive Sign Thursday” message was “Racism has no place here, or anywhere.”

The district has made many strides toward developing cultural literacy since:

- Staff and administrators are working with consultant Dr. Kalise Wornum on cultural proficiency.
- Harvey created a semester-long course at Littleton High School, “Race and Membership in America.”
- Faculty members have led professional development on diversity in science, inclusive libraries, and a multicultural book study for young students.

Harvey, a history teacher at Littleton High School, and MacGregor, K-5 STEM Integration Specialist for the district, have played a leading role in student and staff

development. They have co-facilitated book studies with Littleton High School students during optional summer reading.

In the summer/fall of 2019, students read “White Kids: Growing Up with Privilege in a Racially Divided America,” by Margaret A. Hagerman. In the summer/fall of 2020, students read “How to be an Anti-Racist,” by Ibram X. Kendi.

Harvey and MacGregor offered a summer professional development in 2020. About 30 district staff members listened to podcasts about race and equity, as related news events were unfolding around the world. Staff members wanted to learn more, and to better understand how to act in their buildings and beyond.

Participants said that “Let’s Talk About Race and Equity” has given them new insight into important issues and empowered them to act.

“Racial inequity needs to be something that we address on a continual basis in society, and as an educator, said Sarah Moore, a history teacher at Littleton High School. “The only way I can help do that effectively is if I continue to educate and challenge myself,”

Jessica Schoffel, a third-grade teacher at Russell Street School, said, "It's important for teachers to talk about race and equity because we are role models for our students. If we can encourage productive conversations about racism at a young age, we will help our students develop a greater understanding of their place in the world, and how they can be a part of positive change. Being silent on issues of injustice would give our students the wrong message."

T.J. Gansenberg, who teaches music at the Shaker Lane and Russell Street elementary schools, said, "Professional development regarding race and equity is so important. It has pushed me to think more about how to address matters of race as it relates to the subject matter I teach. The judgment-free environment and expectations established by Heidi and Susan were important for everyone to be successful having necessary, but uncomfortable conversations."

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Littleton Public School teachers Susan Harvey, left, and Heidi MacGregor co-facilitated a two-day professional development program in January. They are shown here in a pre-COVID-19 trip to Italy. (Photo courtesy Littleton Public Schools)

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