

## Communities In Schools of Lakewood Values, Beliefs and Commitments

### **Student-Centered**

We believe that EVERY student, no matter their race, ethnicity, ability, gender and gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or geography deserves the best possible education. In a society with vast inequalities and a long history of oppression and racism, we believe in providing EVERY student access to the experiences, resources and support that allow them to thrive and reach their full potential in school and in life no matter what.

We commit to being **student-centered** in all that we do (e.g. our time, priorities, discussions, and decisions) and to responding to the best of our abilities whenever and however kids need us in order to address both individual and larger systemic barriers to success.

### **Teamwork**

We believe in order to create optimal learning environments for EVERY student, we must all work together. We know that collaboration is not easy, but we are committed to partnership and inclusion.

We commit to authentically participating in **teamwork** with our schools, students, families, organizations, and community partners.

### **Impact**

We believe that our commitment to the students we serve must keep us focused on results and benefits to our students. We also believe that relationships, not programs, change the trajectory of students' lives. We know that actions affect individuals and relationships in both intentional and non-intentional ways.

We commit to staying focused on the results of our words, decisions, and actions by considering how they **impact** our work, students, schools, and community.

### **Excellence**

We believe EVERY student deserves the highest quality supports and programming. We also believe that excellence is a journey, not a destination, and we must continually strive to do our best. We believe we can approach excellence by leveraging the strengths of our staff, community, partners and resources to ensure that students receive the supports that meet their needs.

We commit to striving for **excellence and equity** in our education system, understanding that excellence in education is only achieved when it is available for EVERY student. And we commit to **excellence and equity** in our work through being open to feedback, asking difficult questions and learning from challenges rather than avoiding them.

## **Equity and Anti-Racism Commitment**

Our commitment to young people drives everything we do at Communities In Schools of Lakewood. We know that our mission and work to surround students with a community of support to empower them to stay in school and achieve in life is often undermined by persistent, systemic racism, and we must do more to ensure our youth, have the tools and the environments they need to thrive.

We know racism and inequity exists because we see it where we serve. We see significant disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes among students based on race, ethnicity, and other factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, immigration status, special needs, English language proficiency, sexual orientation, and geography. These disparities are built on a history of systemic and economic inequity and racism.

We cannot deny the painful, violent truth about our nation's past or the present reality of racism facing our communities of colors, especially Black and Indigenous people in the United States of America. We must not tolerate acts of police violence, and we must see the killing of so many Black people (George Floyd, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, and so many more) at the hands of police and others as a symptom of the deeper wound our country carries. Racism infuses the systems with which our young people interact and those that they and their families rely on for health care, education, and justice, just to name a few.

The accumulation of acts of violence and oppression, either experienced or witnessed, can have a profound effect on our young people, particularly young people of color. They may believe that people in positions of power do not value and respect their worth, and they may fear for their safety. Our young people cannot learn and thrive if they fear for their own safety and well-being. There is also well-documented psychological and developmental damage resulting from systemic racism (American Psychological Association; <https://www.apa.org/pubs/highlights/spotlight/issue-128>).

The resiliency of our young people is undeniable, and we are proud of their leadership in making our communities better for all members! As a youth-serving agency, we must actively engage in strategies to help prevent racial trauma for our young people and equip adults with the tools to show up as allies, mentors, and supports.

The issue of inequity will not be solved overnight, and as an organization we are committed to partnering with our students, families, and community for real change through long-term sustained action. We will continue to invite our community to join us in solidarity against violence and racism today, tomorrow, and in the months and years ahead.

Additionally, we will continue to partner with our community and students, as well as the Statewide and National Networks of Communities In Schools, to influence state and national anti-racist policy.

We support those who are addressing police brutality directly and accept our responsibility as a youth-focused organization to incorporate anti-racist principles in all the work we do with and for young people. Communities In Schools of Lakewood

commits to build a team of staff, board and volunteers that can and will productively stay in even the most difficult equity-focused conversations. We commit to a continuation of action, but more importantly to taking better action; to improving our collaborative, reflective practice; and to surfacing, examining and rethinking important assumptions in our work.

It will take all of us to change the ingrained assumptions, beliefs and systems of oppression. We encourage our community, partners and supporters to join us in taking a pledge to examine and rethink our assumptions as we work toward becoming anti-racist in our beliefs and actions.

**Agreement:** As a Communities in Schools of Lakewood board member, staff member, intern or volunteer, I agree to these values, beliefs and commitments and will strive to uphold them during my role with Communities In Schools of Lakewood.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_