



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**For BOE meeting Monday 6/22**

1 message

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**Anedra Jones** <anedra09@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 9:13 AM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

## Dear Members of the Board of Education,

Black Lives Matter. Full stop. At this moment in our history it is a simple affirmation that lets Black members of the community know we are valued, accepted, and loved. We've seen it painted on streets, worn on t-shirts, stated in advertisements, and affirmed by representatives from various sectors of our communities. We have not seen it from the Stow-Munroe Falls city school district. After teachers and administrators from the district, as well as members of your board, listened to Black parents relay stories of racism endured by their Black sons in the district, I thought the statement released would be stronger, and more specific. The experiences shared in that meeting are unique to Black students. Those students and parents deserve to know that the district values them, and is working to eradicate the racism and discrimination they face. We, as Black parents and community members, deserve to hear this district say Black Lives Matter.

Privilege allows you to ignore the problems of racism because you don't face them. Black students and parents can't ignore racism, we must face it. We must deal with it. Racism is a daily, anxiety-inducing concern for Black people in any community, including Stow and Munroe Falls. It is comforting to know that the people we trust to educate our children are concerned with issues that affect them. It is dishonest to say that all lives matter with the racist incidents happening in our nation and community, without affirming specifically that Black Lives Matter.

Sincerely,  
Anedra Jones  
1809B Higby Drive  
Stow, OH 44224

Anedra



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Letter to the Board for 6/22/2020**

2 messages

**Ginger Bakos** <gbakos73@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 9:02 AM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Dear SMF School Board Members and Superintendent Bratten,

If the school board wishes to take up the mantle of drafting a statement on anti-racism that ensures that black students and staff indeed feel welcome, invited and important, the statement proposed on tonight's agenda woefully and embarrassingly misses that mark.

It should not take global protests to move a district to stand against racism and discrimination, that said, late is still better than not at all. The statement as it is written is not at all direct and, in fact, appears to seek to avoid accountability. The statement in its current form is unacceptable and a grave disservice to the staff, students and families of this district.

Either make a statement that stands strong in support of the black students, staff and families of this district or let your silence speak volumes. Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter in Stow. Black Lives Matter in Munroe Falls. And Black Lives MUST Matter to this school board. If black lives do not matter to this board, then you have no business sitting in those seats.

In an endeavor to support what I hope is an earnest effort by the Stow-Munroe Falls School Board to adequately, appropriately and actively support anti-racism in the district, I have adjusted the current statement to one that is direct and holds the board accountable to the community.

"Our mission at Stow-Munroe Falls City School District is to "Provide Inspiration to Make a Difference in the World." No inspiration can be found when our students and staff feel unwelcome, uninvited or unimportant. In support of the movement for Black Lives, we, as the board, must re-evaluate our district's approach to equity and inclusivity and racism and discrimination. As a predominantly white school district, we have too often been blind to the racism and discrimination faced by our black students and staff. We have not adequately promoted an inclusive, equitable, anti-discriminatory culture within the SMFCSD community, and it is incumbent upon us to change.

While we have policies in place to discourage racism in our schools, words without action are meaningless. In an effort to better understand how we as a district can support black students, staff and families, on Friday, June 5th, the Stow-Munroe Falls District organized a

"listening luncheon" where black community members were invited to share their experiences. We aim to transform that information into action through a committee on inclusivity led by our K-6 curriculum director, Isha Collier, Riverview Elementary principal Traci Kosmach, athletic director Cyle Feldman, and superintendent, Tom Bratten. The purpose of this committee is to establish a vision, define goals, and develop action steps to promote equity in our schools. The board looks forward to hearing and acting upon that work to support, include and inspire our entire student population. Black lives matter to this board and this community, and we are committed to real and appreciable change that will provide a truly inclusive SMFCSD community for every student."

Kind Regards,  
SMF School Parent  
Ginger Bakos  
544 Fairchild Ave.  
Kent, OH 44240

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**Ginger Bakos** <gbakos73@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 1:55 PM

To: Ginger Bakos <Gbakos73@gmail.com>

Cc: st\_jwhitacre@smfcscd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcscd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcscd.org, st\_jwright@smfcscd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcscd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcscd.org

This letter to the board still applies to the updated statement just released. The revised statement still does not adequately address the issues addressed in my initial letter. The final sentence "embroiled in divisiveness" is insulting. Standing for what is right and just is not divisive. Words matter, and the board must do better.

Kind Regards,  
Ginger Bakos

On Jun 22, 2020, at 9:02 AM, Ginger Bakos <Gbakos73@gmail.com> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**6/22 Meeting please read**

1 message

**Jacqueline Fry** <jfry3@kent.edu>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 7:03 PM

To: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org

Hello,

The question of whether or not to read alumni letters based on the fact that many of them were from people who moved far away from Stow speaks volumes to the atmosphere Stow breeds. Yes, I did move out of state and decided to move back to work as a mental health professional in my hometown because it is very clearly needed.

The culture of Stow is now on you all as board members, you can change it so graduates don't move away the first chance they get!!

Personalizing your own reactions to Black Lives Matter is simply not helpful at this point and real substantial change needs to be made (whether you're 1/16th Native American or not Jason, that is a harmful cliché which does not excuse you from your whiteness and/or your guilt).

Please educate yourself on the issues of **systemic racism** in this country and **implicit bias in all of our minds** as you move forward to hopefully lead Stow Munroe Falls City Schools to a better future.

Special shout out and THANK YOU to Nancy Brown and Jessica Wright.

Thank you.

Warmly and full of hope,  
Jacqueline Fry  
Class of 2005



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Please read at 6/22 meeting**

1 message

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Jacqueline Fry <jfry3@kent.edu>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 12:54 PM

To: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Hello,

My name is Jacqueline Fry, I'm a class of 2005 alumnus. I am **APPALLED** at the irresponsible lack of awareness and general understanding that Stow City School board members, council members, and educators have demonstrated in recent days regarding race relations. The topic of race in this country is necessary to speak about because it directly and clearly affects the fabric of oppression in the schools that teach our children.

After graduating from Stow, I lived and worked across our country (California, Washington, Oregon, Texas) proudly serving with AmeriCorps where I learned how to support various institutions and community agencies. I was wholeheartedly **embarrassed** at my lack of education regarding the history of this country, disparities based on race, and systemic oppression continuously upheld by people in power.

My fellow classmate explained it well: Stow is populated by children raised by parents who have never had to acknowledge or grapple with the true history of this country. Stow's curriculum, like curricula around the country, has been designed to whitewash over state-sponsored terrorism against Indigenous people and Black people, especially African Descendants of Slaves (ADOS).

**It's not wholly your fault - America is like this everywhere. But it is your problem, and you need to do something about it.**

Black Lives Matter. I urge the Stow administrators and teachers to **show leadership, empathy, and a commitment to learning** to their students and community by 1) making a statement that Black Lives Matter and 2) educating themselves on the history of white supremacy and how to dismantle it **IMMEDIATELY**.

As an alumnus of Stow and a mental health professional on the brink of graduation, **I want more for my community, I want more for our children**. There are many book and resource lists available online. One book I found galvanizing was "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury & Healing" by Dr. Joy DeGruy.

