



United Teachers of Franklin Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

October 2020

United Teachers of Franklin stands in full support of Franklin's ongoing commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. These values lie at the heart of our organization:

- We support diversity, as it embodies our mission to fight all forms of bias in education.
- We support equity, as it forms the foundation of our collective, democratic process.
- We support inclusion—not only because we are a union, but because we are *teachers*.

We work hard every day to create environments for students to thrive. If we are not fighting for students to express their authentic identities in the classroom, then we are not meeting our professional duties. We see no contradiction between protecting our jobs and protecting students from insensitive or harmful comments and practices. It is essential for our continued development as teachers to address these incidents promptly. We believe that difficult conversations can become part of our school culture—not to create a punitive atmosphere, but to cultivate a powerful solidarity at Franklin rooted in compassion and our shared mission of serving students.

We appreciate our new DEI coordinator, Mrs. Kim Owens-Heath, and the transparency of her progressive discipline policy. The due process in our existing contract allows for the removal of teachers who make no effort to reform practices that result in student harm. The union would not oppose such a removal, but we hope that such measures will not be necessary. Ultimately, we hope that the real work of making Franklin a safer space happens in the many small, uncomfortable moments when one person decides to speak up and the other commits to listening.

United Teachers of Franklin applauds the work of the students who have led this initiative, and we encourage the administration to fully embrace a new era of restorative justice practices within our staff culture.