

January 12, 2021 Board Meeting

General Public Comments not relating to Distance Learning (Received by 2:30 pm. On January 12, 2021):

Comment 1:

We would like to invite you to join us in a virtual theater for young audiences collaboration between the FUHS Theater Program and Orangethorpe Elementary Primary Multi-age Classroom. (Grades K-3)

The elementary students wrote narrative stories as a part of their Writer's Workshop activities. Nine stories were chose from those submitted to the project. The high school students created scripts, acted out the parts, included props/puppets and filmed the stories. We think you will be amazed!

The show will stream online on Thursday January 28th at 6:00pm
Pam Keller

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Comment 2:

Last month you all devoted a good chunk of time to hearing and responding to the district's suggestions for how to proceed in fulfilling the resolution to "improve the understanding of biases and anti-Black racism, and to proclaim the lives of Black students matter."

It was decided that a task force would be formed to guide the district's next steps. I very much appreciated Trustees Thakur, Talveras, and Berryman's requests that the board not merely write this off as taken care of, but instead to continue to examine closely what the purpose and goals of the task force will be, how it is executed, and who will be involved.

This is of particular concern to me, given that during the meeting both Trustee Sugarman and Superintendent Pletka falsely credited the Listening Tour as having utilized the expert input of a person of color from Cal State Fullerton, Dr. Lisa Kirtman. It was later revealed that Dr Kirtman actually took no part in the Listening Tour. This prevarication was specifically interjected by Trustee Sugarman in order to reassure concerned parents

that the board/district is in fact utilizing "expert opinions" in this process. As such, my trust in the integrity of the board and the superintendent has been shaken.

I would like the board to know that I do not take lightly how my children are influenced by their teachers and curricula with regards to their understanding of the world in which they are growing up. It is important to me that my children recognize the privileges our society grants them due to their white skin, and that they learn to see it as their responsibility therefore to speak out when those same privileges are withheld from people with darker skin.

Therefore I want the board to know that while you have my heartfelt appreciation for the time and energy you devote to my children's growth and well-being, I remain dissatisfied with your response to our district's need for a better, fuller understanding of biases and anti-Black racism. And I call on you to actually follow through this time on the request of many parents that you bring in outside experts in racial equity education, to advise the task force in curricular and structural changes which the district should make toward this end.

Thank you,
Katie Peckham
Fullerton resident

Comment 3:

In light of what has been happening in our nation reeling from domestic terrorism by white supremacy groups and the disparate rates of Covid-19 transmission and lack of access to care for people of color in our country, I feel it is imperative FSD will prioritize the need for anti-racism curriculum and diversity and ethnic studies for our students.

The roots of structural racism and lack of adequate access to education, medical care, financial opportunities for certain people of color will not be overturned unless our students get the proper education to prepare them when they become adults.

FSD needs to increase the support of outside experts in areas of ethnic studies, anti-racism, and improve social studies curriculum to a better awareness of current racial justice issues and past injustices. I am not

talking about having one or two “token” members from our community to chime in. Rather we need a wide range of experts to help form a task force that can address tangible changes very soon and improvements in the long term future as well. This will be a wise investment for the future of our students. We have done well with promoting kindness and anti-bullying campaigns. We need to go farther to help our students address deeper, systemic problems that our society is facing. Now is an opportune teaching moment for us all.

Thank you for your time and energy towards these important goals.

Cindy Shinmei
Parent of students at Beechwood

Comment 4:

Like parents throughout the country, I was horrified by the events at the US Capitol last week, and what they revealed about what happens when hate, White supremacy, and political polarization are allowed to go unchecked.

As educators, this is on us - every one of the people who broke into the Capitol was once a student. They sat in classrooms where teachers did - or didn't - teach about the impact of racism, white supremacy, and hate in the United States.

We can't let this keep happening. As educators, we have a tremendous responsibility to directly and explicitly address pressing issues in our society - including the ones that are hard to talk about. We have an academic - and moral - responsibility to speak out against hate, to prepare students to think and talk critically about complex ideas, and to nourish civic discourse within and beyond our classroom.

