

Critical Truth

From: david williams
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2021 3:30 PM
To: don grotting
Subject: Please Review: District Message

Stephanie & Katherine,

I am planning to send the following message out this afternoon to all staff in the district. I wanted you to be aware of this as I am mentioning you both. The full message is below.

If you would rather I do NOT include your name please let me know as soon as possible. I want to send this message out by 4:30 today to all staff. This week has been a week of reflection for us all and I want to thank you both for the work you do for this district in moving our anti-bias, antiracist work forward and I do look forward to finding time to meet with you both individually.

Thanks,
Don

Dear BSD Staff,

We've come to the end of a challenging week. Since the publication of the Fox News article regarding the February Equity Summit, I have engaged in many conversations and read many emails from staff about the issues that it raised. It has caused me and the entire leadership team to reflect on how it is that we move forward.

I've especially reflected on a statement from Board Member Donna Tyner at this week's School Board meeting. She credited the work of Dr. Bryant Marks of the National Training Institute on Race and Equity and said: "In reference to discussions about race, if it isn't messy, you aren't doing it right."

This discussion has been messy. It also has been worth having as part of our commitment to equity and the success of every student. As a district and a community of learners, we have high expectations for ourselves, and we seek continuous improvement.

I have learned from this discussion and see opportunities to improve.

Instead of focusing on the specific questions asked by Fox News, I should have focused on elevating what matters most: our shared values of creating and nurturing an inclusive environment for all students, families and staff and the work that we're undertaking to become an anti-bias, antiracist school district.

Key to our equity work is assuming positive intentions. When I hear Katherine Watkins' comments now, I understand her to be expressing her expectation that all our educators authentically engage in ABAR work for the benefit of our students. When I hear Stephanie Yelder's comments now, I understand her to be expressing her desire for colleagues to bring an intense passion and energy to our efforts.

I myself have made statements expressing similar sentiments. If we're going to be an antiracist district, everyone needs to be engaged. Breaking down barriers that harm our BIPOC students and staff is difficult work, and it's not optional. Doing what is right for our students so that outcomes aren't predictable based on race, gender, disability, language spoken or any other characteristics requires open and constructive dialogue — together.

I apologize for the harm caused to Katherine, Stephanie and other staff members. I remain committed to supporting all of our staff's personal well-being and safety.

Thank you for joining me in this work and for your continued dedication to our students.

Don



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