School Board Address

Unconscious Bias

February 12, 2018

Administration Building

Good evening Chairman, Madame Vice Chairman and members of the Loudoun County School Board,

As an advisory committee to the Loudoun County School Board, it is incumbent upon the Minority Student Achievement Advisory Committee to bring to your attention an ongoing concern regarding unconscious bias in our school system.

Have you ever been treated differently because of your attributes? Has your future been decided for you because someone thought you had more or less potential because of your gender, the color of your skin, your age or some other demographic? Unfortunately, the future of some of our children is decided for them because of their demographics. MSAAC believes that educators aren’t intentionally holding back students, but a teacher’s unconscious bias which reflects their personal experiences, perceptions and assumptions is potentially influencing how a student will be developed in their classroom. Villegas, a professor at Montclair University; and Lucas, an Associate Dean of the College of Education and Human Services and a Professor at Montclair University tell us in a 2007 paper that, “The vast majority of teachers in the United States are white, middle class, and monolingual English speaking. In most cases, their lives differ profoundly from the lives of their students.” What this means is that these differences unfortunately affect how our students are perceived which can affect how they are taught, evaluated, and supported.

As the LCPS School Board, how do you respond to someone that is different from you and what will your expectations be of them? It is time to create a paradigm shift in how we view and consequently organize, manage and teach our students. It is imperative that all licensed teachers be required to attend unconscious bias training.

If teachers, parents, students, educational institutions and communities take the time to experience self-reflection, get to know each other and check their biases, then inevitably we will see positive effects on the academic, social and cultural development of student’s and we will stop labeling students as “the problem child”. MSAAC encourages the LCPS School Board to continue to require that all LCPS teachers attend unconscious bias training and that all LCPS procedures and systems be reviewed on a regular basis by a neutral, third party to ensure fairness and equity for all students. Please ensure that the 2018/2019 budget allows for these recommendations.