Listening to parents and celebrating diversity are important and wonderful ideas, but they do not address the larger imperative facing our classrooms and society. Our district must go farther, and live up to the commitments made in the February 2020 resolution regarding racism and bias.

I am writing to urge you to ensure ALL school sites in our district adopt curricula and guidance that is anti-racist and explicitly addresses racism and white supremacy in age-appropriate ways, rather than assuming that

celebrating diversity will equip our students to dismantle the injustice that persists in our society.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that we have some amazing teachers and administrators in FSD, who have the skills and resources they need to take on this charge. However, others will need coaching, support and accountability along the way. It is essential the District bring in and learn from educators and scholars with expertise in the field of equity-oriented curriculum, policy, and programming as it develops, implements, and assesses the impact of its approach. Just as we expect the District to use research-based approaches when developing math or literacy programming, so too must it involve state and national experts when developing programming related to equity and inclusion.

Our children - and our country - is depending on you.

Thank you,
Alison Dover
Parent of 2 students at Beechwood Elementary

Comment 5:

I am a parent of a 6th grader and 8th grader in the Fullerton School District. I am writing to strongly encourage the district to adopt curricula and provide teacher professional development toward anti-racist teaching that explicitly addresses racism and white supremacy. I ask the board to draw on expertise and resources about anti-racist education in our local area (for example within the College of Education at CSUF). We are at a pivotal moment in our country and our schools can and should play a critical role in challenging anti-Black racism and in working toward a more just society.

Mallika Scott, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Elementary and Bilingual Education
California State University, Fullerton

Comment 6:

I am a parent to twins, both in 5th grade at Rolling Hills Elementary in the multiage program. I would like to know what the district is doing to educate and prepare our children on anti-Black racism, racial injustice and racial equity, white privilege, and the white supremacist systems of the U.S. As has been evident for a while, and most recently in the insurrection on the

U.S. Capitol on January 6th, how are our children being helped to understand this violence/attack on democracy, and then having age-appropriate actions that they can take to make significant social justice change? Silence on these important issues is no longer an option; silence and inaction is what led to our current health, social, political, and economic situations. What an opportunity to make significant change by educating our children today.

If you have not already, I highly recommend that the district hire expert consultation around curriculum and training on anti-Black racism and ways to dismantle racial oppressive systems. At the end, we all will greatly benefit from this work.

Thank you,

Olga L. Mejía, PhD

Comment 7:

I am writing to ask for a more in-depth discussion on equity for students in FSD. I am not sure I am 100% in agreement with the push to invest a ton of time into it by having sites create Culturally Responsive Teaching task forces to tackle this issue. There is work to be done, but at some point, you can't just keep piling on these issues on to the sites without first looking within. It is not only about BLM, but EQUITY as a whole. Children need to see leaders that look like them. Teachers that look like them. A curriculum that engages them with stories about them. These aren't things that any site Task Force can bring to fruition. It's smoke and mirrors. The collective will see right through that and come away as offended as ever for lack of true efforts. I can go on and on about this, but I only ask that you first look within. Are you a true representation of the community of students you serve? Is your organization Diverse? Is your curriculum and pedagogy culturally relevant? Children today are losing their native language in Korean, Spanish, etc. There are social and cultural stigmas that are attached to that. Does FSD care? Are there male leaders within FSD that male students can gravitate towards and see as future mentors? In visiting your website, it seems that there aren't any site leaders that are males. Boys will go from tk-8th grade (10 years) in FSD and not see a Male leader until they get to High School. What message does that send? It is not just about RACE, it's about EQUITY in general. Food for thought.

Comment 8:

Dear FSD Cabinet & Board,

As a past administrator and now teacher in the Fullerton School District, I know FSD has some room to grow in the area of Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Celebrating Black History Month is NOT enough. It's clear FSD schools do their own thing when it comes to participating or celebrating certain races, backgrounds, and/or cultures.

