



# West Irondequoit Central School District

321 LIST AVENUE  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14617  
Telephone: (585) 342-5500  
FAX: (585) 266-1556  
[www.westirondequoit.org](http://www.westirondequoit.org)

## Summary of 7-12 Listening Circles – June 2020

On Tuesday June 16, 7-12 Community stakeholders were invited to participate in a listening circle, entitled: “Brave Space: A Talking Circle about Recent Events and Racism in America.” The format of this listening circle was modeled after student circles conducted earlier in June with the support of PiRI (Partners in Restorative Initiatives) and WICSD staff facilitators.

The introduction to the Circle was facilitated by Superintendent Aaron Johnson, with breakout groups supported by Mrs. Karen Finter, 7-12 Director of Instruction; Ms. Alecia Zipp-McLaughlin, Principal of Irondequoit High School; and Mrs. Kim Cristal, K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Supervisor. More than 20 community members registered to participate in the circle. This is a brief summary of the feelings and insights shared by participants. We greatly value and respect all of the insights shared and we look forward to future conversations.

---

As an introduction, participants were asked to share one word or phrase about how they were feeling. They were also asked what value they hold on to during difficult conversations:

### Feelings:

- Frustration
- The need for action
- Investment
- Reflective
- Awareness growing
- Sad
- An opportunity lost
- Overwhelmed
- Disappointed in education
- The need for true anti-racists
- There is room for growth

### Values during Difficult Conversations:

- Embrace diversity
- Open to communication
- Appreciate perspectives
- A way to learn to do better
- A way to understand own privilege
- Recognize that this is a change process
- Seek common ground
- Build culture of all being heard
- Being kind is not enough; need action
- Saying vs. doing

As a second round in the listening circle, participants were asked to identify the necessary critical steps to address the issues of racism within our school community.

- Need for more engagement from all
- Move past shame of white privilege
- Even if there is an initial lack of participation-keep going, build trust
- Educate others
- Move forward
- Diversification of staff is critical
- Families need an outlet to share feelings
- Expand curriculum, teach the perspectives
- Consider Parent ambassadors
- Zero tolerance for racism or bigotry
- Need literature reflective of more cultures
- Honest and open communication
- Support for parents
- Remove antiquated cultural celebrations
- Increase student and community engagement
- Staff accountability
- Provide opportunities for reflection
- Access to counseling

Finally, participants were asked if they were the principal of their child's school, or the Superintendent of Schools, what would be the first move?

- Change the curriculum
- Activate more people-enlist experts
- Remove confederate flag on Hoover
- Gather students soon to get their insights. Consider how can they be represented by staff and feel comfortable
- Provide training for staff
- Communicate with students
- Consider walking a day in the life of an African-American student. Get a sense of what they go through every day.