

June 10, 2022

Dear Board of Education Members,

The intentional, targeted, and unchallenged diatribe by Superintendent Freeman, Chairwoman Kathleen Balestracci, Dick Hersh, and other members at the Guilford Board of Education meeting on May 9, 2022, which was directed at anyone in Guilford who dares to oppose their “Equity and Social Justice Initiative,” can only be described as unprofessional, Alinsky like, ⁽¹⁾ and factually incorrect.

At this meeting, you defamed the many concerned parents and citizens of Guilford who have an absolute right -- and indeed an obligation -- to expose and hold you accountable for the indoctrination of our entire Guilford School Community with the tenets of Critical Race Theory ⁽²⁾ under the guise of your “Equity and Social Justice Initiative.” Your accusations were false, and your resort to “ad hominem” attacks (as opposed to debating these controversial issues on the merits) is clearly an attempt to suppress the free speech rights of parents who have every right to address real concerns about their children’s education, particularly when it veers off into the realm of divisive racial politics.

First and foremost, you absolutely have not “been having a conversation with the [entire Guilford] community concerning race, equity and social justice.” ⁽³⁾ Scores of requests to participate in an uncensored debate on your ESJ Initiative have been flatly rejected. ⁽⁴⁾ As recently as May 14, 2022, you rejected an invitation to appear at a “No Left Turn in Education” meeting at your convenience to hold a question-and-answer session on your ESJ Initiative like the informal meetings you have been having at various Guilford Schools on Saturday mornings. ⁽⁵⁾ Rather, what you have done is the following:

- You have issued a position statement in support of our Superintendent’s ESJ initiative. ⁽⁶⁾
- You have stated your absolute belief in systemic and institutional racism in every public statement you have issued over the past 2 years. ⁽²⁾
- You have issued communications fully endorsing “Culturally Responsive Education” and the goal of teaching our children to become “activist anti-racists.” ⁽⁷⁾
- You have proclaimed there will be no public oversight over the Superintendent’s choice of consultants or training for teachers, trainers or administrators. ⁽⁸⁾
- You have pledged to include the local teacher’s union in discussions surrounding all matters related to our local school district, its schools and its funding. ⁽⁹⁾
- You have pledged to oppose all proposals that would censor teachers from teaching about inclusion, diversity and equity. ⁽⁹⁾
- You have rejected Dr. Martin Luther King’s dream of a colorblind society and school system and replaced it with a race conscious approach to education where our children are being taught to look for systemic and institutional racism in every conversation, every interaction, and every subject in school. ⁽²⁾

Second, your actions are “ultra vires” – a violation of your town charter obligations to be fair and disinterested when it comes to “controversial issues.” ⁽¹⁰⁾ It may be time to put this specific question to the town attorney (if disinterested) – and we would be happy to help you frame the specific proposition on which legal guidance is needed.

Third, you labeled a recent communication from No Left Turn in Education Guilford (NLTEG) a threat to Guilford teachers and administrators. To justify this accusation, you cherry picked the word “watching,” and falsely expanded it to “watching you,” from the closing line of the cover letter that accompanied our position statement on Dr. Siler’s “Curricula Equity Audit.” The closing line was actually “We are concerned, we are informed, and we are watching.” The purpose of the position statement was to “insist that whatever policy changes, teacher contract changes, teacher evaluation changes, curricula equity changes, etc. are adopted as a result of the vague recommendations made by Dr. Siler in his Equity report, that they comply with existing State and Town Statutes. These laws and policies require Administrators and Teachers, in consultation with parents, to “Promote in students’ pursuit of truth, knowledge and wisdom, and provide access to all points of view without deliberate distortion of subject matter and to not indoctrinate students with their personal views.”⁽¹¹⁾

To couch this as a threat is incendiary itself. To be clear, the letter and position statement were addressed to the BOE⁽¹¹⁾ and copied to the teachers and administrators with the sincere hope that you would take your mandated oversight of the School System and our School Superintendent seriously, and not “promote policies, programs or curricula that are manifestly unethical and illegal under State and Local law.”

Copying the teachers keeps them informed of our expectations of honest oversight of the Superintendent by the Board of Education.⁽¹¹⁾ We suspect that there are many teachers and administrators who vehemently disagree with your ESJ Initiative, but who are afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation. We hope to give these folks hope and courage that at least some Guilford citizens care enough to speak out against your ESJ indoctrination of our vulnerable students.

Finally, our Superintendent stated that there have been “letters to the editor suggesting that parents should not trust their teachers or administrators.”⁽³⁾ Trust is not the issue. We are merely communicating to our fellow citizens the urgent need to ask questions in order to be better informed of the results of highly slanted professional development in GPS. When criticizing citizens who point out the indoctrination of our school community with the tenets of Critical Race Theory, when denying parents, the opportunity to observe their children’s classes,⁽¹²⁾ or when criticizing citizens who make FOI requests⁽¹³⁾, you are inherently creating mistrust. What have you got to hide?