Warmly,  
Jacqueline Fry



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Request for Public Statement and Action

1 message

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**Liz Light** <liz.light3377@gmail.com>

Thu, Jun 4, 2020 at 12:21 PM

To: st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_kchapman@smfcsd.org, st\_scarsella@smfcsd.org, st\_lswinsburg@smfcsd.org, st\_schmidt@smfcsd.org, st\_bangely@smfcsd.org, st\_cgriffin@smfcsd.org, st\_paul@smfcsd.org, st\_acottrill@smfcsd.org, st\_tburdette@smfcsd.org, st\_lepard@smfcsd.org, st\_ehaught@smfcsd.org, st\_treen@smfcsd.org, st\_amurray@smfcsd.org, st\_love@smfcsd.org, st\_sdeitrick@smfcsd.org, st\_dulbricht@smfcsd.org, st\_lacoste@smfcsd.org, st\_muckleroy@smfcsd.org, st\_ladner@smfcsd.org, st\_mpostak@smfcsd.org, st\_long@smfcsd.org, st\_alexander@smfcsd.org, st\_kreiner@smfcsd.org, st\_mgries@smfcsd.org, st\_paradise@smfcsd.org, st\_cottrell@smfcsd.org, st\_yanchunas@smfcsd.org, st\_beres@smfcsd.org, st\_spalchesko@smfcsd.org, st\_vanorman@smfcsd.org, st\_jwyant@smfcsd.org, st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org, st\_merz@smfcsd.org, st\_obraza@smfcsd.org

Hello SMFCSD Administrators, Teachers, Staff, and Board Members,

Please see my letter, attached. I am a former student and am seeking a response from SMFCSD regarding the police murder of George Floyd and countless other Black people as well as the capacity for our schools to take accountable action to better serve all students in light of police violence and systemic oppression.

I have not seen any public statement regarding this from the district and this concerns me. Failure to address these events by remaining silent is harmful to students, families, and the community at large. I hope SMFCSD will take this historical moment as an opportunity to lead by way of public action.

If you are unsure of what an appropriate public statement might look like, below is a link to a statement issued by Centerville School Superintendent in Ohio for your reference.  
Superintendent of Centerville Schools Statement

I look forward to your prompt response,  
Liz Light  
(330) 245-6746

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**SMFCSD Call for Action.pdf**  
54K

Hello Superintendent Bratten & SMFCSD Community,

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I am an alum of SMFHS, class of 2010. I was born and raised in Stow, living at various times on McTaggart Rd., Sandford Ave., and Ritchie Rd. I attended Highland, Indian Trail, Lakeview, Kimpton, and Stow-Munroe Falls High School. I went on to receive my BA from Ohio State University, Magna Cum Laude, in 2014. I am currently a masters student, working toward my MS in Marriage and Family Therapy and will seek licensure to become a therapist in service of low-resourced populations with an emphasis in trauma-focused therapy.

I write to ask what the district's plans are to publicly address the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless other Black people by police. Beyond addressing Black death at the hands of police, I would like to know what actions the district will take to protect, preserve, and support Black students, families, and the community at large as well as creating a culture of anti-racism in each school. I believe this begins with administrators, teachers, and staff taking accountability by addressing what is being taught in terms of Black History and social justice at every grade level in our schools.

That being said, I am interested in curriculum enhancement and reform. I have taken significant time to reflect on the education I received through SMFCSD regarding American and World History and the Black experience. For the past 5 years I have facilitated small groups for a community Black History course for white people wishing to develop as allies. Taking the course before facilitating, I was 1 of 300 adults learning Black History for essentially the first time.

I do not recall learning much at all about Africa (importantly pre-Transatlantic Slave Trade Africa) or the African Diaspora, the colonization of America, slavery and the economic impact/business of slavery in Southern and Northern states, the Reconstruction Era, or the pervasiveness of American legislation throughout our history (Jim Crow, Fugitive Slave Laws, restrictions on marriage, education, land ownership, voting, home ownership, the War on Drugs, etc.) which lay the foundation for systemic oppression today. Learning about the Tulsa Massacre and Black Wall Street in my mid-twenties is not acceptable as a person who received a high school education.

The aspects of Black History I do recall from my k-12 education are primarily slave narratives (often with underlying themes of "white saviors"), repeated spotlights on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and Rosa Parks, and surface lessons touching on "milestones" like the Emancipation Proclamation and Brown v. Board of Education. Most importantly, the narratives surrounding such lessons always resulted in the false notion that we live in a fair and just society because "slavery is over," "equal right laws have been passed," "racism is confined to the KKK."

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Additionally, it is crucial for schools with majority white student bodies in majority white communities to have multiple leaders in their lives (teachers, administrators, coaches, etc.) who are non-white. This gives all students a lived experience with a role model that does not look like the majority, and allows opportunities to cultivate healthy and resilient attitudes toward diverse people during crucial developmental periods. Anti-racism must be taught, engaged, and encouraged in our schools; for many students, this will mean a gateway into a lifetime of treating others with compassion, fighting for equality, and creating just and caring communities.

**I ask that you share your plans for the following in response:**

- **Immediate public address of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless other Black folks by police**
- **Actions SMFCSD will take to protect, preserve, and support Black students, families, and the community at large**
- **Creating a culture of anti-racism in each school in the district**
- **Curriculum enhancement and reform as to include Black History from a non euro-centric/white perspective**
- **Advocating for curriculum change at a state level**
- **Mandatory anti-racist professional development for all administrators, teachers, and staff**
- **Creating and implementing hiring practices and recruitment strategies that work toward school staff being representative of Ohio's demographic population**

I understand it is possible changes have been made since I graduated in 2010 or that I was unaware of measures being taken while I was a student. Please let me know of any associated policies, procedures, or actions in place at this time. Additionally, I commend any teachers who independently seek extra resources or integrate content that strive toward more equitable, anti-racist classrooms and school culture.

Below are two resources offered to me from a colleague and public school teacher. These resources may help as starting points to flesh out courses of action in making SMFCSD a safer place for the most systemically vulnerable youth and residents as well as take a lead in creating a truly just community for all.

I look forward to your response,

Liz Light

(330) 245-6746

<https://www.tolerance.org>

<https://www.facinghistory.org>



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

**Comment for the record (Board of Education meeting, Monday 6/22)**

1 message

Deborah Wang (王欣欣) &lt;deborah.wang@gmail.com&gt;

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 10:34 AM

To: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org

Hello,

Black Lives Matter. My name is Deborah Wang (pronounced *Wong*). I'm a class of 2005 alumni. I find it disappointing but frankly, not surprising, that the Stow school system has yet to say Black Lives Matter.

I came up through Stow schools as a Chinese-American student. I was treated as a model minority and benefited greatly from it. I was also regrettably enculturated into the polite, color-blind brand of racism and white supremacy endemic to wealthy suburban areas like ours.

If any administrators or teachers from 15 years ago are still there, you may remember me as the girl who left for Berkeley. The distances I've traveled over the years have given me perspective on our hometown. I know Stow as intimately as anyone born and raised there. Take it from a native daughter: you have a racist, white supremacist culture.

Your school district is populated by children raised by parents who have never had to acknowledge or grapple with the true history of this country. Your curriculum, like curricula around the country, has been designed to whitewash over state-sponsored terrorism against Indigenous people and Black people, especially African Descendants of Slaves (ADOS).

It's not wholly your fault - America is like this everywhere. But it *is* your problem, and you need to do something about it.

The privilege afforded me by racial triangulation cocooned me in ignorance about the racism suffered by my black and brown classmates. I am only hearing their stories now. I regret to my core that I could not have stood in solidarity with them in school. I am writing this in solidarity with them now.

Black Lives Matter. I urge the Stow administrators and teachers to show leadership to their students and community by 1) making a statement that Black Lives Matter and 2) educating themselves on the history of white supremacy and how to dismantle it. There are many book and resource lists available online. I suggest beginning with "The Color of Money" (Mehrsa Baradaran) or "How to be an Anti-Racist" (Ibram X. Kendi).

-D.W.



