March 5, 2020

Dear MSAAC Delegates, Members, and Community,

The Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee (MSAAC) is dedicated to advancing the academic, social, and cultural development of every student and to ensuring that the needs of all minority students are met. As one of two parent-led advisory committees to the Loudoun County Public School Board, we serve as a critical component to ensuring these needs are addressed throughout the system.

The Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee is tasked to:
- Advise the school system on the educational and cultural needs of minority students.
- Cultivate an equitable educational experience for all students that will positively impact achievement.
- Create a forum for safe and respectful communication between parents, teachers and administrators.
- Help parents and educators collectively understand the importance of nurturing a climate of cultural sensitivity in an increasingly diverse academic and social environment.

The Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee (MSAAC) Executive Board delivered the following public statement to the Loudoun County Public School Board on Tuesday, February 25, 2020.

A year ago, LCPS, MSAAC, NAACP and the Loudoun Freedom Center issued a joint statement following the racially insensitive exercise at Madison’s Trust Elementary School. We stated that, “A systemic approach and community partnerships are critical in addressing racism, cultural insensitivity, and inequity throughout the school division. We are committed to working together to address these issues until they no longer exist in our schools or community.” MSAAC stands by its commitment to address such issues at every level - to include those that reside within the school board.

On February 18, 2020, the school board for Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) underwent equity training that was open to the public. The school board, along with senior LCPS administrators, reviewed a timeline of African American history - from the arrival of enslaved Africans to Virginia in 1619 to the more recent practice of redlining. During a small group discussion, John Beatty, the Catoctin District School Board Member, stated that life for African Americans was “worse after
Reconstruction because you didn’t have the patronage of a master.” At the conclusion of the equity training, a member of the public in attendance offered Mr. Beatty the opportunity to clarify his remarks. Mr. Beatty reaffirmed his statement and provided examples of positive experiences for enslaved people - including that, under slavery, slaves had labor and the opportunity to earn a little money.

Slavery was not patronage. Masters were not patrons of charity - they were enslavers. The relationship between enslaver and enslaved is not symbiotic; it is parasitic.

Mr. Beatty says he believes that slavery is evil, but his ignorance about the nature of American slavery leads us to believe that we cannot trust him to work in the best interest of all our children. His statement lacks empathy and such views show either a lack of respect or ignorance surrounding the history of the African American experience. One cannot possess cultural competency while holding a pollyannic view of slavery. It behooves every American, particularly one who is serving as a representative of the people, to build cultural competency.

The Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee (MSAAC) Executive Board strongly condemns this rhetoric of white supremacy. Therefore, the MSAAC Executive Board strongly urges:

- the school board immediately condemn Mr. Beatty’s statement,
- that Mr. Beatty be removed from the Discipline and Equity Committees,
- that Mr. Beatty apologize for his statement, and
- that Mr. Beatty participate in a Restorative Practice (RP) circle with interested parents and students from the community, LCPS personnel, MSAAC representatives, the Loudoun NAACP and the Loudoun Freedom Center. This is a practice utilized within the LCPS Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to explore reconciliation and healing as strategies for equity.

MSAAC has long partnered with the school board and community groups to address and dismantle the systemic inequities allowed to flourish in our school system for too many years. Mr. Beatty’s statement undermines and threatens those efforts. If the school board does not immediately condemn Mr. Beatty’s public comment, then every school board member is complicit.

You can find more information about MSAAC and upcoming meetings by visiting the website located at the following link: https://www.lcps.org/MSAAC. We also encourage you to follow MSAAC on Twitter and Facebook (@lcpsmsaac). If you have questions, please feel free to contact us at MSAACCommunications@lcps.org

Sincerely,