



# WEYMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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Robert Hedlund, Mayor

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Carrie Palazzo

May 27, 2021

MASC Office  
c/o Friend of Public Education Award  
One McKinley Square, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02109

Dear MASC:

Please find the nomination for the Friend of Public Education Award submitted by the Weymouth School Committee.

This nomination recognizes a group of individuals who through their work have contributed to the public schools and have demonstrated ongoing commitment to and support of public education. Specifically, we seek to recognize three recent graduates of Weymouth High School, Olivia Pietruszewski, Janaysia Gethers, and Paige Hardy, who have worked together to bring more awareness and support to Black and Brown individuals in both our community and schools. Their addresses have been provided on the Nomination Award Form attached.

In the wake of the deaths of Ahmaud Abernathy, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, these three women reached out to the Town of Weymouth, Weymouth School Committee and Weymouth School District in May 2020 with their intent to organize a Black Lives Matter Vigil in Weymouth. With professionalism, maturity, calmness and determination, they worked collaboratively with the Town Departments and Schools to identify a suitable location and develop the event. Understanding their rights to organize and the potential obstacles and concerns, they were steadfast in their goal but willing to work with all involved to ensure a safe and successful event. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, they organized a peaceful, very well attended and inspiring Black Lives Matter Vigil at Legion Field, Weymouth. The event included former and current Weymouth students who told stories of their experiences, read poems, sang songs and encouraged those attending to continue the work of supporting Black people in our community. This event organized by these three young people continues to contribute to the public schools in a number of ways leading to significant and meaningful actions by the School Committee, Weymouth School District and a number of other community actions.

After the Vigil, many of the young people involved in the Vigil were inspired to continue a summer long effort of peaceful rallies in front of Town Hall raising awareness for Black Lives Matter.

In addition, the Black Lives Vigil led to additional discussions at School Committee and, on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, School Committee unanimously supported an affirmation of Support for Black and Brown Staff, Students, and Community Members. Affirmation attached.

In addition, the School Committee and Weymouth School District created a Cultural Competency/Racial Equity Subcommittee to its Return to School Plan working groups recognizing that there was not only a health pandemic due to COVID-19 but that racial equity concerns needed specific focus. The Return to School Subcommittee, included a number of individuals including teachers, principals, school committee members and community members. Olivia, specifically, continued to stay involved with Weymouth as a part of this group during these virtual meeting times. The subgroups met to develop a piece of the Weymouth Return to School Plan and, in August 2020, drafted a Statement of Racial Equity for our Community of Weymouth Public Schools seeking to: (1) review curriculum, (2) make data informed decisions, (3) review and challenge hiring practices, and (4) create safe community spaces for meaningful inclusive discussion. The Committee continues to meet regularly to this day. From this Return to School Racial Equity Subcommittee, a number of actions have occurred including the formation of a Black Student Union at Weymouth High School, a newly formed community group of parents called Weymouth for Inclusion, Solidarity and Equity (WISE) and a commitment to include a Racial Equity lens to school discussions.

Because of Olivia, Paige and Janaysia's ongoing commitment to the Weymouth Public Schools and their willingness to include us, work with us and engage in full, extraordinary conversations, Weymouth has made Racial Equity a priority focus for our work with students, staff and community at large.

Please support this nomination by choosing these three recent graduates of Weymouth High School, Olivia Pietruszewski, Janaysia Gethers, and Paige Hardy, as recipients of the Friend of Public Education Award.

Thank you,

Weymouth School Committee