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Please Read at 6/22 Meeting

1 message

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Cara Byrne <crh64@case.edu>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 9:03 PM

To: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Dear Board Members:

I am a 2005 graduate of Stow-Munroe Falls High School and currently work as a Professor at Case Western Reserve University. I join other alumni of SMFHS to encourage you to make clear your commitment to fostering an educational setting that is anti-racism and to clearly demonstrate your support for students, faculty, staff, and community members of color.

I'm grateful to read Board President Whitacre's recent statement that says: "There is no place for [...] any form of racism or discrimination at Stow-Munroe Falls Schools." I ask President Whitacre and the Board to clarify this remark by explaining what actions are being taken not only to address individual instances like the alleged comments made by a SMF teacher, but also to do better as a district to stand against systemic racism. I would like to know more about how the district plans to, as President Whitacre states, "come together to address issues of serious concern."

As neither the Superintendent nor the Board has made a statement to the larger community addressing the deaths of George Floyd or Breonna Taylor and the nationwide calls to seek equity for those historically and currently oppressed and discriminated against, I hope that you consider doing so now. While I realize that you are managing the challenges of our current pandemic, this is also a crucial moment in history that challenges us all to be critical of injustice and racial privilege - especially those that exist in our schools. I hope that you live up to your commitment to "Empower Each Learner to Be a Self-Motivated Successful Citizen in a Global Society" by teaching students how to stand up against racism and discrimination. This begins with our actions and words.

I write today not only as an alumna, but also as someone whose nieces and nephews currently attend SMF schools. I have a great appreciation for the education I received and that they receive, but there is room for improvement in cities across the country, including Stow. I hope you join neighboring districts, including Kent City Schools and Hudson City Schools, in making a public statement. I would also like to share my current district of Cleveland Heights-University Heights's letter to read and consider. Black lives matter.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Cara Byrne  
Stow-Munroe Falls High School Class of 2005

1224 Oxford Road  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44224



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**statement in support of the Black Lives Matter resolution**

1 message

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**Heather Walter** <hlwalter725@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 4:54 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Dear Stow Munroe Falls Board of Education Members,

Attached is a statement to be read at tomorrow's BOE meeting. I'd be happy to appear and read my statement, or allow someone else to read it into the record for me.

Thank you,  
Heather Walter  
Parent to 2 SMF High School students

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Heather L. Walter, PhD  
Director & Associate Professor  
School of Communication  
The University of Akron

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**Dear Stow Munroe Falls Board of Education.pdf**  
33K

Dear Stow Munroe Falls Board of Education,

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I am writing after seeing the statement on Black Lives Matter you are voting on at Monday's meeting. I am concerned by the lack of clarity in stating the value of black lives and black students. I feel strongly that your statement needs to do a better job of committing to enact actual policy changes that will protect those students. I have already seen similar statements from across the region and country that would serve as excellent models for your statement. I am particularly concerned by the sentence near the end saying you want to include ALL student populations. Yes, all students are important, but this statement should be about the black ones. Using "all" diminishes the point of the protests, diminishes the importance of our students who are hurting right now, and diminishes the necessity to make real change SPECIFICALLY FOR THEM.

As educators and standard bearers for the district's educational process, it is necessary to educate yourselves on this issue. There is substantial research highlighting the great disparity between black and non-black students in the way they are treated due to both implicit and explicit biases. Just two years ago, the Government Accountability Office found that black students are more likely to be disciplined, more likely to be suspended, and more likely to have their behavioral issues escalated to law enforcement than their white counterparts engaging in the same behavior. According to the Department of Education data from 2012, black boys are suspended 3 times more than white boys, and black girls are suspended six times more than white girls.

It is this type of disparity which requires a greater look into our systems that lean toward harsher treatment to children of color. To truly protect ALL the student populations, we must face some difficult self-reflections to examine the disparity that exists in the SMF district and how we can change it. The district must be committed to facing some uncomfortable truths, and recognizing that there is more to racism than the overt and purposeful hate that one might exhibit willingly.

School should be a safe place for all children to learn. Our students should be able to trust that we will put their safety and education above all else. Children should see our schools are modeling systems of fairness and justice. None of this can happen if we don't figure out why it isn't safe for black children and why we aren't a model of fairness and justice. None of this can happen if the district doesn't claim in strong language that we will not stand for racial intolerance, we will not accept any disparity on the basis of race.

We can fix this. We can make Stow Munroe Falls a district where, as you say, ALL student populations are supported and included. But in order to get there, we must make a commitment to our black students. It is time to say it: Black lives matter!!

Dr. Heather L. Walter  
SMF Parent



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Letter submission for tomorrow's BOE meeting

1 message

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Heather Shall <hwoffshall@gmail.com>  
To: st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 9:24 PM

Good evening,

I'm attaching a letter I've written and ask that it be read at tomorrow evening's meeting. It is in regards to the district's proposed statement on racism. I appreciate you taking the time to read it and sincerely hope that the board votes to do what is right for the students of color in this district.

Thank you,  
Heather Shall

 BOE Meeting 6/22 Letter

Stow and our school district has a problem with race. It's an uncomfortable truth. As a white Stow-Munroe Falls graduate with white children that are students in the district, it is a truth that I haven't always known or acknowledged. And yet, it **MUST** be accepted if we have any chance of making appreciable change for the students of our district. It has been an unprecedented few weeks for our nation. I witnessed a group of young adults - students in our district - organize and passionately agitate for something bigger than themselves. My young daughter, a student at Lakeview, drew a Black Lives Matter sign and marched with them - her very first protest. I was so proud of them all and yet simultaneously, I was and still am ashamed. I am ashamed of the people who have driven past and spat on, cursed at and gestured rudely at these students on the corner with their signs. I am ashamed of the actions of fellow residents online, ridiculing and antagonizing those that have shared their stories and experiences of racism here in Stow. And I am ashamed of our school district for sitting silently these past weeks when so many other districts have spoken up. I am ashamed of our district for being presented with proof of an employee's racist hate speech and rather than confronting and boldly saying that this is not something that has any place in our schools and our city, they have been silent and instead allowed teachers to post messages online that say the administration has informed them that a teacher in the district has been "hacked" and has instructed them to convey this message of innocence.

The statement on racism that the district has put together is woefully inadequate. You state that the mission of the Stow-Munroe Falls City School District cannot be accomplished if "students or staff feel unwelcome, uninvited, or unimportant," and yet you conclude your statement on racism by doing just that. Rather than stating that you "embrace the opportunity to support and include" the BLACK "student population in our school district", you instead use the phrase, "ALL student populations in our school district." You even have the nerve to capitalize that. You boldly and proudly stand up and say "all lives matter" when what you should be saying, is "black lives matter". Instead of saying that it's important that BLACK students have "a sense of belonging, appreciation, safety and inclusivity in our classrooms", you shirk your duty to do what is right and say, "It is important that EVERY member" does. My white daughters have never felt like they didn't belong, weren't appreciated or safe or that they weren't included because every single student in their class looks just like them. You owe it to the students of color in this district to make a better statement than that. It's too little -- much too little -- but it's not too late to do what is right. **Black Lives Matter.** In this nation, in this state and in this district.