What FSD needs is much like what we have with regard to "Innovation & Instruction." They need a district-led team with the curriculum - including relevant history lessons, coaching and reflection pieces for teachers, assessments, activities, etc. that respond to anti-racism and dismantle prejudices that are already sewn into our society & city. This needs to occur district-wide to ensure every student on every campus and every teacher on every campus feels not only feels included but also empowered.

We also need to be working with outside experts to get this initiative up and off the ground. We are in the backyard of CSUF with Chapman and Biola also being nearby - so to not include their expertise is a disservice to all involved.

We know you have a lot on your plate but our students, staff, and our community are all worth it.

Sincerely,
Erin Klopfer

Comment 9:

I would like the Fullerton School District to take strong actions related to the June resolution to "improve the understanding of biases and anti-Black racism, and to proclaim the lives of Black students matter." In recent events, we have seen what happens when we don't take these issues seriously and pretend that institutionalized and structural racism don't exist. We need to be organized, act boldly, and hold schools accountable for implementing real changes. These changes should take into account expert advice.

Thanks,
Dr. Jessie Peissig

Comment 10:

As a parent of a child attending Golden Hill Elementary, I have emailed the Board on multiple occasions. First, to express my support of the Open Letter that was presented to the Board on June 19, 2020, then again to comment and offer suggestions on the findings and recommendations gathered from the "listening tour." I commend the Board for encouraging individual schools to form their own Culturally Responsive Teaching task force. However, I hope that the District will support these schools by providing more overall guidance so that there is some consistency in the what we want to teach our children. This guidance can be in the form of bringing in outside trainers/educators who are experts in the topics of racial equity and social justice so that they can provide appropriate training for District employees, teachers and parents. In light of what occurred at our nation's Capitol last week, this kind of education is even more critical.

Sincerely,
Khanh Ninh

Comment 11:

Hello, my name is Mike Rodriguez and my kids attend Fullerton schools. I understand that the district has recently completed a "Listening Tour" to hear the community's thoughts about diversity and inclusion. From transcripts that I have read, it seemed like lively discussion, but I'm wondering if the conversations left out critical issues in our district, such as racial justice, antiracism, confronting xenophobia. While it is important to celebrate the diversity that our community has to offer, it is also important to address systemic inequality, discrimination and marginalization. As we educate our youth, it is important to discuss issues such as white supremacy and other forms of oppression in order to nurture a more empathetic and educated student body that can come together from very diverse backgrounds. Racism has been a legacy in this nation, from the rise of the KKK in Fullerton and North Orange County in the 1920's to the waving of the Confederate flag in the Capitol last week during the insurrection. We cannot wait any longer, our students need Critical Ethnic Studies now.

On another note, FSD has reported 57 positive cases among district staff last week. It is dangerous to return to hybrid learning at a time when cases are so high and we are experiencing a surge. I implore you to be responsible and remain distanced learning until both waves of vaccines have been distributed to our community. Teachers should not be forced to return to conditions that are unsafe, and students should not be report to classes where the viruses can possbile be spread to their families at the end of the day.

Thank you.
Mike Rodriguez

Comment 12:

I so appreciate that some action is being taken to improve our children's education in regards to diversity. This is what culturally responsive education is about. However, we need even more to be sure the state of action and knowledge related to social justice is current and relevant to the challenges of 2021.

I truly believe that the FSD district administration and board have good intentions towards their community members. However, truly being skilled and knowledgeable in areas of diversity requires ongoing professional development and life-long learning. After listening to numerous board meetings (including portions of the last one), being a participant in the listening tour, and having my child participate, I noticed many examples of outdated perspectives or lack of cultural competency. This is a big problem if leaders are to inspire the work that needs to be done.

Because this work is so important, I highly recommend FSD reach past their own inner FSD community to current experts who are willing to bring everyone up to date with their skill sets and knowledge base. The district had the opportunity to do so with the listening tour with volunteers who were experts in this field, but this opportunity was not fully utilized. Please don't miss these opportunities again.

