

Dear Don,

We are writing to you in response to the incident last week involving the intentional release of our ABAR summit "FishBowl" conversation to Fox News and the culminating and devastating impact of that release on our BIPOC staff who participated in the event.

First, we want to recognize the response you sent last Friday was an acknowledgement of what transpired and offered a conciliatory nod towards continuing our ABAR work that all of us have to do. However, we strongly believe that it was not enough. The response missed the mark in content and tone and has resulted in a deterioration of trust. It has deteriorated trust with our staff, particularly our BIPOC staff, who volunteered to participate in this activity, were encouraged to speak their truth, and now are being vilified for it. We fear for their safety physically, emotionally, and mentally.

We needed a robust response that unconditionally supported the BIPOC staff members mentioned, with actionable steps to ensure their safety. We needed a robust response that unequivocally supported the ABAR work and a commitment to increase the scope and the pace of our ABAR work. We needed the response to live up to the promise you made in August, that if one of us, staff and administrators, found ourselves "out there" with ABAR work, that the district would back them up 100%.

As you have heard, our BIPOC staff are tired. They are tired of always being on the defensive when it comes to talking about race in schools. They are tired having to navigate the tricky corridors of systemic racism in our district. They are tired of having their hopes raised, that the Beaverton School District was going to get serious about race and equity, only to be let down when it became difficult. We will continue to lose BIPOC staff to other districts if this is allowed to continue.

This is not an easy letter for us to write. If we are to hold true to our learnings and our leadership in our buildings around ABAR, we know one thing: being silent means being complicit in maintaining “status quo” when it comes to racism in all of its insidious forms. As Desmond Tutu stated, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

We believe that this is one of those defining moments in any district where actions and words matter and can make a significant difference. We believe that all is not lost and that we have an opportunity to correct some wrongs. Communication missteps have clearly been made, and repair to our staff must happen in order for us to move forward with this work.

What is the plan for staff (classified, certified and administrators) when mistakes happen and/or threats are made? What action has been taken so far? We'd like to know more about what steps you are taking to provide immediate support to staff who have been threatened and harmed. We are wondering about what specific strategies are being tried, such as...

- Speaking out in support of Stephanie Yelder’s passion for action, to be bold in our work to be Anti-racist educators.
- Speaking out in support of Katherine Watkin’s belief that racial trauma exists and there should be consequences for teachers who continue to perpetuate racial trauma on students.
- Speaking up when our staff is attacked in any media story; for example, it is abhorrent to ridicule a person based on their appearance, which has happened in this situation.
- Offering a public apology supporting Stephanie and Katherine, who are passionate about their work to teach all children and end racism.
- Creating a plan WITH all the impacted staff on the panel who will likely continue to suffer email attacks and insults for weeks to come.

- For staff who are fearful about continuing to work, making temporary adjustments to their work schedule or work environment to feel safe to continue their work.
- Creating a plan for preventing this from happening in the future, and if it does formulating a response plan.
- Creating an interim process for reporting complaints of racism at all levels, as well as a follow-up process.
- Addressing the community about the situation and addressing misconceptions. The District needs to take control of the narrative and be specific about the why and how of our anti-racism work, based off of state requirements and laws.

This letter is an invitation to a collaborative meeting. We would like to discuss these points in person and the pace and scope of our ABAR work, with a small group of elementary administrators.

We know at the end of the day, you want to do the right thing. We are asking you to also do the brave thing. We close with the stirring words of Martin Luther King Jr., “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” Now is our time to make a strong stance.

Respectfully,

Kalay McNamee

Sherry Marsh

Jim Hiller

Ali Montelongo

Erin Miles

Erin Kollings

Monica Arbow

Karla Ramírez

Angela Tran

Erika Heslin
Wendy Bernard
Tiffany Wiencken
Annie Pleau
Larissa Parker
Ashlee Hudson
Carmen Roberti
Sean Leverty
Shannon Anderson
Tracy Bariao-Arce
Monique Singleton
Melissa Holz