Thank you,  
Heather Shall  
[hwolffshall@gmail.com](mailto:hwolffshall@gmail.com)  
3454 Oak Rd. Stow, OH



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

## Public comment for 6.22 BOE meeting

2 messages

**Pamela Wind** <pamelajwind@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 10:24 PM

To: "Bratten, Tom" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org

Board members,

Good evening, my name is Pamela Wind and I reside at 4558 Chatwood Dr, Stow. I am writing to express deep disappointment with the way our district is NOT addressing the issue of racism within our district. I was initially encouraged when I heard that listening sessions were underway. However, the district has not handled the extremely racist comments coming from an employee's social media account very well at all, allowing staff to claim that the teacher was "hacked" (with zero proof of this claim being provided) rather than dealing with the very real harm and pain caused to the recipient of those statements. I was again encouraged I when I found out that the Board was drafting a statement on racism. However, when I read the draft statement, it started out strong only to end with all-capital words ALL and EVERY. My white children have never felt that they were not welcome in this district due to the color of their skin. This is NOT about "every" student, this is about doing better for our black students. This is about letting our black students and families know that they absolutely have a place here. BLACK LIVES MATTER and we need to do so much better than this as a majority white district. From Board members to administration and faculty, to the students engaging in race based bullying, we MUST do better. Not only must the statement be stronger, we need action.

Toward that end, I would like to know what the district is doing or plans to do to address the following:

1. Ensuring that all board members and staff, especially teaching staff, are thoroughly educated in the systemic nature of racism in this country, and how to be actively anti-racist?
2. How diverse is our staff, and is it reflective of our student population? Do our black students have black teachers at some point during their time in our schools? If those staff are not present, what will we do to address this?
3. Ensuring that our curricula are not whitewashing history or current events, and ensuring that the stories of black people by black people are included throughout our k-12 curricula, throughout the school year?
4. Knowing that students of color are overall disciplined more frequently and more harshly in this country, what are we doing to track discipline, and to ensure that we are not engaging in discriminatory discipline practices?
5. Knowing that MANY of our black students and families have multiple stories of being treated in discriminatory ways, what are we doing to actually address these issues shared with staff during the listening sessions? What actions will be taken as a result of our families bravely sharing their painful stories?
6. What is the plan to deal with specifically race based bullying? How is it addressed if one student calls another the N word, for example? Hopefully this is dealt with differently than simple name calling, as it IS different in both intent and impact. What are we going to do district wide to engage in prevention of this behavior, and in responding when it happens? What mental health resources are we providing to students bullied in this way, and are those services culturally appropriate?
7. Most importantly, what are we as a district going to do to ensure that black students feel \*welcome\* in our schools?

I am looking forward to hearing the answers to these questions soon. Thank you for your time.

Pamela J. Wind, Ph.D.

**Pamela Wind** <pamelajwind@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 2:32 PM

To: "Bratten, Tom" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org

I have just read the mildly changed draft statement. I want to be clear that the removal of "ALL" and "EVERY" does not change the fact that this statement does not, as drafted, address the needs of our black students and families and does not early state that black lives matter in our school district. My comment stands, and I still wish it to be shared during tonight's meeting.

Pamela J. Wind, Ph.D.

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Monday's Board Meeting

1 message

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sarah haren <haren.13@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 10:02 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Cc: Michael Haren <mharen@gmail.com>

Hello members of the board,

Attached please find our comments regarding the board's "Statement on Racism and Equality" to be read during the comments from the audience portion of Monday's board meeting. Thank you!

Michael and Sarah Haren  
2631 L'Ermitage Pl  
Stow, OH 44224

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 Letter to board re\_ statement on discrimination.pdf  
24K

Thank you for reading my letter.

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With all that is currently happening in our country, and the increasing visibility of violence and hatred toward black Americans, we are grateful that the board has chosen to take a stand to show our schools and our community that we will not allow this hatred in Stow and Munroe Falls.

When we read the proposed statement, we were very encouraged by what began as a strong show of support for black students and teachers. The discussions that have already begun and the promise of action plans to address discrimination in our schools is a step in the right direction.

We are disappointed, however, that the statement does not clearly and unequivocally state that Black Lives Matter. As white parents of white students, we have never felt as if they do not belong or are not supported. You do not need to tell us, or the 85% of the district that looks like us, that you support ALL students/staff and want to ensure a sense of belonging for EVERY student. The black students, parents, and staff need to hear that the district supports them, now, specifically. Please show that you do.

Thank you,  
Michael and Sarah Haren  
2631 Lermilage Place  
Stow, Ohio 44224



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

## Statement on Racism and Equality

2 messages

Kari Suhadolnik &lt;karisuhadolnik@gmail.com&gt;

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 10:46 AM

To: "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>

I was very encouraged to see the Stow Munroe Falls Board of Education put forth a proposed statement on racism and equality. After having reviewed the document I have a few concerns. I was hopeful that the content would be centered on denouncing discrimination and racism against the black community. However, the use and capitalization of the words ALL and EVERY highlight the fact that this statement falls far short of that. We will not take the proper steps to achieve equality in the district until you properly identify the root issue and define it in an honest way. Words have meanings. If the intention is to denounce racism and discrimination use the right words. Black Lives Matter. Black students and staff matter. The black community matters.

My daughter has been marching and protesting and fighting in the name of two of her best friends and their families because in her words "I want them to know that I care". If she at the age of 9 can understand the concept that all lives can not matter until BLACK LIVES MATTER then so can a school board consisting of well educated elected officials that have a duty to do what is right and just.

Thank you,

Kari Suhadolnik  
4263 Meadowlark Trl  
Stow, OH 44224

Kari Suhadolnik &lt;karisuhadolnik@gmail.com&gt;

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 4:02 PM

To: "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>

After reading the edited version, I appreciate the desire to modify and make changes. However, in order to make the statement a true statement against racism I feel it's necessary to be deliberate in clarifying that black lives matter and that the the intent to support the black community.

Thank you.

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Request For Special Meeting.

1 message

Kari Suhadolnik <karisuhadolnik@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 4:00 PM

To: "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>

Good Afternoon,

I am disappointed with the board's decision to not to hear public comments on 6/22. I requested the letters and was able to read them myself in under an hour. I have personally attended lengthy meetings, whether it was an awards night, a long executive session, or a large community issue such as the transportation issue in 2019. There was time to read all of these heartfelt letters if the situation was given the priority it deserved.

I would like to request a special meeting be held in order to read all public comments that were submitted. I do not know the reason that the community was denied their voice, but I will assume it was an error in judgement and not an attempt to silence the black community and their allies. Please show the community that it is in fact the former and not the latter by making this right.

Thank you for your time.

Kari Suhadolnik  
330-322-0140



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

## Request

2 messages

**Monica Robinson** <robbiesfam@yahoo.com>

Tue, Jun 23, 2020 at 11:42 PM

To: Tom Bratten <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, Nancy Brown <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>

Dear Board Members,

It has taken me over 24 hours to gather my thoughts and be able to express them to you. I have been parenting my black sons for the past 10 years. 9 of those years have been spent as a resident of Stow. For the past 8 years I have brought things at different times to people in the district about concerns I have had with the difference in treatment that my sons have experienced compared to their white peers. Most of the time my concerns have been brushed aside and not taken into account. I was just the crazy white mom reading into things. On June 15th, I sat in Mr Love's living room with other black parents in the district. I listened to story after story of how they have struggled in this district. It was then that I realized that what we have been experiencing is real.

Last night you silenced me again! Your decision to not read the comments continued to reinforce my opinion that you really do not care about our experience in this district. You really don't want to hear from those of us that have faced racism in this district because maybe if you don't hear it then you can continue on believing that it doesn't exist.

I am angry by Mrs Bettis's outburst. Mrs Bettio, would you like to know where I was when all of that was happening? I was parenting my adult children with no idea that 16 years down the road I would be parenting black sons. What I have learned over these past 10 years parenting my boys is nothing that was ever taught in adoption classes. There is nothing that could have prepared me for the sadness mixed with rage that I felt last night after being silenced. I had to go and look my sons in the face and tell them that this is a marathon and not a sprint and that I will do whatever it takes to demand that this board hear our story and make the changes necessary to eradicate racism in their learning environment!

