



NEW HOPE-SOLEBURY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
*Engaging, Enriching, and Empowering All Students  
through a World-Class Education*

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June 22, 2020

Dear New Hope-Solebury District Community:

We would like to take the opportunity to respond to the petition received on June 19 and to expand upon the public comments that Board President Liz Sheehan gave to the Solebury community on June 13.

The twelve pages of personal comments and experiences that accompanied the petition were heartbreaking. We must support victims of racial bias while disciplining and educating those who perpetuate it.

Therefore, immediately, New Hope-Solebury School District will take the following actions:

- The Board will recommend the formation of an Equity Committee at our next public meeting, June 30, that will enable the district and its stakeholders to conduct a formal examination of our operational procedures, programming, policies, and K-12 curriculum.
- We are working with community organizations to schedule outreach programs, virtual town hall meetings, and professional developments, and will share these dates as soon as possible. We welcome resources from local experts working in social justice.
- We will work harder to advocate at the state level for changes to the inequitable funding formula for public schools, which has resulted in an estimated \$23 billion gap
- We will advocate for the development of state curriculum standards on social justice.
- Members of the school board are currently attending anti-racism seminars through the PA School Board Association to learn more about equity work and to connect with experts in other school districts.
- We will keep the public informed of our efforts and anticipate participation and input from those who wrote and signed the petition.

This is only the beginning; the committee we establish at the June 30 meeting will work with all stakeholders toward future initiatives and long-term change. We are committed to doing the work of anti-racism together. We ask your patience as we make mistakes along the way, but we know that is a necessary part of growth and we accept that responsibility as board members, teachers, and administrators. We have difficult conversations ahead of us, but we are ready do the work for and with our Black, Indigenous, and families of Color, as well as for students who identify as LGBTQ. Not only is it vital that every student be represented in our curriculum, it is imperative that the larger community hear and learn from a diversity of experiences in order to pop what is colloquially known as the “New Hope bubble.” Historically this phrase has been used to celebrate the security of our small town, but symbolically this idea does all of us a great disservice, especially our students. It

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insulates us and keeps us from seeing that what happens in Minneapolis or Louisville or Philadelphia has a profound local impact.

This is a time to lead, in part, through listening. While it is the Board's job to govern, to help create a positive district culture, and to ensure the safety of our students, we cannot do this without buy-in from the community we serve. Signed by over 500 individuals, the petition serves as a road map, showing us the issues and concerns the community wants us to address. Although many members of our faculty and staff have been working independently to broaden their curricula and programming to include diverse voices and tackle challenging issues, we agree that it is long past time to organize and support this effort district-wide. Past attempts at raising larger conversations about race in the school system have been stymied by accusations of political bias and other obstacles which have precluded significant progress on these important issues. As the petition attests, we hope we are now at a point where a growing majority of our community agrees that racism is a human rights issue, not a political one.

Dwayne Reed, an educator in Chicago, recently said that "white supremacy won't die until white people see it as a white issue they need to solve rather than a Black issue they need to empathize with." Our district must engage everyone in a conversation about white privilege and how that operates. It is incumbent upon the 92% of us in New Hope-Solebury who are white to understand how we benefit from this privilege and how it allows institutional racism to persist. We understand that acknowledging that this IS a white issue is a necessary first step in working together toward racial justice in our schools and community.

Thank you for your outreach and your bravery in sharing your stories. We are committed to making meaningful change in our school district and working to ensure that all of our students are provided with a well-rounded education that is more representative and inclusive of the contributions of diverse cultures and ethnicities; that celebrates diversity and increases cultural understanding; and that engages students and faculty in tough conversations.

The New Hope – Solebury Board of Directors

Dr. Charles Lentz  
Superintendent

Dr. Charles Malone  
Director of Elementary and Secondary Curriculum

Mr. John O'Hara  
President  
New Hope-Solebury Education Association

Ms. Maria Bennett  
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New Hope-Solebury Education Support Professionals

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