

Kristi Mussman

From: Stacey Ruelle
Sent: Thursday, October 14, 2021 10:43 AM
To: Jonathan Drewes
Subject: Policy Violation

Hello Jonathon,

I wanted to follow up our conversation from yesterday with a correspondence of your acknowledgment that the allegations that were made against you by staff members are indeed true and did happen as they have alleged. Your actions are in direct violation of our commitment to equity and inclusion resolution and do not protect the integrity and promote the positive image of the district which violates our code of ethics as board members. The expectation going forward is that you will abide by all district policies and reaffirm your commitment to supporting the boards work on equity and inclusion. As discussed, you will be expected to follow through with the restitution plan.

Stacey

Kristi Mussman

From: Stacey Ruelle
Sent: Thursday, October 14, 2021 10:45 AM
To: Michael Nelson;Jonathan Drewes;Mary Frantz;Enrique Velazquez;Julie Bernick;Amy Crosby
Subject: Policy Violation

Hello Board Members,

I wanted to make you aware that allegations were made against a board member about a violation of policy. In response an investigation was conducted, and the allegations were found to be substantiated. In according to board policy 204, the appropriate steps have been taken.

Sincerely,

Stacey

Subject: Call for Board Action
Date: Monday, November 8, 2021 at 6:28:51 PM Central Standard Time
From:
To: School Board

Dear Dr. Staloch and Prior Lake-Savage School Board members,

The Prior Lake-Savage School District lists accountability and respect as two of its core values. The school board and district also passed the Commitment to Equity and Inclusion resolution, which states that “the district will commit to being accountable to achieving the vision established in this resolution.” We, [redacted], are asking you to live up to those values and that commitment. The district and board needs to demonstrate real respect for us as educators of color and be accountable in response to the recent racist comments made by School Board Treasurer Jonathan Drewes to one of our colleagues.

These racist comments were harmful and explicitly go against our district’s stated values and what you as a Board agreed to stand for with the passage of the equity resolution.

District Policy 413 also states that the district will “maintain a learning and working environment that is free from harassment and violence on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, familial status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability.” It is hard to believe this policy is being taken seriously when such an event not only occurred, but occurred in public and on district property.

Four weeks have passed since the incident and the investigation that followed. The teacher involved, the [redacted] and our union have yet to hear any serious follow up from district leaders. Educators of color do not need an apology, but action from our employer. And, we need any action from district leadership and the board to be meaningful in order to heal. We need evidence that things will change moving forward and that our district will actually commit to its promises.

We call on the district and board to actually prioritize equity and agree to Prior Lake-Savage Education Association’s contract language proposal on retaining educators of color.

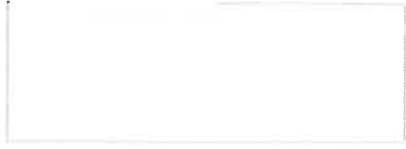
We also call for the resignation of School Board Treasurer Jonathan Drewes, so the district can publicly respond to a public incident and show that it does value accountability and respect.

We as teachers of color do not need to educate a board member on why his comments were hurtful, but we need the district and board to seek out training opportunities so this never takes place again.

As educators, we teach our students to speak up and stand up for themselves and others, especially when faced with a situation where people are physically or emotionally harmed. We need our employer to do the same for us.

Sincerely,

--



From: Jonathan Drewes <jdrewes@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us>

Sent: Thursday, November 11, 2021 7:45 PM

To:

Cc: < >; Stacey Ruelle <SRuelle@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us>;
<

Subject: October 11

All,

Attached please find my letter addressing the events from the parking lot at the DSC on October 11. I respectfully request that you forward this to all parties involved.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Drewes

11/11/2021

Words are powerful. On October 11th, my words hurt people. My words made another human being feel devalued. In the moment, I struggled to find the words to ask about the person I was meeting for the first time. My own inadequacy caused me to use hurtful language as I attempted to get to know someone. The instant I became aware of the impact my words had on another human being I felt tremendous remorse. Weeks later, that feeling remains. I am sorry.

I am profoundly sorry for what I said. People are not "Imports." My decision to use this word to describe other human beings was wrong. It was harmful. On a personal level, as a human being, I am profoundly sorry for the hurt I caused.

The impact of my words is magnified because I am not just a parent or community member. I cannot imagine how it felt to hear those words from a member of your School Board. In one breath a district leader is talking the talk about Dr. Hollie and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness and in the next demonstrating that clearly, I do not get it. How disheartening it must be to hear an elected leader who espouses support for equity and inclusion work in the district say something so hurtful. As a member of your School Board, I am sorry for how my words made you feel about the leadership in your schools. As an educator, you deserve better.

Along with my apology I want to offer gratitude to you for choosing to stand up. Without your courage, the behavior likely would not change and this could happen again. Your job is to educate students not school board members. Yet you needed to call me out in order for me to see the hurt my actions caused. I am responsible to educate myself about how to be a better person. This incident demonstrates the importance of the commitment to ongoing development in our Equity & Inclusion Resolution. We need to be better. I need to be better.

Words have power. On October 11th in the parking lot of the DSC, my words were hurtful. I have struggled and failed to find a word with the power to properly convey my remorse. I can only say one last time that I am sorry.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'R' followed by a long, horizontal flourish.

