

5/8/2021

Mail - Rachel Hiatt - Outlook

Follow Up to Yesterday's Letter

Allen Bourff <abourff@hse.k12.in.us>

Tue 2/9/2021 4:21 PM

To: All Certified Teachers <AllCertifiedTeachers@hse.k12.in.us>

Cc: Principals - All and Assistants <PrincipalsAllandAssistants@hse.k12.in.us>

1 attachments (18 KB)

Follow up to February 8th letter.docx;

Attached is a follow up and clarification to concerns and questions regarding yesterday's letter.



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Dear Faculty:

Black Lives Matter.

At Hamilton Southeastern Schools, we will not debate the humanity of any individual.

We have emphasized that Black Lives Matter, and this remains an emphasis in our equity work as we move towards creating and sustaining safe places for our students to learn and teachers to teach.

The intent of yesterday's letter to the faculty was designed to provide instructional strategies to discuss and teach Black Lives Matter, one of the most significant issues of our time. I understand that the impact was hurtful, and for that I apologize. The letter was designed to provide guidance for teachers to lead these discussions and to assist students as they develop their own positions on this important social issue.

That we have families that do not wish for us to have these discussions has been made clear. However, we are limiting our students if we do not provide them the tools to explore a social cause, research its origin, and understand its significance. We have staff that work every day to prepare our students to assume their places as local and global contributors. Anything less is breaking our compact with the community.

I am not requesting that teachers abandon their passion for a social cause, that social issues not be discussed, or that students not be allowed to express themselves. On the contrary, I am requesting that we affirm publicly through our instructional practices that Black Lives Matter, that all humans have value, and that we stand in solidarity against injustice, racism, and violence, at all times. When that affirmation is challenged by those who contend that we have overstepped our mission, I will be able to say that our attention has been on the development of thoughtful processes enabling our students to positively influence their community.

Respectfully,

Allen Bourff

role in the work of the school district.

(NATAKI PETTIGREW)

As Dr. Bourff said, I am Nataki Pettigrew, and I am thrilled to be on this journey with each of you. We recognize the challenges associated with navigating issues of equity. These challenges have led to meaningful dialogue with our stakeholders. But my role is to ensure continued communication AND action so that we are effectively addressing inequities in our district-

As a college student, one of my favorite books was *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, and he once wrote, "I am invisible simply because people refuse to see me." That resonated with me as a college student -- that we could somehow refuse to see people.

Despite all of our greatest achievements as a country, as a district, we must acknowledge that there are students we have refused to see. In this position, I have the privilege of aligning our policies, practices, and procedures with a robust vision of equity and inclusion. A vision that encompasses ALL students.

As we embark on this journey toward equity, I want to remind you that we have a collaborative equity team that is comprised of equity coaches and district and building administrators. They each have completed equity training, including the undoing racism training with Child Advocates. Please take a moment to visit our new district equity webpage to locate your child's equity coach.

Our teachers have also participated in additional training and study around inclusion. We have designated safe spaces in our schools for our LGBTQ students as we intentionally work to affirm the identity of each student in our learning community. HSE has also prioritized social emotional learning in each of our schools.

So what does this mean? We ask ourselves, what will be different. How will we change from this moment? Although we have taken steps to sharpen our equity lens, we have so much work to do to ensure that equity is integrated into the fabric of our learning system. We must be a witness to the truth. And to that end, we will continue to disrupt bias in our school system by **evaluating policies** that disproportionately impact marginalized students, we will **challenge implicit bias** in our schools through extensive and continued training and development, we will work to **narrow the gaps** between our highest performing students and our lowest performing students. We will **integrate a systematic process** that identifies and addresses inequities in each of our schools. We will **listen to the people** in our district as we discuss how inequities have shaped the student experience. We will **hold ourselves accountable** for specific equity metrics. And we will **commit to a growth mindset** as we ask ourselves "what have we done to be better for our students?" And then we will take action as we pursue institutional change in our district.

Here's the good news -- we are all a part of the solution. We are not powerless to change and it never too late to pivot. What better time than now to bridge cultural differences, affirm the identity of all of our students, cultivate equity, and improve the experiences of each student.

As we continue to pursue equity and inclusion, I ask all stakeholders to give us space to make changes. As we turn the mirror inward, we truly understand the significance of this moment. We recognize there are staggering truths we must address. Our students need us to be active participants in this process and to usher in sustainable change. I invite you to share this journey with us.

On behalf of Dr. Bourff and myself, thank you for listening. Have a great weekend!