

The Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township

Phone: (317) 988-8600

Fax: (317) 243-5744

Email: jeff.butts@wayne.k12.in.us

Education Center
1220 South High School Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46241



Jeffrey K. Butts, Ph.D.

Superintendent of Schools

June 3, 2020

To The MSD of Wayne Township Students and Families:

Please allow me to be vulnerable when I say this is probably one of the toughest letters for me to write. I did not want my silence to be deafening, and I have truly searched for the right words to express what has been going through my mind. As you know, I am a white male. And with that, I have privileges that are afforded to me because of the color of my skin. Privileges that have been bestowed by our society. I have come to understand that there have been systems working in my favor that have made many events in my life more possible.

Over the last several months, we have witnessed several incidents of systemic racism and oppression that have rocked our world. The disheartening part about all of this is knowing that none of these incidents are new: the racial disparities in our healthcare system (COVID-19); the horrendous acts of police brutality, which have led to the death and heartache of many Black men and women; the unjustified traffic stops and arrests, which have resulted in unfair sentencing for so many others; and the covert racism and microaggressions that happen in school classrooms. For over 400 years, this has been a horrific part of America's history.

I will not pretend to understand what it is like to be a Black person or a person of color in this society. I have never had to have the talk with my son about what to do and what to say if he were to ever be pulled over by a police officer or about being careful when he chooses to wear a hoodie at night. These are very real conversations that many, if not all, Black parents have had to have with their children.

I say all of that to say, as the Superintendent of the M.S.D. of Wayne Township, it is my responsibility to be a leader in this work...the work of dismantling white privilege and structural racism. It is my responsibility to ensure when Black children and children of color come to school that they receive a great education AND that they will be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve from their classmates and each and every staff member.

I want you to know that I acknowledge my personal and professional role, and along with that, I know it is my responsibility to talk to others about systemic racism and what we must do differently. Maintaining the status quo can no longer be tolerated and will not be in the M.S.D. of Wayne Township. Through our equity work led by Dr. Denita Harris, I am continuously learning about how I can be more impactful in this work. And, through this work, I will listen, search for understanding, and work with others to change the things we will not accept. I will stand with our students, staff, and community!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey K. Butts

Jeffrey K. Butts, Ph.D.
Superintendent



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