Much as the National School Boards Association (NSBA) deemed it necessary to issue a public apology for sending a letter to President Biden suggesting that “threats and acts of violence” at school board meetings might be “domestic terrorism,”⁽¹⁴⁾ we believe that the Guilford Board of Education has an obligation to retract and apologize for the defamatory comments made at your May 9, 2022, BOE meeting. We believe that your apology must be a public apology and should contain language similar to the NSBA apology letter dated October 22, 2021.⁽¹⁵⁾ This letter stated, “we regret and apologize for the letter ... we deeply value ... the voices of parents, who should and must continue to be heard when it comes to decisions about their children’s education, health and safety.” Your public retraction and apology statement needs to be issued as soon as possible.

We are not naïve enough to believe that we can ever come to a consensus concerning your “equity and social justice initiative.” When one side “foregrounds race,” rejects Dr. Martin Luther King’s dream of a colorblind society and education system in favor of a race conscious approach to education, and preaches as facts “systemic and institutional racism,” while the other side believes in the equality of opportunity as opposed to the equity of outcomes, American exceptionalism, the promise of America and the American Dream, and a colorblind approach to education, there isn’t much common ground.

We also realize that there are free speech rights to teach and speak to theories such as your “equity and social justice initiative,” but when you do, you are required to posit contrary thought on these complex issues. ⁽¹¹⁾

Therefore, we would like to invite you once again to meet with our No Left Turn in Education Group, not informally, but formally, to work out an acceptable compromise based on your obligations to ensure that both sides of this divisive issue are being taught in Guilford Public Schools. We also need to reach a compromise on offering parents and students an opportunity to opt out of your “equity and social justice initiative,” not just by opting out of specific classes, or assignments, but to opt out of your entire anti-racist pedagogy. Likewise, teachers and administrators should be given the opportunity to opt out of mandatory DEI, SEL, CRT, etc. continuing education if training is not also offered on opposite perspectives. This compromise is called choice. This compromise is called presenting different viewpoints not a single ideology. This compromise is called preserving free speech and making all sides available to decision makers.

We are ready to meet with you formally and on the record, in good faith, at your convenience to come to an agreement on the above. We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

No Left Turn in Education Guilford
www.noleftturnguilford.org

cc: Superintendent Freeman
Employees of Guilford Public Schools
Employees of the Town of Guilford

Bibliography

- (1) Saul Alinsky “Rules for Radicals,” “Accuse your opponent of what you are doing, to create confusion and inculcate voters against evidence of your own guilt.”
- (2) Dr. Angela Robinson, Professor of CRT at Quinnipiac University, explained at the Guilford Human Rights Commission Zoom Forum on Critical Race Theory on 8/12/21, that there are only (3) principal tenets that all Critical Race Theorists agree on as follows: First, racism is a social construct (It is what judges, politicians, and people in power say it is; it is Institutional), second, racism is pervasive (it is structural or systemic), and third a colorblind approach will not solve the problems of racism (A colorblind approach perpetuates white supremacy, therefore we must use a race conscious or color conscious approach). In the GPS system, these three principal tenets of CRT have been articulated as fact for the past 2-1/2 years by both Superintendent Freeman and the BOE. Examples include the following: in a Zip06 article dated 5/5/21, Superintendent Freeman said, “The District is committed to incorporating awareness of systemic racism into both how it functions and how it teaches.” In its “Statement on Addressing Equity and Social Justice in Guilford Public Schools” on 4/26/21, the Guilford BOE said, “Institutional racism is a part of American history, and educators must explicitly address this reality and create a culture that helps eradicate it moving forward.” In a New Haven Register

article dated 6/1/21, Superintendent Freeman said, “students are learning institutional racism is part of American history.” In his 3/17/21 Library zoom discussion entitled “Equity and Social Justice in Guilford Public Schools, Superintendent Freeman said “Being colorblind won’t solve the problems that are inherent in structures or societies or communities or schools or personal relationships if you are concerned about systemic racism ... We must take purposeful action to address systemic injustice ...That is our goal, that will be our plan.” Chairwoman Balestracci in a 3/3/22 email said, “We expect that students will explore history and other topics, from multiple perspectives. In doing so, exploration of systemic racism, which has and continues to exist, can be expected to arise. And finally, Chairwoman Balestracci, in an email dated 5/4/21 said, “Let me assure you that I am neither uninformed nor being pressured to assert the existence of institutional racism in our history, its continuing presence, and its negative impact on people of color. The evidence supporting this is overwhelming.”