So it is because of this that I am petitioning this board to hold another meeting and listen to everyone of our stories. I would love if this could be done in person so that you can look my sweet boys in the face and explain to them why you silenced their mother and father from speaking to the racism in this district! Please make this right by allowing us to speak. I realize that an in person meeting may not be possible because of COVID but please let our voices be heard.

I also would like to thank Nancy Brown and Jessica Wright for speaking up for us! They did the job that they were elected to do which is to represent those of us in the district.

Monica Robinson  
4035 Red Wing Trail

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

**Monica Robinson** <robbiesfam@yahoo.com>

Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 3:39 PM

To: Tom Bratten <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, Nancy Brown <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>

I just wanted to follow up after a brief discussion through Facebook messenger with Jason. I am still requesting and see the need for a special meeting to discuss racism in our district! This is just as important to my sons safety as the busing issues were in the fall!

Monica Robinson

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Response to School Board Meeting on 6/22/20**

3 messages

**Antoinette East-Jenkins** <aej1521@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 2:27 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org,

st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org

Cc: st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_tgummere@smfcsd.org, st\_icollier@smfcsd.org, st\_feldman\_1@smfcsd.org,

st\_tkosmach@smfcsd.org, st\_love@smfcsd.org

Board Members, Administrators and Committee Leaders:

I am reaching out to discuss the board meeting held on Monday 6/22/20. I assume there is a belief that getting a 5-0 vote on the statement concerning Racism and Equity is a win, but you have completely missed the mark. While admittedly the statement presented by Board member Nancy Brown is leaps and bounds better than the offensive and insensitive statement put out on Friday which essentially was an "all lives matter" statement, there still much room for improvement. I have been invited to participate in a Cultural Inclusivity Meeting at Kimpton (hosted by Mr. Love) and to participate in the Inclusivity Team lead by Iisha Collier but I have to tell you Monday's meeting leaves me wondering if these meetings are a waste of my time. While I know that Mrs. Collier, Mrs. Kosmach, Mr. Feldman, Mr. Love and his staff are committed to this work, it is clear to me that the board was more concerned with the optics and politics of this topic than impacting real change. The actions of the board on Monday stand to derail the work of these committed committee members and I cannot sit in silence and allow that to happen.

Racism is real in Stow-Munroe Falls, Racism is real in Ohio, Racism in America and is ingrained in everything we encounter. You cannot and will not impact real change without listening. The conversations will be uncomfortable and controversial but listening to the issues is the only way to make a change. The statements of the community members and alumni who took the time to write deserved to be heard. For that reason I am requesting a special meeting to discuss the racism black students and other students of color face in this district. You spent 15 minutes debating whether or not to read the statements, how many could have been read in that time? You began accepting comments beginning with the March 16th meeting, and continued it at the April 20th and May 26th meetings. You spent a good amount of time talking about solutions for the busing issue, posted a message on the webpage and created an online portal for comments, yet you couldn't take the time to read the comments sent in by residents. One can only surmise the reason for the different approach to handling the situations is the topic. Is tackling racism not as important as the busing issue, because this is sure how it appears?

Thanks,

*Antoinette East-Jenkins*

Antoinette East-Jenkins M.A.Ed.

Educator ~Volunteer ~Advocate

(330)338-2253

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

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**Collier, lisha** <st\_icollier@smfcsd.org>

Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 3:08 PM

To: Antoinette East-Jenkins <aej1521@gmail.com>

Cc: Jason Whitacre <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, Geraldine Bettio <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "Brown, Nancy"

<st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "Wright, Jessica" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, Lisa Johnson-Bowers

<st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "Bratten, Tom" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, Trevor Gummere

<st\_tgummere@smfcsd.org>, Cyle Feldman <st\_feldman\_1@smfcsd.org>, "Kosmach, Traci" <st\_tkosmach@smfcsd.org>,

Michael Love <st\_love@smfcsd.org>

What is the procedure for scheduling a special meeting for this topic?

I have had several people reach out to me in the community and I think it is important to let their voices be heard. I also read every single letter and it took me only 40min to read, which is less than 3-4 hours. One letter made me cry with how much passion the writer had for the topic. This matter is urgent and important.

[Quoted text hidden]

--

lisha M. Collier

K-6 Curriculum Supervisor

Stow-Munroe Falls City School District

Phone: 330-689-5445 or x.705437

"To achieve goals you've never achieved before, you need to start doing things you've never done before." -Stephen Covey

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**Kosmach, Traci** <st\_tkosmach@smfcsd.org>

Wed, Jun 24, 2020 at 3:38 PM

To: "Collier, lisha" <st\_icollier@smfcsd.org>

Cc: Antoinette East-Jenkins <aej1521@gmail.com>, Jason Whitacre <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, Geraldine Bettio

<st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "Wright, Jessica" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, Lisa

Johnson-Bowers <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "Bratten, Tom" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, Trevor Gummere

<st\_tgummere@smfcsd.org>, Cyle Feldman <st\_feldman\_1@smfcsd.org>, Michael Love <st\_love@smfcsd.org>

Antoinette's points are well taken. Through some tears I read the pdf. letters and agree there is value in having the letters read as we begin working toward equity, especially as it pertains to race, in our school district and community.

Respectfully,

Traci

**Mrs. Traci Kosmach**

*Principal, Riverview Elementary School*

*Stow-Munroe Falls City School District*

330.689.5310

Happy Brains Learn Best!

I read am currently reading [all about love New Visions](#) by bell hooks, [Resilient Leadership 2.0](#) by Bob Duggan and Bridgette Theurer and rereading all of Brene Brown's books

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6/25/2020

Stow-Munroe Falls City School District Mail - Response to School Board Meeting on 6/22/20

notified that any retention, distribution, or dissemination of this information is strictly prohibited. Thank you.

[Quoted text hidden]

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Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Black Lives Matter - Alumni Voice**

1 message

**Beth Hawks** <bhawks0607@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 23, 2020 at 5:04 PM

To: st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org

Dear,

I am writing today as a mother and an educator. I attended SMF schools my entire school career, from Echo Hills through SMFHS. I saw my friend Miguel posting on social media that the board of education would not give any type of acknowledgement to his letter; that the district had given a generic statement but more in response to a teacher making a racist comment and claiming to be hacked than in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. Shame on you. You all owe it to your past students to acknowledge their experiences, to make changes as needed, to promise to do better. Acknowledgement and growth cost nothing, as a large educational institution I would hope that you would always be striving to improve. Right now, making sure your students, both past and present are heard and represented should be a top priority. You need to be creating a learning environment where all your students, including students of color feel safe. I would like you to share your action plan: make it very public. Your students are waiting to see how you will show up for them.

I desperately hope your action plan includes a training for your entire staff, I've heard that you've created a committee. After watching the last board meeting, I suggest that the board members also attend. I hope that everyone attends with the intention of growth. I would also like to see a black lives matter sign shown at the high school. Other schools in the area have done it, I think you owe it to your students to put one up.

Also, add a few biographies of POC alumni to share in your social media feeds. Again, your kids are waiting for you to show up.

I would like to mention that the suggestions I have presented cost almost nothing. Showing up for your students and showing them that you are behind each and every one of them is not expensive. Do it. Be there. Tell them that black lives do matter, that their lives matter, that you've made mistakes and will try your best to do better. Miguel Carvallo deserves it. Linda Kellam deserves it. George Garrison deserves it. Shawn Blackwell deserves it. Billy Porubsky deserves it.

Do better.

