

TCAPS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Statement

(As presented by Dr. VanWagoner at the [Board of Education meeting](#) on April 26, 2021)

As many are likely now aware, a racist, anti-Semitic, and discriminatory “slave trade” Snapchat was being circulated by several TCAPS students, as well as students in other districts. It was brought to the attention of school officials by students, who were then immediately able to begin an investigation and to take appropriate action to address the posts.

First, I would like to publicly condemn this behavior. It is never acceptable, or in any way funny, to create, share, or comment on social media posts that appear to trade or sell others, to dehumanize or devalue another person, or to discriminate against your peers because of an individual’s gender, identity, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

Second, I want to applaud the student “upstanders” who saw the Snapchat, knew it was wrong, and rightly reported it to school officials. It can be difficult to do what is right in the face of peer pressure or because of the fear of retaliation for speaking up. It can be all too easy to remain silent, but the students who came forward proved their strength of character. I am so incredibly proud of them for standing up for what they knew to be right.

Social media has the power to help connect us, it also has the potential to cause harm to others. We must call out actions that fail to meet our high standards of excellence for our students, particularly when those actions fail to meet the tenets of basic human decency and respect. We must also ensure that we are providing as many opportunities as possible for students to learn to better understand and relate to one other going forward.

TCAPS will continue to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts and we recognize - as incidents like this show - that there is still much to be done. We are grateful for the consultation and guidance of leaders within our community, and beyond, who are helping TCAPS in this work, including Marshall Collins from Northwest Education Services (formally TBAISD.)

As an update on the activity currently underway by our Social Equity Task Force, a group that was formed and has been working collaboratively with partners since August, includes the following goals and key action steps:

- Creating a definition of equity for TCAPS and creating an anti-racism, anti-Semitism, anti-discrimination resolution for the Board of Education to consider at an upcoming meeting
- Providing staff training through Justice Leaders Collaborative, with the goal of working to develop and provide more comprehensive professional development opportunities for TCAPS staff
- Identifying and providing immediate opportunities for student learning about diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging issues through guest speakers/presentations and

lessons

- Further developing a timeline to review TCAPS curriculum and instruction identifying what we are currently teaching and identifying gaps that need to be addressed in our curriculum and resources
- Continuing efforts to provide and expand the books available in school libraries to ensure they include authors who represent BIPOC communities and a wide diversity of individual voices and experiences

While these efforts are underway, we acknowledge that there is still much work to be done. TCAPS remains committed to doing our part to ensure that EACH student is provided a safe and welcoming learning environment, which celebrates EACH student's individuality, uniqueness, and contributions. We will also continue to work with partners in our community because racism and discrimination are not just TCAPS issues, they are broader societal issues and we will need to continue working together to confront and address them as as a community and nation.