I ask the board to form a task force of advisors on these issues including experts in the field. This task force can serve as an advising group to the

board and the district. In this way, the board can be sure that the actions of the district are reflective of current perspectives on this vital work.

During the last board meeting, one of the board members indicated an interest in establishing training for the board and other administrators. I also whole-heartedly support this idea.

Readying our kids for 2021 and the coming years, starts by the leadership being current and ready themselves. The perspective on including diverse voices is important and a good start, but it may not be enough if larger systemic and institutional issues of injustice continue to be ignored. The district needs to prioritize and require this work, of themselves, and also for each child in every school.

Thank you for your concern and attention,

Mia Sevier

Parent of children at Raymond and Ladera Vista

Comment 13:

I encourage the district to form a Culturally Responsive Task force at the district office to provide a uniform vision and action plan for all students in FSD with regards to addressing anti racist curriculum, teaching practices, and discipline practices. Giving individual schools this responsibility without proper district-wide training and professional development will result in piecemeal efforts to address issues that have long plagued our school system and continue to disenfranchise students. Building awareness around anti racist practices and curriculum cannot be sidelined because of uncomfortable conversations that will take place or the fear of even having those conversations. Choosing comfort over courageous conversations is the definition of white privilege. Please be courageous.

Colleen Ferreira

Comment 14:

As a parent, teacher and Fullerton community member, I encourage the district to adopt curricula and guidance that is anti-racist and explicitly addresses racism and white supremacy in age-appropriate ways, rather than assuming that celebrating diversity and ensuring children

feel 'liked and smart' will equip our students to dismantle the injustice that persists in our society.

Thank you,

-Marisa Nguyen

Comment 15:

I am writing to urge you to bring in experts on integrating racial equity into our schools education rather than have that work fall to lay community members who cannot be expected to know how best to do that work.

Especially in light of recent events, we must take action to raise awareness and racial equity education in our schools.

I recently saw a presentation by Alison Dover that was perfect for children and adults. I myself changed how I run meetings as a result. Mrs. Dover was recently named Professor of the Year by the Anaheim School District and has been nominated at the state-level in recognition of her statewide efforts. Minimally, she is a local, willing resource who could also recommend other resources.

Finally, PLEASE continue with the hybrid learning as COVID numbers continue to spike.

Thank you,

Marcia Taborga, Ph.D.

Comment 16:

I am a parent of three Black children who attend Beechwood. Our family is deeply disappointed in the lack of action that has come from the efforts put forth by FSD. My husband and I were part of the listening tour, and our oldest daughter (sixth grade) participated separately as well. The questions raised in both meetings we participated in were surface level, and an early indication that this attempt to "go deeper" was going to pan out to be nothing more than an exercise in futility. To know that the main action item that has transpired from this investment of time is that you have a called upon individual schools to form their own task forces is absurd. This fails to provide consistency district wide, and essentially can be viewed as a frail attempt to circumvent any real liability.

The following must take place to rekindle/reaffirm the faith that district parents and guardians had upon your stated commitment to the June

resolution:

- Hiring ACTUAL outside experts on racial equity education
- Commitment to training staff in anti-racism
- Creation of District Department to manage Race/Human Relations & Advocacy (please utilize San Diego Unified School District for an outstanding model)
- Integration of anti-racist curricula throughout the school year

I would like to have taken this opportunity to thank the District on their beginning efforts, but rather than feeling heard and understood, we can see that our experiences were recounted for show, rather than for any intent to take real action. My 11 year old daughter being "rewarded" for her participation with an art tutorial makes this very clear.

The school district doesn't HAVE to change; it will be fine without doing so. But it SHOULD change, because just being FINE is not good enough for the students under your watch. Claiming to be a leader among School Districts does not make it so. ACTION makes it so.

"Having the ability to survive without having to know or develop a level of respect for groups of people is a part of the legacy of American racism and white privilege."

- Author: Fredrick Joseph

With great hope for the future,

Erica Patmon
Beechwood Parent