

EXHIBIT 25

Opinion

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Kansas public school teacher stands by criticism amid attacks and national attention: 'I will not be deterred'



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The outpouring of love and support I have received has been nothing short of amazing. Thank you!

On the other hand, since my op-ed in *The Lion* and after various interviews about the Shawnee Mission School District's DEI/Deep Equity curriculum and district policy, there have been a few people misrepresenting my position to spread hateful *ad hominem* attacks and numerous lies about me. Sometimes they stoop to doing it through kids or with unflattering pictures of me.

I won't dignify their denigrations with specific responses, and won't be fazed by

anything they are scheming, but if one reads my article objectively one would see that I have three reasonable main concerns:

(1) I take issue with the divisive and indoctrinating effects of the particular Corwin DEI/Deep Equity program the Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) is using; it needs to be exposed for what it is: a race-based ideology that does damage to our students and staff.

Let the people decide for themselves. Release the curriculum for parents and taxpayers to see, so that they can make their own decision. Show our community the slideshows, the wording, the writing, the videos and all of the materials we are compelled to watch and participate in.

An unofficial SMSD mouthpiece has conveniently said it is copyrighted material that cannot be released. But copyrights prevent people from selling, not disclosing under "fair use." The milquetoast description the district has been pushing out in response to my article is a deceptive non-response.

There needs to be transparency. How is it legal to keep the information hidden? Parents and taxpayers have a right to know what is in the DEI curriculum.

(2) Separate from the DEI curriculum, I also take issue with our district's refusal to put into writing the policies we are told we must follow in our schools. When we are being told at staff meetings to hide information from parents regarding their minor children transitioning at school, why won't SMSD put that in writing? What is the policy regarding pronouns, and how does the district plan to implement a pronoun policy when at the same time telling us to hide the pronouns from parents?

How are teachers to keep up with students who change their pronouns from day-to-day or are gender fluid? These are real issues of consequence to all of us who teach in the district, and all teachers should want the district to be absolutely clear on how these new policies work.

The fact is, the district does not have a policy for these issues and there is nothing in writing, but they will write-up a teacher for using "incorrect" pronouns that match a student's biological sex, even if accidentally. It is fundamentally unfair to all staff for the district to subject educators to disciplinary action regarding policy that does not exist or is unclear.

It also appears to many of us that the district does not *want* to put these policies in writing or to be held accountable for the repercussions. It does not make me "transphobic" to want clarity on district policy. The district has a responsibility to protect its staff by clearly stating its official policy. Telling us to lie to parents is wrong, and many staff members across SMSD feel the same way.

(3) The district needs to return to a focus on academics and instilling a culture of learning in our schools. There is a place for emotional health, but we have swung way too far, and are impeding learning and killing educator morale. Teachers are not psychologists. Academic performance is falling by the wayside.

SMSD high school proficiencies are low. Only 29% are proficient in math, and just 38% are proficient in reading.

I am deeply committed to offering fair representations of messages from opposing viewpoints and letting students develop their own opinions. I am not at all opposed to teaching opposing views or Black history. In fact, after an SMSD

workshop about building our own classroom libraries, I used my own money to buy books by mostly Black and minority authors after SMSD refused to purchase a single book that offered another view (see Bob Woodson's *Red, White, and Black*).

The official excuse was that they didn't want to push politics. Yet, our district has purchased *White Fragility* and other books by Ibram Kendi, Michelle Obama, and Don Lemon, to name a few, and offers *Black Lives Matter in the Classroom* at district professional development days.

I am not for banning voices from the left, but the environment must be fair. If our schools are going to champion diversity, why not diversity of thought? Why can't we have more conservative Black voices in our school library, at our professional development days and in our DEI meetings?

Why can't there be a fair representation of views in our school? Isn't that what learning is all about?

The vitriolic treatment I have received from those who don't know me and have never set foot in my classroom is exactly why more teachers and staff do not speak up. They, too, would get called "racist," "transphobe," "disgusting," a "right-wing extremist," a "Nazi," a "fascist" and worse.

Students (and parents) who have never been in my room or spoken a single word to me are spreading absolute falsehoods about my classroom. They claim I have a racist flag flying in my room (I have an American flag), that I fat shame my students, or call them names, to recount only a few. They offer no corroboration because they can't; none of it is true. I challenge them to come forward with evidence.

SMSD says the majority doesn't have a problem with the Corwin DEI curriculum (which says whites are "oppressors" and inherently, unconsciously or systemically "racists"). But the district doesn't know, because the guarantee of nastiness, lies and irrational hatred from the mob (within and outside of the school system) keeps teachers quiet and in their place. SMSD can only say there is "no evidence" the infiltration of leftist ideals is causing teachers to leave and kids to feel traumatized. But they haven't looked for the evidence.

I have received hundreds and hundreds of messages from staff members at Shawnee Mission North, from staff in schools across the district, from teachers around the state, and from people across the nation thanking me for standing up to what is happening in our schools. Parents, students, former teachers and staff from Shawnee Mission North and all around the district have been asking how they can help because they have seen the same.

The support has far outweighed the hateful rhetoric and worn-out accusations. Those accusations, frankly, are patently false and will not stop me from doing what I love – teaching kids English and how to critically think about both sides of an argument.

Our students and our school district are being harmed by indoctrination that instills a victim mentality. It's not good for minority kids, white kids, transgender kids or *any* of our kids. It causes division, stress and anxiety.

Yes, your kids are being indoctrinated in a harmful way. Parents don't like to hear that it is happening in the pristine Shawnee Mission School District, but it needed to be exposed. The Shawnee Mission School District needs to return to a focus on academics and create a climate that is pro-human, not anti-white.

The current Corwin DEI curriculum is not conducive to learning. We need to stop pushing an ideology that not everyone agrees with without allowing other views to be heard. It is wrong. In his book *Love Your Enemies*, Arthur Brooks states:

None of us is infallible. Whether you are a person of the left, the right, or the center, there are reasonable people of goodwill who do not share your fundamental convictions ... All of us should be willing—even eager—to engage with anyone who is prepared to do business in the currency of truth-seeking discourse by offering reasons, marshaling evidence, and making arguments. The more important the subject under discussion, the more willing we should be to listen and engage – especially if the person with whom we are in conversation will challenge our deeply held – even our most cherished and identity-forming beliefs ... Our willingness to listen to and respectfully engage those with whom we disagree (especially about matters of profound importance) contributes vitally to the maintenance of a milieu in which people feel free to speak their minds, consider unpopular positions, and explore lines of argument that may undercut established ways of thinking. Such an ethos protects us against dogmatism and groupthink, both of which are toxic to the healthy of academic communities and to the functioning of democracies. (183)

The Deep Equity meetings are politically charged; to say otherwise is dishonest. We should not be exploiting identity politics in our Deep Equity meetings, or with our students at school.

The district needs to address this problem and move away from the disdain shown to independent and conservative views. These DEI meetings should be fair. They are not. We can all agree that we want to work together for compassion and fairness and unity. We have shared objectives, and we all want to build a community at Shawnee Mission North that allows for fair, free and abundant opportunity for all people. Those shared objectives can and should be met in ways that do not focus on race, victimhood and blaming.

I will not be deterred. Every student who has ever had me knows I believe there are two choices: make excuses, or do the work. Even while the mob tries to intimidate and cancel me, I am not afraid of the work that needs to be done and will fight for the students in this district.

Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

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