From: Jonathan Drewes <jdrewes@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us>

Sent: Tuesday, November 23, 2021 3:14 PM

To:

Cc: ; Stacey Ruelle <SRuelle@priorlake-savage.k12.mn.us>;

Subject: A Public Apology

All,

As you are aware, we were unable to complete the work at last night's study session. During the planned discussion of equity work it was my intention to make a statement acknowledging the events of October 11 and to offer a public apology at the board table. Due to the disruption of the meeting that was not able to take place.

and the parties involved in this incident have waited too long already for such an action. I do not want people to wait another two weeks for another board meeting for an apology that should have been delivered weeks ago. Instead, I have submitted the attached letter to the editor to the *Prior Lake American* and *Savage Pacer* and have requested publication in both newspapers. The remarks were modified slightly from what had been prepared last night to be appropriate as a letter vs. a statement. The sentiment is the same.

Once again, I ask you to kindly share this letter with all parties involved in the incident.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Drewes

November 23, 2021

Letter to the Editor:

Issues of race in our society are an ongoing struggle nationwide and the past two weeks have made clear that our community is no exception. While a viral video made race the lead story in the local news, our challenges in our schools and community go deeper and are not going to go away when this story runs its course.

The ongoing work of equity and inclusion in our school district and our community needs to continue. We need to be prepared to have difficult and even uncomfortable conversations. Mistakes are an inevitable part of the process.

This became personal for me in October, because I made such a mistake. In a conversation before a board meeting, my words hurt one of our valued staff members. Words have power and the words I chose to say devalued another person as a human being. While it was not my intent, my intent is not what matters. The impact of what I said is what matters. And the impact of what I said cut someone deeply. I've been trying for a month to find words to properly convey my remorse over this incident. It seems wholly insufficient, but the best I can come up with is to say to the people involved in that conversation I am profoundly sorry.

As a member of the School Board, I will continue to support the equity and inclusion work in the district. The Equity and Inclusion Resolution states in part that the School Board "Commits to its own work, as a Board and as individuals, and to the training necessary to strengthen our collective ability and competence to oversee the District in becoming equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist in policies, beliefs, and actions." The events of the past couple of weeks as well as my personal failings reinforce the importance of this work. We need to be better. I need to be better.

How do we move forward as a community, heal and build trust? I would like to start by building a relationship with those who were hurt by my words so that in turn we can restore trust. I will be reaching out in the hope we might have a conversation over a cup of coffee or a meal. We must learn from our mistakes. I certainly have.

Jonathan Drewes

School Board Director

Prior Lake Savage Area Schools

Incident Meeting #4

Date: Oct 12, 2021

Time: 12:35 PM

Attendees: Jonathan Drewes, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

Notes:

- [REDACTED] - Tennessean Warning
- Allegation review by [REDACTED], comments made
- Jonathan - this isn't where I thought we were going
- [REDACTED] - remember the conversation?
- Jonathan - yes, I walked up to them. They said they were from [REDACTED]. I said something about a hunch or assumption about that. I was asking a [REDACTED] teacher that I was wondering, she had an accent, wondering if the teacher was coming from abroad. She was native from [REDACTED] and moved [REDACTED] as a child. I said something about, maybe it was after saying I had a hunch that [REDACTED] staff that I said something about after one very brief training it is okay for me to see color and not be color blind. I remember the most thing was one of the teachers sharing with me that she has personal with student dealing with. The most notable part of the discussion was the student with parent in jail and talking about...
- [REDACTED] - do you remember how many standing by you?
- Jonathan - about 5, probably all [REDACTED]. Looked [REDACTED]. All female. One taller more caucasian looking
- [REDACTED] - do you remember using the word "import",
- Jonathan - yes, I used the word. We have some people that are imported, wrong word. Absolutely used that word. I am guilty and apologetic and I have learned from it
- [REDACTED] - that is the nature of it. You remember saying it, you said it. The context they heard, I see color and you are an "import". Aka thing
- Jonathan - fair
- [REDACTED] - the word was enough, and you add the color and you are an import
- Jonathan - saying I see color, I thought it was implied not color blind. Poor choice of words. Something if I was aware at the moment, I would have apologized. I would apologize now
- [REDACTED] - when they clarified and said a few times
- Jonathan - I don't know
- [REDACTED] - [REDACTED] teacher and raised her. Used import and one of those
- Jonathan - I am learning something. Flat out. I have such mixed emotions right now. I feel terrible. I really do feel terrible. I have been listening to the radio and all the Jon Gruden stuff in the car. I have clearly made an error that made someone uncomfortable. In another completely unrelated way, I was deeply disappointed in myself for doing it, my expectation all day together that I was going to come in here and something about negotiations. I was expecting an entirely different conversation.
- [REDACTED] - you see that a good lesson in a white privilege society, even when you think you are advancing and you hardly remember saying, it has created for that entire staff

- Jonathan - I wish, my instinct and apologize and ask for forgiveness and thank people for calling it out. I will grow from having that happen. I feel horrible. I am guilty.
- [REDACTED] anything else you can remember about that conversation?
- Jonathan - conversation about student unrelated
- [REDACTED] didn't pick up on any body language or?
- Jonathan - as I think about it with a different lens, when the conversation moved, there wasn't any engagement from the other folks. I interrupted it because I was sharing a 1:1 but perhaps the reason was because I offended someone.
- [REDACTED] or change the subject because offended someone?
- Jonathan - yes
- [REDACTED] next steps review
- Jonathan - I will offer to write an apology, go to the school, I am wrong... I made...
- [REDACTED] my hope is through all of this that the outcome is we are in a better spot than we were both. There needs to be some remediation around this and bridge building and conversations around this. I am sure [REDACTED] is already thinking
- Jonathan - this feels life changing to me. This is so inconsistent with who I thought I was. I do recognize my own shortcomings. I hurt a human being