Elizabeth Hawks

3738 Shattuck Ave

Columbus, OH. 43220

Class of 2002 - Elizabeth Skuldt

~~

Beth Hawks

(330) 554-6613

**Bettio, Geraldine** <st\_gbettio@smfcscd.org>

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## SMFCSD Board Meeting Follow Up

1 message

**Chris Hendricks** <chris.hendricks@duke.edu>

Tue, Jun 23, 2020 at 1:39 PM

To: "st\_tbratten@smfcscd.org" <st\_tbratten@smfcscd.org>, "st\_mmanley@smfcscd.org" <st\_mmanley@smfcscd.org>, "st\_padula@smfcscd.org" <st\_padula@smfcscd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcscd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcscd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcscd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcscd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcscd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcscd.org>, "st\_nbrown@smfcscd.org" <st\_nbrown@smfcscd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcscd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcscd.org>

Dear all,

I'm writing to confirm that I am not a "bot," and while I may no longer live in Stow, I am an alumni and product of the SMFCSD with direct experience and exposure to the lack of representation, support and resources provided to the Black, Indigenous and People of Color in OUR COMMUNITY.

I'm incredibly disappointed in School Board's inaction last night, your silence and disregard to YOUR COMMUNITY'S request to be heard is not only disrespectful, but a blatant failure to represent the people that you are designated to represent. Your inaction in this board meeting, along with the lack of diversity among your board members is a direct representation of how this school district has continually brushed these issues under the rug, a result of your white privilege.

**THANK YOU NANCY BROWN AND JESSICA WRIGHT** for standing up for YOUR COMMUNITY.

Did you notice that the number of views on this video is more than 4x the number of views on your last virtual board meeting? That demonstrates that YOUR COMMUNITY wants to be represented in this important discussion and you are failing to do so.

To even suggest the public comments were "bots" is incredibly disrespectful to YOUR COMMUNITY and foolish. The whitewashed "statement of support" the board has put together is not enough. There must be action, you must recognize that the Black students in your school district do not receive the same experience and you **MUST** do better.

### Chris Hendricks

Director of Outdoor Adventures

Duke Recreation &amp; Physical Education

Box 90548, 117 Wilson Center | Durham, NC 27708

Office: 919-681-2824 | Fax: 919-681-6181

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**From:** Chris Hendricks**Sent:** Tuesday, June 16, 2020 1:59 PM**To:** st\_tbratten@smfcscd.org; st\_mmanley@smfcscd.org; st\_padula@smfcscd.org; st\_jwhitacre@smfcscd.org;

st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org; st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org; st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org; st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

**Subject:** Support your Black Students and Families

As an alumni of Stow Public Schools, I'm incredibly disappointed at the lack of support this school district has shown for the Black and Indigenous People of Color, in your schools and communities, particularly during these times of turmoil. I'd encourage you to review statements made by neighboring school districts, such as Kent City Schools and Twinsburg City Schools. Your silence is deafening.

At minimum, we need to see a statement of support from Stow Schools. Tell your students you are not only distressed about the current events, but you plan to take actionable steps against racism. Tell them Black Lives Matter. This is not about a political statement, this is about an expression of value and appreciation for marginalized communities.

Faculty, staff and students need educational opportunities to understand and discuss the impacts of systemic racism, along with resources to guide anti-racist behaviors. As a school district with over 90% white faculty, staff and students you have a role and responsibility to educate and elevate community resources that support Black and Indigenous People of Color. Please step up Stow, silence is NOT an option.

Black Lives Matter.

## Chris Hendricks

Program Director

Recreation & Physical Education

Duke University

Box 90548, 117 Wilson Center | Durham, NC 27708

Office: 919-681-2824 | Fax: 919-681-6181

## Chris Hendricks

Director of Outdoor Adventures

Duke Recreation & Physical Education

Box 90548, 117 Wilson Center | Durham, NC 27708

Office: 919-681-2824 | Fax: 919-681-6181



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Today's meeting.

1 message

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**Olive Persimmon** <olivebpersimmon@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 11:57 PM

To: st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org, st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Quite frankly, I don't have it in me to be diplomatic anymore, so I'm going to tell it to you straight:

You keep messing this up.

All you had to do was say "Black Lives Matter" four weeks ago when literally everyone else was. Not because it's "politically correct", not to rabble rouse. But because it was the right thing to do. Because the black community was in pain. Because minority students who graduated from YOUR schools tried to tell you how much pain they were in. And you couldn't acknowledge that with three simple words.

So we wrote to you. Some of us diplomatically. Some of us with anger. Some of us describing real trauma experienced as a POC in the Stow school system. Some of us mentioning the same suicides mentioned in your meeting today, as if we didn't know.

But you still couldn't acknowledge us. You refused to read our letters. You claimed you didn't have time, but the truth is that you were being cowards. And the irony is, that's EXACTLY what's happening in this country, that's why we're protesting in the streets, continued refusal to acknowledge the pain and trauma of the minority communities.

You failed us.

This could have all been handled so differently. Compassionately. Responsibly. Ethically. But it wasn't.

Do better.



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Specific follow up to today's board meeting

1 message

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**Vidya Misra** <vidyamarie@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 9:43 PM

To: st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org

Hi,

After reviewing a bit of the board meeting tonight I have a few questions:

1. To what extent do you value the input of SMF alumni?
2. Will you commit to having a conversation about racism in Stow without bringing up other topics that can be addressed at a different time? In my years of facilitating anti-racism professional developments for adults across the country, I can promise you that if you engage in this conversation without defensively shifting the focus to something else, you might find it's not so bad.
3. Will you respond to my experiences with racism in Stow city schools and honor the fact that instead of turning away in anger for the rest of my life, I am offering to help?
4. Will you acknowledge my professionalism by admitting that racism exists in Stow?
5. What is your plan for addressing racism, specifically, this coming summer and school year?

I would also like to recommend that you read "White Fragility" by the white, female author, Dr. Robin DiAngelo. In it, she explains the historical and psychological roots of white defensiveness to talking about racism. It helped me overcome some of my guilt and defensiveness.

Thank you in advance for your response to an Alumni,  
Vidya Misra '06



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Requesting Additional Meeting

1 message

Lindsay Dunphy <lindsaymdunphy@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 6:56 PM

To: Jason Whitacre <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org

Hi all,

I understand this moment is bringing out some strong emotions in members. As it should, we all should feel uncomfortable. Two requests I would like to make of the board:

1. I would also like to see in writing where public comments are only allowed for 15 minutes.
2. I am requesting a special meeting regarding the subject of diversity & inclusion where our voices can be heard. I really hope one of the biggest social movements in some of our lifetimes as citizens of this country, can make your agenda.

Mrs. Bettio, I too have lost friends (at Stow) to suicide, and I agree these losses matter to address. HOWEVER, this movement is about allowing our neighbors that have been pushed down by society, due to inequities you all as white citizens have never had to experience. It is a movement about equality. Just like a movement for women's right to vote, would you have instead turned that into "men's votes matter"? Of course they did, they were the only ones that could vote.

I don't wish to diminish your feelings. You are heard. I would also like you to hear us. We are here to push you outside of your comfort zones and into a space where great community improvements can be made. Are you with us?

Lindsay Dunphy

Sent from my iPhone



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Silence on Black Lives Matter**

4 messages

**Aaron Yeager** <aaron.yeager.1@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 11:07 AM

To: st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org

Cc: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Hi,

I'm Aaron Yeager, Stow High '06. A friend and former classmate told me that the board has not said anything about the most important thing happening right now, besides the virus -- the Black Lives Matter movement.

I'm very disappointed. When I attended Stow High, it was not diverse, and I doubt anything has changed. While that's not anyone's fault -- to an extent -- it's also why I left Ohio and moved to New York City.

