

Dear Pierce Faculty, Staff & Families,

As I reflect on my first year as the principal of Pierce, there is a great deal to be proud of as a school community. From implementing one-to-one computing to revamping our master schedule, we have brought about necessary and important changes for our students' learning and school experiences in a relatively short period of time. However, when I think about our efforts in a broader context, there is a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done. Racial injustice is a reality for many of our students, staff, and families, and our school and district have a responsibility to use its platform and resources to equip our educators and students with the tools and support necessary to combat these injustices in our community and society. As a principal, parent, and member of the Milton community, I am committed to leading this work in our school community.

As we think ahead to a new school year, I want to share some specific change efforts that you can expect as we move forward.

**Collecting Parent, Teacher & Student Insights:** At last week's meeting of the Milton School Committee, numerous parents and community members shared powerful testimonials about their children's experiences, often related to race and racism, in the Milton Public Schools and at Pierce over the years. These experiences offered pronounced evidence of our compelling need to enact personal and institutional change so that we can be the affirming, inclusive and equitable school and school system our students, staff and families deserve. In order to understand both the explicit and nuanced experiences of our parents, teachers, and students, and particularly those that may be characterized by racism or injustice, we need to create spaces for their voices to be heard and elevated. This summer I will hold several focus groups to hear from parents and staff about their experiences and perspectives. I will hold similar roundtable conversations with more educators and students when school resumes in September.

**Adopting Anti-Racist Curriculum & Teaching Practices:** Educators need to be able to engage with students and each other on the topics of race, anti-racism, and equity. They need the tools, resources and support to do this work. Building on structures already in place including Pierce's partnership with the Anti-Defamation League and our recent English language arts curriculum adoption process that aimed to introduce units of study and literature that encompass topics and texts that are connected to dimensions of diversity, and specifically race, we have to build our capacity to adopt, create, and implement anti-racist curriculum and instructional practices in our classrooms in a safe, supportive, and academically rigorous fashion.

**Professional Development for Staff:** Educators need targeted professional development to grow their ability to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students through the lenses of diversity and equity. To this end, all Milton Public Schools staff will participate in a 15 hour professional development series with cultural proficiency coach Dr. Kalise Wornum during the 2020-2021 school year. In addition to our school-based leadership team, 18 Pierce educators recently completed this course with Dr. Wornum. Another installment of this training will be offered to staff in August.

**Affinity Groups:** Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, the Pierce Diversity Committee worked to initiate affinity groups for our students of color. The implementation of these pilot groups was halted by the school closure this spring, but we are prepared to move forward with these opportunities for students in the fall.

We find ourselves at an unprecedented time in our history. Evidence for change in how schools and communities actively combat and resist racism is everywhere we look. From our curriculum and instruction to our policies and practices, we have a responsibility as a school community to interrogate our work and processes with a critical eye and a focus on providing all of our children with the opportunity and support they need to realize their full potential. We must collectively embrace the need for a change in our values, systems, and practices, and commit

to providing an anti-racist and equitable education for all children. This work will be challenging, and we may not get it right every time. However, it represents the beginning steps on the path toward a more socially just and equitable experience for all of our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Fish". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a stylized "F".

William Fish  
Principal