

Press Statement



NAACP Dane County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information Contact:
Greg Jones, President
608.335.2001
Lisha Terre, Education
Committee Chair
eterre@gmail.com

NAACP CONDEMNS SUN PRAIRIE SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR USE OF RACIST CURRICULUM; DEMANDS COMPLIANCE REVIEW

February 27, 2021, Dane County WI—For more than sixty-five years, the NAACP has stood proudly on the unanimous 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision. We established the precedent that “separate-but-equal” education and other services were not, in fact, equal at all – they are inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional. We continue this fight today.

Earlier this month, students (including those who were African American) in a sixth-grade class at Patrick Marsh Middle School in Sun Prairie Wisconsin were given an assignment to imagine they were doling out punishments in ancient Mesopotamia. According to a screenshot of the lesson, they were given the following scenario: “A slave stands before you. This slave has disrespected his master by telling him, ‘You are not my master!’ How will you punish this slave?” While the assignment raises several questions and issues, e.g., 1. It demonstrates the lack of oversight on matters of race and history in the Sun Prairie curriculum, particularly the impact on students of color. 2. It is fundamentally racist. 3. It is indicative of a district not in compliance with State Standards. We are outraged by the education failures this has exposed, which include:

Failure of three teachers to not recognize the damage that their chosen lesson could do to all students, and particularly black students and other students of color, demonstrates a huge failure of cultural competence.

- The district must complete a thorough investigation to determine how and why this particular lesson was selected, purchased, and evaluated.
- It is questionable whether the teachers followed the long-term practice of having lesson plans reviewed and approved by a supervising teacher; connected to previous and upcoming lesson plans and learning objectives; and the overall lesson plan for the unit.
- The teachers’ error in judgement will lead to mistrust and uncertainty for years to come.

Failure of the Sun Prairie District to meet State standards. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Administrative Code outlines school district standards for Staff Development that meet the needs of individuals or curriculum areas in each school; and for a “School district curriculum plan” with an organized set of learning experiences that build upon previously acquired knowledge and skills, and includes objectives, course sequence, course content, and resources. The Sun Prairie District failed to develop and implement an effective staff development plan and a functional curriculum plan compliant with DPI District Standards.

Therefore, the NAACP Dane County demands that DPI conduct a compliance audit of the Sun Prairie School District for failures relating to professional development and curriculum plans. Upon a finding of non-compliance, we expect DPI to implement a compliance plan for the Sun Prairie District.

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