Ohio has a diversity problem -- at least Stow does, and other suburbs like it, which make up a large part of NEO as a whole. I literally cannot remember any having teachers of color at SMFHS, when I attended -- forgive me if I'm wrong.

What I do remember, though, is being taught that the reason why the Civil War happened, was because of states' rights -- which is bullshit. It happened because of the same thing that's happening right now -- slavery (in the form of prisons), lynchings...the list goes on, sadly.

I urge you to do something -- anything -- about BLM. Stow, like everywhere, needs to do better. The sin of omission is just as bad as the sin that's done openly.

Thank you,  
Aaron

--

Aaron Yeager  
Executive Director, Know Personal Finance  
330 235 3439

**KNOW PERSONAL FINANCE**

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**Aaron Yeager** <aaron.yeager.1@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 11:09 AM

To: st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org

Cc: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Adding the correct email address for Nancy, sorry.

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Aaron Yeager** <aaron.yeager.1@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 11:14 AM

To: st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org

Cc: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Here's my mailing address, also:

269 W 146th St  
Apt. 3B  
New York, NY 10039

[Quoted text hidden]

**Aaron Yeager** <aaron.yeager.1@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 5:24 PM

To: st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org

Cc: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, "Whitacre, Jason" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, "Wright, Jessica" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

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Shame on you.

Nancy and Jessica were right, during tonight's meeting. Racism is the most important issue in the country right now, and you set it aside to talk about donations. The least you could have done is allowed people to comment on YouTube.

I'm an alum of SMFHS, but I'm ashamed to say that. Have a good night.

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Please just read them all.

2 messages

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**Becky Alexander** <ralexand1@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 5:13 PM

To: "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "Whitacre, Jason" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "Wright, Jessica" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, Jeffrey Hartmann <st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org>, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org

We're happy and willing to come in person but since we couldn't, we all took time to write you and we are watching live.

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**Becky Alexander** <ralexand1@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 5:20 PM

To: "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "Whitacre, Jason" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "Wright, Jessica" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, Jeffrey Hartmann <st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org>, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org

Since you have decided to refuse to read all our letters, I demand to know when the next in-person meeting is. Since our state has reopened, I expect you to reopen too. Trust me, we are happy to show up and make our voices heard since you have taken that away from us on an issue that actually matters. And it will be very easy for me to get there from Munroe Falls.

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Alumni statement

1 message

Deanna Stevens <deannastevens2010@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 4:47 PM

To: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org

Dear members of the Stow-Munroe Falls Board of Education,

My name is Deanna Stevens, and I'm a 2004 graduate of Stow-Munroe Falls High School.

I wanted to reach out to you to express my hope that the board not only shows its support for the Black students within the district by acknowledging the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement, but also by addressing how it will work toward creating a safe, inclusive environment for students of color.

Will you incorporate black authors and history into your curricula? Will you commit to hiring teachers of color in all your buildings? Will you commit to bias training for all teachers and staff within the district? How will you build a welcoming environment for all?

Growing up as a first-grader at Indian Trail, there were only two Black children in the school — myself and my brother. That same year was the first time I dealt with a racist "joke." A classmate told me, in the middle of the lunch line so everyone could hear, that Black people had dark skin because we were dirty and didn't take baths. Now, as a 34-year-old woman, I realize how dumb that sounds. But as a 7-year-old girl, that "joke" did exactly what it was supposed to do. It made me feel as though there was something wrong with me, as if I should be ashamed of my skin and who I was. It was traumatic. I will never forget telling my parents and my teachers about the comment — just after learning about Martin Luther King Jr., no less. It was at that moment I stopped being just a girl at school, but the Black girl at school. That moment that I knew that no matter how well I did in class or how well I played with others at recess, I would always be different.

My journey as the Black girl continued. At Kimpton, a classmate told me of another student who had called me "a Black bitch." When I was asked about the identity of the person who said it, the classmate refused to tell me. At the high school, I was confused with the only other black female who was in my class at the time in a class of more than 500 students.

I'm fortunate that I was able to receive an excellent education and was lucky enough to take that foundation to earning my bachelor's and master's degrees. But, I accomplished my goals despite the challenges I faced within the district. I've made lifelong friends and have been proud of the continued success of the district. But, when deciding where to live as an adult, my husband and I crossed Stow off of the list because we didn't want our children to go through the same struggles that I did growing up.

Because I do still care about the district I grew up in, I'm here to share my story so that you can understand what it's like to be a Black person within the district. I know how much the district stating Black Lives Matter would have meant to me if I were still in school. I would feel like I was less alone, that I was supported, that my existence not only mattered, but was also valued. And that message, and most importantly, a course of action behind that message, is vital for not only your students of color, but also to the community in general.

Please know, you will be sending a statement whether you announce your support or not. You will be letting your students of color, and their allies, know where you stand in this important moment of history. Please don't let silence speak for this district.

Thank you for your time,  
Deanna Stevens '04



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Follow-up to yesterday's email

1 message

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**Heather Shall** <hwofffshall@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 3:46 PM

To: Nancy Brown <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Hello all,

In light of the revised statement released by the district (too late for parents and taxpayers to submit a formal response to be included in tonight's meeting, I see - intention duly noted), I'd like to follow-up and stress that my previous statement absolutely still applies to this new message.

The omission of the words "ALL" and "EVERY" do nothing to change the intent of your message, which is very clearly, All Lives Matter. By refusing state unequivocally that you care about our non-white students, their safety, their inclusion, and the quality of their educational experience, your message is hollow and meaningless. Don't think that anyone who sees this message can't read between the lines. Black students matter. The inclusion of black students matters. The safety of black students matters. The black community in Stow matters and it's appalling to see an official message crafted by the SMFCSD that refuses to say that.

This is not a divisive issue. This is a human rights issue. You either care about the rights and the treatment of black students and their families and you say it without compunction or you don't. And if you don't care about our black students, then I question your suitability to be a member of the Board of Education in our district.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Heather Shall  
3454 Oak Rd. Stow, OH



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Fwd: School Board Comment**

1 message

**Nancy Binzel Brown** <nbinzelbrown@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 2:37 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

This was sent to my personal email instead of my board email. Full disclosure - this is my son.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Carter Pierce** <clpierce98@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 1:59 PM

Subject: School Board Comment

To: Nancy Binzel Brown &lt;nbinzelbrown@gmail.com&gt;

I have recently heard that the Stow-Monroe Falls School Board has decided to release a statement in which it does not address Black Lives Matter. Although saying that all lives matter is true and you may hold that belief, but what you are saying is hypocritical and ignorant. By saying *All Lives Matter* you are not addressing the problem at hand. The problem is this: Black people have been oppressed for over 400 years and although there has been some progress, it has not been enough. By saying that *All Lives Matter* you are not fixing the problem of institutionalized racism and the brutality that Black people have faced. By not addressing the problems that Black people have faced you actually do not believe that *All Lives Matter* and thus make your argument invalid.

By not addressing that Black Lives Matter in your statement you are failing the Black Student Population at Stow-Monroe Falls High School. You are failing the students that you are supposed to be representing in School Board. With failure brings the possibility of learning something from that failure. Currently at Stow-Monroe Falls High School (SMFHS), after Government, there is no requirement for Social Studies classes. I would like you to consider requiring an African American Studies Course. History taught to many students, especially from my experience, is White-Washed. Yes, there is a Chapter going over the Civil Rights Movement and Slavery but that is not enough. In fact, that is barely touching the surface. With this class, the teacher should delve more deeply into the History of African Americans starting with Slavery and going into now. This class should expose the Racist atrocities committed by America but also shed more light on African American leaders such as Malcolm X, Muhammed Ali, James Baldwin, and Martin Luther King Jr. (Just a couple of examples).

