

Text from Statement by _____ at May 22 D39 School Board meeting:

"A healthy school climate is a worthy goal and learning empathy, kindness and compassion is something our kids should do both in school and of course at home. I suppose I am little surprised that Second Step didn't already do this. In our home, empathy, kindness and compassion are learned within the context of loving your neighbor as yourself.

But what concerns me about the equity team initiative -- whose goal I assume is to improve school climate and teach kids empathy, kindness and compassion -- is that the school used resources for teacher training from polarizing organizations like Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance group and the National SEED Project. With SPLC, which produces Teaching Tolerance materials, if you disagree with their narrow worldview, you are labeled a "hater" or "hate group." They had listed Dr. Ben Carson, a world renowned neurosurgeon, former presidential candidate and current HUD Secretary, on their hate list and ended up removing him and apologizing. In recent years SPLC has become politicized now operates less as a non-profit defending against hate and more as a fundraising organization for spreading a specific ideology. SPLC also has a dubious record when it comes to monies raised versus what they pay out to victims of the hate crimes they represent.

As for SEED, according to its website, "SEED helps us [i.e. training participants] to connect our lives to one another and to society at large by acknowledging systems of oppression, power, and privilege." What do systems of oppression, power, and privilege look like in a school filled with classrooms of youngsters aged 5 - 12? SEED seems to think that it is necessary for some groups to check inherent attributes - often ones that people have no control over like race and gender - before they can truly relate to others, which is ridiculous. My 2 year old mixed race niece - whose mother, my sister, is white, and father, my brother in law, is black doesn't need me and her uncles and cousins and grandmother and grandfather to check our white privilege. She needs us to love her, teach her about the golden rule and encourage her to be anything she wants to be in life.

You have said that the two SEED trainers who have come to the school are not coming as SEED trainers, but this is confusing since at a parent information night SEED was mentioned several times and a SEED facilitator, Ms. Savage Williams, said of her SEED equity work:

"I believe as important as it is, it's more important to do this work in Wilmette and Winnetka because this work on race, when I talk about it here I know it's radical and it's not done very often and it's extremely important because it's not intuitive, it's not easy and and I will do it and I will push it."

I don't see how this squares with a school initiative where we are hoping to establish a climate of kindness and empathy.

So a few questions:

Why choose materials and individuals from these divisive, one-sided organizations to train the teachers on teaching kids empathy, kindness and compassion?

In the absence of a curriculum could you provide copies of training materials used to train teachers so parents can know what language is being used to talk with our kids about empathy, kindness and compassion? I assume our wonderful teachers are doing so in a professional manner but when I learned materials from Teaching Tolerance and SEED are being used it concerned me.

Also, please define the terms "equity, inclusivity, and diversity" as it relates to our school climate, the equity team initiative and teaching our kids about empathy, kindness and compassion. These are words I hear and I think mean different things when you are talking in different contexts. Clear communication is so very important and helpful.

Thank you for attempting to address this important topic of school climate, which is important to all of us. But please turn to less divisive, polarizing organizations for training resources.

Thank you for your service and I look forward to hearing from you."

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