



April 12, 2018

An Open Letter Regarding District 301's Commitment to Diversity and Respect

Yesterday, Central Education Association (CEA) Vice President Dave Chapman distributed to all District 301 faculty and staff an email regarding Mr. Nathan Etter, a first-year music teacher at Prairie View Grade School. The CEA is the union that represents most of District 301's teachers and certified staff members. In his email, Mr. Chapman claims that school leaders treated Mr. Etter in a discriminatory manner.

While it is not typical for the District to publicly share details related to such matters, given the tone and content of Mr. Chapman's message, we feel it is important to do so. On February 21, 2018, the District Office was contacted by a parent who expressed serious concerns about a conversation Mr. Etter had with first-grade students in response to questions they asked him after he received flowers from his husband on Valentine's Day. As is standard practice following a parent call, the school principal spoke with Mr. Etter (in this case, with union representation present) to learn more about that classroom discussion, which the principal learned was very brief and acknowledged different types of family structures. There was no further action taken by the District. In fact, the school principal met with Mr. Etter early last month to discuss planning and goals related to Mr. Etter's re-employment for the 2018-19 school year.

We want to emphasize the unwavering commitment of our Board and Administration to ensuring that our school community is consistently respectful and accepting of diversity amongst our students, faculty and staff. This commitment is documented in our Board policies (5:10 Equal Employment Opportunity and Minority Recruitment and 7:10 Equal Educational Opportunities).

Neither Mr. Etter nor Mr. Chapman informed District leadership of these concerns, which we learned of only after Mr. Chapman sent the email to staff yesterday. We wish to assure you that, had we been aware, we would have taken immediate steps to alleviate Mr. Etter's concerns.

While we have strong diversity and inclusion policies and practices in place, we can always learn and improve. To that end, this morning, District 301 Superintendent Stirn contacted both CEA President Kim Paulus and Mr. Etter to express our regret that Mr. Etter experienced any distress, to inform them that the Board and Administration planned to send this communication, and to invite them to meet with him to discuss Mr. Etter's concerns.

In closing, we want to state clearly that discrimination, harassment, exclusion or intimidation in any form are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in District 301. Professionalism and respect are values we must all affirm and demonstrate daily in our interactions with colleagues, students, parents and our community to ensure that District 301 remains inclusive, supportive and welcoming of diversity in all forms.

As always, we welcome your questions, comments, concerns or suggestions, and thank you for your support of our schools and students.

Dr. Todd Stirn
Superintendent

Jeff Kellenberger
Board President