- (3) Guilford BOE meeting on May 9, 2022. At this meeting, Superintendent Freeman referred to the “conversation we have been having in our community concerning race, equity and social justice,” and that “there are letters to the editor suggesting that parents should not trust their teachers or administrators.”
- (4) Most requests for the BOE to participate in an uncensored debate on their “equity and social justice initiative” were ignored, but on a few occasions, email rejections were received as follows: on 5/9/21, Chairwoman Balestracci said in an email “The Board of Education will not be participating in a debate on Critical Race Theory. As has been stated numerous times, GPS is not teaching Critical Race Theory and the equity and social justice initiative at GPS is not based on any particular ideology, curriculum or text.” In a 5/27/21 email, Chairwoman Balestracci said “It appears that you have now heard from several Board members that we will not be participating in a debate on Critical Race Theory. We are not using Critical Race Theory as an approach.” And finally, in a 1/10/22 email Dick Hersh said, “Let me be clear as per your email. I am not interested in setting up a public debate because I do not accept your basic assertion about the need to discuss the “merits of our school superintendent’s critical race theory indoctrination of our entire Guilford School community under the guise of his equity and social justice initiative.”
- (5) After the informal discussion at Baldwin Middle School on Saturday May 14th, Superintendent Freeman, Chairwoman Balestracci, and Dick Hersh rejected an invitation to hold a Q&A meeting with No Left Turn in Education Guilford at their convenience.
- (6) On 4/26/21 the Guilford BOE publicly issued their “Statement on Addressing Equity and Social Justice in Guilford Public Schools.”
- (7) On 9/7/21, the Guilford BOE spends \$7731.28 of taxpayer money to print and mail their 2021 Summer/Fall newsletter to endorse “the importance of a Culturally Responsive Education,” the first such mailing since 2009. In the June 2020 “Our Direction” GPS Communication, Superintendent Freeman said “Ibram Kendi tells us that striving not to be racist is not good enough. To make our community better and more just, we must take actions that are actively antiracist ... We are committed to being more intentionally antiracist.”
- (8) In a 3/3/22 email, Chairwoman Balestracci said “The Board has not required review of training materials for any professional development topic with GPS staff prior to delivery of school training and will not be doing so now. We hired a superintendent with whom we meet multiple times monthly, and whom we evaluate regularly, and it is the superintendent’s responsibility, using his instructional and managerial expertise, to oversee the training of staff in the district.” The result is Guilford has only hired consultants who teach the religion of Critical Race Theory. Examples include Insight Education Group (IEG) and DR, Sharon Locke. Influencewatch.org,

when describing ISG'S Critical Race Theory left-of-center ideology says that "Insight Education explicitly states that it is working to "strategically dismantle practices that perpetuate structural racism" and that all educators the firm hires are dedicated to self-development "rooted in the tenets of anti-racism." Education is described as a means to overthrow "systemic racism." Dr. Sharon Locke was hired to work with the GPS leadership team to install a structure of Culturally Responsive Education. At the Guilford BOE zoom meeting on 1/25/21 Dr. Locke stated that her "Structure was straightly aligned with Kendi's "How to be an Anti-racist" and "Stamped." Kendi, in a Slate podcast interview said that his "anti-racism work" has been "inspired" by critical race theorists, and that he considers Critical Race Theory to be "foundational to my work."

- (9) Guilford Education Association (union) candidate questionnaire 2021 to which all (5) Democrat and Independent candidates elected to the BOE answered yes to the following questions: Will you pledge to include the local teachers union in discussions surrounding all matters related to your local school district, its schools and its funding, and will you oppose all proposals that would censor teachers from teaching about inclusion diversity and equity?
- (10) Definition of "ultra vires." Ultra vires is a Latin phrase that translates to "beyond the powers." This means that someone is acting beyond the scope of the authority or power that is granted to him by law, contract or agreement.
- (11) No Left Turn in Education Guilford position paper and cover letter dated 2/24/22 concerning Dr. Siler's "Report on School Culture and Pedagogy in Guilford Public Schools" which can be accessed by going to www.noleftturnguilford.org and clicking on news.
- (12) At the Guilford Human Rights Commission public zoom meeting on 10/20/20, Superintendent Freeman was asked "Is there a plan or option in the future for parents to attend/observe classes or teacher training" to which the Superintendent answered, "That is a challenge we acknowledge but feel that students/teachers will not take risks if they do not have a safe space for learning/teaching."
- (13) At the Guilford BOE meeting on 5/9/22, Superintendent Freeman said in reference to FOI requests, "What I worry about is when I see national play books that are released that are encouraging somebody who disagrees with the direction the Board has set to intentionally gum up the works by filing repeat FOI requests or by making requests for lots of it ... what is playing out is not a sincere attempt to engage in an open conversation, but it is an opportunity to play gotcha."
- (14) National School Boards Association letter to The Honorable Joseph R. Biden on 9/29/21 which said "America's public schools and its education leaders are under an immediate threat" and that "public school officials are ... facing physical threats because of propaganda purporting the false inclusion of critical race theory within classroom instruction and curricula."
- (15) National School Boards Association letter to all NSBA members dated 10/22/21 apologizing for their 9/29/21 letter to President Biden which prompted a 10/4/21 memo from AG Merrick Garland addressing threats against school administrators, board members, teachers and staff.