



### **BOE Statement (5/27/21)**

We want to extend our sincere appreciation for everyone who has invested their time, work, thoughts, opinions, research, personal stories, and more regarding the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative that Forsyth County Schools embarked on in 2017. We want to share with our community the following:

- Forsyth County Schools does not and will not teach, nor promote, Critical Race Theory. We teach the [Georgia Standards of Excellence](#). We will continue to work with our staff and students to be sure all voices are heard and respected as we build leaders for success with strong character as stated in our [Learner Profile](#).
- Our district is committed to listening, learning, and leading so ALL students and their families are welcomed, included, and connected in the FCS family. We will continue to evaluate all resources and initiatives (including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan) and look forward to engaging stakeholders in the creation of a new 2022-27 Strategic Plan this fall.

*The Forsyth County Board of Education*

### **Superintendent Letter (5/17/21)**

In February 2017, Forsyth County Schools' accreditation was renewed by AdvancED.

The comprehensive review of our school district included six months of self-study and a three-day visit by the review team that included observations of classrooms and interviews with students, staff, parents/guardians and community members. Proudly, we received many commendations.

As is true with most accreditation reviews, we also received a couple of recommendations to help us improve. In the spring of 2017, our school system embarked on a new five-year Strategic Plan. It was logical to include the recommendations made by the accreditation team and align them with our new plan.

With our growing diverse population of students and families, the accreditation team recommended that we create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan that would ensure that all FCS students and families had a sense of belonging, respect and acceptance in our schools and in our community.

It was also recommended that we enhance our mentoring program to ensure that all students had access to a caring adult who was vested in the personal growth and well-being of our students.

It was clear from their interviews with stakeholders that not all students and families felt a sense of belonging in the FCS family, and not all students had support socially, emotionally and academically from a caring adult.

Think about that for a moment. Isn't that what we all want? Don't we all desire to have a sense of belonging, to be respected and accepted for who we are and to have connections with others. As a parent, that is what I want for my own children. As an educator, that is what I want for all FCS children.

This is all we are trying to accomplish at FCS with the DEI Plan and our mentoring program. There is no indoctrination. There is no political agenda. We simply want all our children and families to be valued. That's it.

How do we accomplish belonging? First, through education. We must be intentional in our efforts to ensure that our staff and students understand and respect the different cultures represented in our schools and in our community. The only way to do that is to learn about different cultures and have conversations and relationships with folks who have different backgrounds and life experiences than our own.

Our DEI Plan does not have a curriculum. It does include a voluntary training for staff. It does mean our schools will be intentional about programs to ensure they are inclusive and sensitive to the many cultures represented in our schools in our community.

Secondly, we accomplish belonging through action. This work started before the DEI Plan was created. We stopped serving one set meal in our cafeterias and instead provided a variety of foods for our children. We worked with community partners to provide devices and internet connectivity for our economically disadvantaged children. Children with learning challenges were provided additional classes and tutors. Books and resources were added so children could learn more about themselves, others and the world. These are just a few examples of the many things we have done and plan to do in the future to create inclusion.

Our school system has been a shining star in our state and in our nation for many years. I am proud to have served as your superintendent since September 2014. As I say to our staff all the time, "We are getting better or we are getting worse, there is no such thing as status quo."

Ensuring that all students and all families are valued, respected and embraced will only help us get better as a school district, county, nation and world.

*Jeff Bearden, Superintendent, Forsyth County Schools*