|  |
| --- |
| **'We believe' statement regarding racism experienced by the Cooper High School**  **girls basketball team** |

|  |
| --- |
| Feb. 23, 2022    The girls varsity basketball team for Robbinsdale Cooper High School played against New Prague High School on Feb. 15, 2022. The game was held in New Prague. During and after the game, Cooper’s student-athletes, coaches and support staff were subjected to racist taunts from some student and adult members of the crowd. These taunts included making “monkey noises” and chants directed at the team. Monkey noises and chants have long been used during sporting events to ridicule African American athletes.    As a district, Robbinsdale Area Schools, in partnership with Cooper High School, assert this incident occurred as described. This incident has caused trauma to the Cooper High School girls basketball team and the school community as a whole.    We believe our Cooper student-athletes and coaches and the first-person statements they’ve made regarding the incident.    We believe the team experienced racist taunts and jeers from the crowd at a high school basketball game in New Prague.    We believe the student-athletes and coaches handled themselves with dignity and pride as they courageously addressed the racism they heard coming from the stands and consoled and supported one another as they left the gym.    We believe people should be respected no matter the color of their skin, and our students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds are important and should be honored.    We believe racist behavior or the perpetuation of racism in any form is damaging to the social-emotional and mental well being of our students.    We believe school should be a safe space for all students. That sense of safety should extend to every court, field, rink, track, course, stage or auditorium, for all student activities and athletics.    We believe that the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) has the responsibility of taking the experience of our students and coaching staff at New Prague High School seriously.    **We are committed to protecting our students and staff, and will take a stance against racism no matter the cost, and as a result, Robbinsdale district schools, including Cooper High School, will not be competing in any athletic events hosted in New Prague for the foreseeable future.**    Sincerely,    David Engstrom  Superintendent    Cabinet of Robbinsdale Area Schools:  Marti Voight  Jeff Connell  Ukee Dozier  Amy O’Hern  Toya Stewart Downey  Anthony Williams |