

EXHIBIT 4

To whom it may concern:

I have been attending our Deep Equity meetings at Shawnee Mission North from the beginning. Taken from the Diversity and Equity page on the district website, the mission is as follows:

“The Shawnee Mission School District embraces its role in establishing a long-term mission and vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion by relentlessly creating a fully unified, equitable, and inclusive culture. It is our mission to value differences and to actively promote inclusion and equity.”

While the message is direct, it is clear by now that this program is designed (either by the district or by our building) based on a presumed superior intellectual or political status and view of leftist ideology. The Deep Equity committee at SMN routinely presents a curriculum centered around a Progressive Liberal point of view, and although the intent of these meetings is to create equity among our students and staff, the limited views are having the opposite effect. These meetings have become nothing more than the continued divisive political tribalism we see all too often everyday.

To my knowledge, as a teacher at SMN for 13 years, there is not a teacher, administrator, or staff member in our building who is unwilling to step up to the plate for our students. We want equality for all of our students. We want them to find success. We care for them and develop relationships with them to build trust. As a staff member myself, and having worked in the building for years, it is irresponsible and unreasonable to continue to carry on Deep Equity meetings while preventing or limiting differing or opposing views from discussion. It is dishonest. It is unfair. It is wrong. If we want sustainable growth in our building, we must not alienate staff and condescend or show contempt for their views.

Here are some examples:

- BLM workshops & lectures with blatant propaganda videos (SMSD in general, not necessarily a focus of our meetings, but same BLM wording is used in our meetings).
- Articles written from a liberal standpoint about white privilege, systemic racism, white supremacy, anti-capitalism, anti-conservatism, decolonizing our classrooms, how to be an antiracist, white fragility, critical race theory, 1619 curriculum, daily microaggressions, etc.
- White shaming discourse and a preoccupation with language depicting white people as the oppressor vs the oppressed (BIPOC).
- Field trips focusing on systemic racism.
- Staff members in this building have posted on social media that conservatives “have only hate in their hearts,” that conservatives are nazi supporters and sympathizers, that conservatives are racist, that certain upbringings somehow don’t allow staff to understand other views, etc... in effect using social media to express divisive vitriol for those we work with. This rhetoric limits the ability for open communication during Deep Equity meetings.

While I do not believe we should police social media, this language is damaging to relationship building among our staff.

- Vilified by staff members as freeloaders for not joining the union (not in Deep Equity per se, but bias in general)

I have read all the articles; I have gone on the field trips; I have read the books. There is no reciprocity. There are no other voices. Not one time has there been any view presented other than a view that lines up favorably with leftist ideology. Discussion boards routinely show contempt to other views and belittle, mock, and ignore dissenting ideas. We should be able to (and can) agree on the objectives of Deep Equity meetings, but disagree on how best to address the problems. The book, *Love Your Enemies*, by 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 health of academic communities and to the functioning of democracies. (183)

As of today, the above is not happening. I would like to address this problem and move away from the disdain shown to more independent and conservative views. These 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 SMN that allows for fair, free, and abundant opportunity for all people. Those shared objectives can be met in different ways. We should reject rhetoric that suggests contempt for the other, and “should celebrate our ideological diversity. Good leaders should get out of their ideological bubbles and interact with those in other positions along the spectrum of personal morality in America” (Brooks 103). We need to find our common ground and bridge our differences with respect.

The issues we discuss in Deep Equity are politically charged topics; to say otherwise is dishonest. Our students are not the same; we as a staff are not the same. We should not be exploiting identity politics in our Deep Equity meetings, or with our students at the school. Doing so neglects the opportunity to bring people together. We should be trying to break down division, not create it. We are not a “one- party” entity. We should be able to tell our own stories and not be afraid that people on our own staff will show us contempt. Healthy competition of ideas

fosters excellence and growth; not allowing other views to be shared equally and shutting down the competition is not “fair play” and shows no courage. We need competing ideas and should not delegitimize an ideological opponent, and especially, “it is not acceptable to shut down the competition if the other side’s ideas make us uncomfortable” (Brooks 167). To build credibility and more sustainable solutions to achieve our objectives, we should embrace the diversity of ideas we as a staff hold, and listen to (and debate) competing ideas, consider the merits of our arguments, not silence and drive out from discussion those we disagree with.

Here is what I propose:

1. Address the problem and stop ignoring that these meetings are centered around promoting leftist ideology.
2. Have the courage to begin fair representation of other views.
3. Execute a remedy by bringing in other views: library books, articles, guest speakers, conservative leaning workshops (SMSD), field trips, and a diverse representation of committee members on the Deep Equity team.
4. Develop sustainable results/outcomes by inspiring others to be their best selves through principled team needs, integrity, and excellence.

I come to the Deep Equity meetings with an open heart. But, the predictable bias shown to all but a narrow field of views has damaged the credibility and integrity of the message. I trust that this is not the intent. However, I worry that if these problems are not corrected, and in the absence of respect to all members of the staff, the effectiveness is diminished and successful teamwork all but impossible. There is already a loss of “buy in” as a result of unprofessional and divisive practices. We all want to begin to build bridges and be the best we can be for the benefit of our students, staff, and ourselves.

I very much appreciate you listening to me, as this was not easy to say. Yet, I believe that we can be better given this opportunity to act courageously. I look forward to future discussion regarding assessment and improvement of our Deep Equity work.

Sincerely and in good faith,

Caedran Sullivan