



Robert Montoya [REDACTED]

Fwd: Message From Interim Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Lyon

1 message

[REDACTED] Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 10:26 PM

Begin forwarded message:

From: administration@southlakecarroll.edu**Date:** December 2, 2020 at 3:53:49 PM CST**Subject:** Message From Interim Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Lyon**Reply-To:** administration@southlakecarroll.edu

This email is regarding: [REDACTED]

Dragon Families,

On October 15, I began as Interim Superintendent of Carroll ISD, accepting the leadership position during this very important time in selecting the new superintendent to succeed Dr. Faltys. Carroll ISD has a strong reputation of excellence across the state, and being here as your interim leader has only further confirmed for me why so many families choose Carroll and Southlake as their home.

As an educator with 31 years of experience, the last 14 as a superintendent, I've had the opportunity to objectively look at the process and work of the District Diversity Council as it relates to community concerns that surfaced about the written cultural competence plan, and I want to take this opportunity to share my thoughts on this work.

My observation during my time serving this community is that the Board and Administration not only responded appropriately in forming an advisory committee to work through the issues of diversity and inclusion, but they acted in good faith to listen to those who opposed the plan in its draft form with a focus on working collaboratively to support students.

As a little historical perspective, keep in mind that CISD was faced with public outcry when an inappropriate racial slur video by Carroll students went viral on social media in 2018. Immediately, the Administration and School Board heard the personal experiences and passionate pleas of CISD families who wanted assurances that students of every color, religion and race would be more welcomed and included in the Dragon family. The Administration was responsive and formed a voluntary advisory committee called the District Diversity Council (DDC) to work with the Administration to create a plan that supports cultural competence. By definition, cultural competence is simply the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. There was an open call at that time for the community members who wanted to come to the table to work on the diversity issue with CISD, and 63 parents, staff members and students were selected for that work.

Through the work of the DDC, changes were recommended and approved to strengthen the Student Code of Conduct, provide basic diversity training for CISD staff and invite all families to participate in the district's first-ever voluntary Culture Survey. DDC updates were shared on the district's website and updates were mailed to Dragon homes in at least two editions of *Inside Carroll* magazine. Survey results were presented and posted for the public as well. The process, as I see it, was interrupted and compressed by the global pandemic and emergency school closures, affecting the original timeline to present the written recommendations last spring. Instead, a draft plan was presented to the School Board on August 3. But even before it was presented, opposition formed to the DDC's work.

Since the August 3 presentation, the Carroll ISD Administration and Trustees have in good faith put implementation of the plan on hold so that we could listen, collect community input, specifically address the concerns of those who opposed the plan and begin to ask the DDC to consider revisions to their recommendations that might still accomplish the original cultural competence goals.

Action was specifically taken in recent weeks to add new members to the DDC in the hope that hearing and addressing community concerns and providing new perspectives would bring this issue to resolution and compromise for the good of all students. Instead, the district has received and patiently worked through massive open records requests, long public comments and meetings, personal attacks on staff and Trustees and now we face civil and criminal legal action.

On Tuesday of this week, Carroll ISD was served with a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to halt any meetings or efforts to work on the cultural competence plan. CISD intends to fully comply with this order although the order lacks clarity about what it entails. For that reason, our attorneys are working to overturn the order. A hearing is currently scheduled for December 14 to determine if the Administration will be able to continue to work with the DDC subcommittees to revise their recommendations based on the input and feedback of the new members and community. There is also an allegation of Texas Open Meetings Act violations, which is being fully addressed by CISD attorneys. These allegations have nothing to do with the work of the DDC and rather serve as an attempt to discredit and derail this important work. In fact, much of the dialogue and information that was circulated about the DDC's plan by those who oppose it was a deliberate misrepresentation of the plan's contents and purpose.

CISD delayed action on the cultural competence plan so that everyone could be heard. One of the major purposes of having subcommittees meet before winter break was to address the community concerns and incorporate new perspectives before posting revised recommendations on the website for public review and input. We have repeatedly acknowledged to our Dragon families that we have no intention of taking action on any plan until the arrival of the new superintendent in 2021 and a strategic planning committee can be seated.

Tuesday's TRO ruling represents a deliberate roadblock by those taking legal action. It halts our efforts to hear community concerns and move forward in resolving this issue for the good of current and future Dragons. We went to extraordinary lengths to meet those in opposition to the plan at the discussion table, and they have for all intents and purposes muted their own voice (and the voice of the community) by forcing CISD to halt the process. Community input needs to go beyond public comments during board meetings, especially considering that many of the comments acutely validate the need for a cultural competence plan.

It is my observation as your Interim Superintendent that this Administration and School Board are committed to a safe and inclusive environment for all students. They are doing all this so that every Carroll ISD student will know that they attend a school district that respects and cares about them. I believe their heart and intentions are pure, and they truly desire to work with this community to end the divisiveness.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jeremy Lyon
Interim Superintendent

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State: TX
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Educator Access
