May 23, 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 Tuesday, May 19, 2020 Loudoun County School (LCPS) Board meeting included the following information item on the agenda: 5.01 Equity Committee: Recommendations Regarding School Board Member Participation on the Equity Committee and Leadership Role as Chair of the Discipline Committee. This agenda item was first recommended for consideration by the school board through majority vote at the March 5 meeting of the LCPS Equity Committee.

This LCPS Equity Committee recommendation was in response to a statement made by Catoctin School Board Representative John Beatty on February 18, 2020. Mr. Beatty stated that life for African Americans was “worse after Reconstruction because you didn’t have the patronage of a master.” The MSAAC Executive Board strongly condemned this rhetoric of white supremacy and on Tuesday, February 25, urged the school board to condemn Mr. Beatty’s statement and to remove him from the Discipline and Equity Committees. Additionally, the MSAAC Executive Board asked that Mr. Beatty issue an apology and participate in a Restorative Practice with interested parents and students from the community.

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 undermined and threatened those efforts. The MSAAC Executive Board
stated, “If the school board does not immediately condemn Mr. Beatty’s public comment, then every school board member is complicit.” The school board took no action until Tuesday, May 19, 2020.

As discussion was to commence on the item, Ian Serotkin, Blue Ridge District Representative, introduced an Objection to the Consideration of This Question, a rarely used parliamentary procedure. According to Robert's Rules of Order, such a procedure is used “to avoid a particular original main motion altogether when it believes it would be strongly undesirable for the motion even to come before the assembly.” By a vote of 8-1, the school board refused to consider discussing the issue referred to the school board by the LCPS Equity Committee appointed by the school board.

We do not know the reason why the board chose not to publicly address the recommendations of the LCPS Equity Committee. What we do know is that the board chose to ignore a committee dedicated to matters related to equity. The committee’s composition was selected by the board itself, to represent Loudoun constituencies that have been largely and historically marginalized within LCPS. The school board’s refusal to consider the Equity Committee’s recommendation denies Loudoun County citizens a voice in the process of governance. It inhibits accountability since Loudoun residents cannot discern the views of their elected officials. This board’s action lacks transparency.

It may have been thought that usage of the Objection to the Consideration of This Question would promote a temporary peace, but it did not advance equity. Equity work is hard and contentious. LCPS alumnus and equity advocate, Paul Gorski, states that equity must be prioritized over peace. Yet this is a peace available only to those who have no need for inequities to be disrupted. The board’s desire for peace shows a lack of respect not only to the committee that they established, but it also shows a lack of respect for the marginalized students for whom the committee advocates. There is no path to equity that does not involve a direct confrontation with inequity (Paul Gorski).

Usage of this parliamentary procedure does not become leaders of a public school system that serves all students. According to Mr. Beatty himself, Great leaders come from the front lines, making tough decisions, and facing the results of those decisions. Mr. Serotkin’s motion allowed the board to avoid uncomfortable discussions of implicit bias and the even more uncomfortable prospect of judging a colleague.

Finally, it is the sincere hope of the MSAAC Executive Board that Mr. Beatty has used the past three months to educate himself about the many micro- and macro-aggressions perpetrated against people of color. The Executive Board recognizes that the discussion of the Equity Committee’s recommendation would be uncomfortable for all participants - especially for Mr. Beatty. However, this could have been a moment to show how a great leader is willing to face
the consequences of this racist rhetoric with humility and the willingness to make amends for wrongdoing whether intentional or not. Mr. Beatty, however, buoyed by the peace of the board’s reluctance to face difficult conversations, stayed silent.

Given the school board’s refusal to offer an explanation for their action, the MSAAC Executive Board is left with no choice but to condemn the action of members who voted to dismiss discussion of the Equity Committee’s recommendation. From the LCPS Equity Assessment, the documented disparities and the inactions by the board this week, never has the evidence been made more clear that solid investments in LCPS equity programs are a necessity. We strongly urge the school board to be intentional in making aggressive investments in equity-related programs and resources to root out the inequities within LCPS.

The School Board welcomes comments from Loudoun County residents and believes that strong community engagement and outreach are important components of a successful school system. The next School Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 26 at 4:00pm. To provide live public comments virtually, register through the online form or phone at 571-252-1030. Registration is available between 8 a.m. on Friday May 22, 2020 through Monday May 25, 2020 at 5:00pm. To email members of the School Board, please use lcsb@lcps.org. Individual School Board email addresses are available via this link.

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,

MSAAC Executive Board 2019-2020