

June 10, 2021

GPS Families,

There has been a great deal of misinformation shared about curriculum processes, structure, and content over the last few weeks. After a conversation with representatives from the Greenwich Parent Teacher Association Council, GPS thought it would be helpful to provide some context and additional information.

Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

GPS has a long history of standing tall supporting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as part of our curriculum and student supports. We have not wavered on these ideals, and we intend to continue growing stronger as a school system. 'Stand Up Against Racism Day' has been a part of GPS for well over a decade. 'Names Day' at GHS has become a tradition for our 9th graders, welcoming them into high school with the messages of inclusion and kindness towards others. GHS was also just designated a 'No Place for Hate' school by the Anti-Defamation League. We have GPS Staff members who participate as part of the First Selectman's Diversity Committee, as well as on our own internal Diversity Committees. This year, our students have sat on panels to share their experiences in GPS, and we've had GPS participation in League of Women Voters panels to learn and share with one another. These are just a few examples of our commitment to DEI across our district.

GPS Does Not Teach Critical Race Theory

We do not want our efforts around DEI to be miscommunicated or misinterpreted to suggest that we are teaching 'Critical Race Theory.' 'Critical Race Theory' is not part of the GPS curriculum. We do, however, want our students to be critical thinkers, listeners, and analyze the past, present, and future in regards to how we see and respect one another, which is a core component of our District's mission to prepare students to function effectively in an interdependent global community.

Commitment to Improve Processes for Classroom Content

Over the past year, we have experienced a small handful of materials which have been called into question. GPS Administration and staff take concerns such as these seriously. Upon review, there was an essay utilized at GHS which was not appropriate, and we acknowledged and took the necessary steps to make sure that this essay will not be utilized again with our students. However, some of the materials being called into question are completely appropriate and meet the standard of expectation for GPS, and support our stated curriculum objectives.

It is our continued commitment to make sure that materials that do not align to our standards-based curriculum are not used in our classrooms. However, it's important to note that our [Board of Education policy](#) supports academic freedom for teachers, within the confines of our curriculum. While every classroom should have a foundational resource to build upon, every teacher brings his or her expertise to the classroom. Teaching is a human endeavour, and the

best teachers tell stories, create a climate of trust, respond thoughtfully to questions and comments, and create opportunities for productive student debate on critical issues.

Some teachable moments are not found on the pages of a text, nor on an outdated worksheet. Technology has also changed the way we access information and curate content. Over the past decade many of our daily lesson plans, textbook resources, and other foundational materials have been eliminated, or are now considered out of date. The GPS District Curriculum Council has been incredibly supportive in reviewing curriculum documents, however, our staff have shared that they want a greater investment in foundational materials.

As such, we committed to strengthening our process when it comes to selecting and vetting materials and resources. We will be focusing on a consistent and rigorous process that directly aligns to our standards-based curriculum. This year, with the mathematics textbook adoption, we have a prime example of providing new resources across K-8 that will replace materials which were almost 10 years old. Another excellent example is the infusion of Foundations in our early childhood classrooms. We will work to ensure that teachers have access to even more instructional materials and resources that are aligned to our curriculum.

Strong Parent Partnership and Support for our GPS Staff

GPS prides itself on strong working relationships with our families. As we come to the close of one of our most challenging years on record for students, staff, and families, we acknowledge that we are not perfect. We celebrate our staff who have been teaching and working under a microscope this year in a way which has never been seen before in public education. We will continue to advance achievement for all of our students. GPS is grateful for all that our staff have done, and will continue to do on behalf of our community, and for the continued support of our GPS families.

Thank you,
Dr. Toni Jones
Superintendent