Understand that what that class will entail might be hard for students but it is necessary because it is American History. It is just like how school children in Germany have to learn about the Holocaust. If students in Germany can learn about the horrible atrocities committed by the Nazis against Jews, then Students in America need to learn the atrocities it committed (and still commits) to our Black population. One of the best ways to stop the lasting racism in our country is to teach students about it so we can have meaningful conversations about the way we treat Black people in America.

Carter Pierce | Wittenberg University Class of 2021

Lesotho Nutrition Initiative

Beta Theta Pi Alpha Gamma Chapter | Historian | Alumni Relations



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**The recent board letter**

2 messages

**Melanie Merritt** <melanie.merritt@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 9:53 AM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Please see the attached letter- thanks for your consideration.

Melanie Merritt

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 **SMF BOE LETTER.pdf**  
57K**Melanie Merritt** <melanie.merritt@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 2:22 PM

To: st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org

Board members-

Super disappointed in the revisions to the statement, which convey the same exact message as before. Why is it so hard to say that we care about our black students, without including the rest of the students? If saying that black lives matter was too much, can't they at least water THAT down to try and express some kind of sentiment? Our black students matter? Why do we have to recognize all students, when this isn't about all students, it's about our black students?

Melanie Merritt

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Black Lives Matter**

2 messages

Monica Robinson &lt;robbiesfam@yahoo.com&gt;

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 8:56 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, "st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org"  
<st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Dear Board,

It has been 27 days since I woke up to the news of another black man dying at the hands of police. 10 years ago when we adopted our first black son, I had no real understanding of what it means to be black in America, let alone to be black in Stow. As our sons have grown we have faced increasing racial biases and outright racism. I have waited for the superintendent and the board to take this opportunity to address racism in our district with a strong statement condemning it and making sure that every student and parent knows that it will not be tolerated. Unfortunately, you have not done that with this statement. Many other districts have addressed it very clearly. I am an employee of Hudson city schools. Not only did our superintendent address it, our board even made a resolution condemning racism. My sons deserve to be educated in a district that firmly states that Black Lives Matter. Of course ALL lives matter, but at this time the message that Black Lives Matter needs to be loud and clear. You see ALL lives aren't having to teach their kids, at the dinner table, how to navigate systemic racism and micro-aggressions fueled by ignorance and hatred. We can and MUST do better than this statement you are proposing. The black students in our district deserve it and their parents demand it! This statement felt very obligatory. Your mention of Black Lives Matter was stated with a negative connotation. Our family is asking that you clearly state where the district stands concerning the black lives you have the opportunity to educate! We then expect definitive action that would support your clear conviction and no tolerance policy concerning racism in the SMFCSD.

Monica and Doug Robinson  
4035 Red Wing Trail  
Stow, Oh

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

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**Monica Robinson** <robbiesfam@yahoo.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 2:13 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, "st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org"  
<st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

My statement still applies to the new statement! I will not be silent about this matter! I will make sure that every parent knows that you continue to not take a stand against racism in this district! We are not being "divisive"! We are demanding that our black children are seen, heard and protected!

Monica Robinson  
4035 Red Wing Trail

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

[Quoted text hidden]



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

## An Open Letter to the Board of Education of Stow Munroe Falls and All Stow Residents

1 message

Vidya Misra &lt;vidyamarie@gmail.com&gt;

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 12:55 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Cc: Mayor@akronohio.gov, nie@thebeaconjournal.com, vop@thebeaconjournal.com, mshearer@thebeaconjournal.com, dkadar@thebeaconjournal.com, dlivingston@thebeaconjournal.com, emills@thebeaconjournal.com, mjprice@thebeaconjournal.com, mshearer@recordpub.com, mmckenna@recordpub.com, lfreeman@recordpub.com, bgaetjens@recordpub.com, ahelms@recordpub.com, pkeren@recordpub.com, klahmers@recordpub.com, hrainone@recordpub.com, sshriner@recordpub.com, swiandt@recordpub.com

*To Whom It May Concern,*

*Below is my letter to the school board. Here is a link to the Google Doc version which may be easier to read.*

*With love and hope,  
Vidya Misra*

*"Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."*

**— bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism***

## A Love Letter to The Board of Education and the City of Stow, Ohio

Dear Hometown,

In my memory, Officer Barry Smith was ever present in the Stow Munroe Falls High School cafeteria during my four years there, in good times and in bad. .... Good times... He was also there when the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened and I was called a terrorist over and over again at Kimpton. He was there when the only Black teacher I had in my 12 years in Stow City Schools (a wonderful musician) died by suicide in 2002. He was there the next year, when the only Black friend I had at school (a poet I admired) died by suicide at age fourteen; and he was there the day after, when we listened to white, male seniors in letterman's jackets laugh at the "N-word" who

probably “hung himself.” He was also there when I was too afraid to talk to him because he was a police officer, because he was Black, and because it was socially unacceptable to refer to him by anything other than “Officer Winslow,” a pejorative reference to the Black patriarch from the sitcom *Family Matters* (1988-1989). So, when I heard that the only Black police officer in the City of Stow was suing the Chief of Police for racial discrimination and retaliation, I knew it was Officer Smith and I wasn’t surprised at all.

I also wasn’t surprised when, after posting about this on social media, a white male classmate who was in my year at SMFHS commented with a dismissal of the lawsuit, a picture of “Carl Winslow,” and the recommendation that I “stay the f\*\*\* out of [Stow]...keep blowing [my ex partner]” And, finally, the command, “Shhhhh. Down Girl.” My lack of surprise at his racist and sexist rancor was also accompanied by a sense of relief because I no longer felt the fear, tension, and anger creeping up in my body when hearing comments like this. Instead, I felt pity– and a renewed commitment to anti-bias education.

It’s taken many, many years to get here, though. Way before I was a History and Social Justice teacher, I was born in an Akron City hospital in the Spring of 1988. My parents, a white, Irish-American mother and a Brown, Indian-Immigrant father, met at Kent State in the 1970’s. The earliest memory I have of finding out I was “mixed” was when I was in the car with my Mom driving home to Birdland from Church on Sunday. A white woman with big, poofy, permed hair, standing at the donut table after the service had asked my name to which I replied “Vidya, V-I-D-Y-A,” taking immense pride in the ability to spell my name and still free from the burden of understanding the reason why I had to.

She responded, “well that’s a *different* name, where are you from?”

I looked up at my mother, confused by the question, and she took over with a smile, “It’s an Indian name. Her father is Indian.”

“Oh!” The woman said. Then looking at me and touching my head added, “you don’t look Indian at all but you do have that nice, thick hair.”

Back in the car, my Mom explained that in our family, “the color of a person’s skin doesn’t matter” but that the woman was noticing that I was “half-white and half-Indian.” It would be years before I understood the inconsistency of these statements. In that moment I only attempted to find the logical silver lining that would soothe the discomfort of finding out that I was *half* of anything and *different*. I settled on, “If everyone mixes like you and Dad then someday everyone will be the same color!”

While this is the first memory I can find, there were many more after. There was the time two white girls cornered me on a treadmill in a Pambi Farms home and demanded that I declare right then and there if I was “Catholic, Christian, or Indian”— nevermind the inconsistent categories of the presented options. Then there was the time when my friends would comment on the “weird” smells of my parents’ cooking or my Dad’s “weird” accent. And the time when they would ask why my sister, Claire, got the “good” name. And when I shared at Lakeview that my father was an immigrant and my classmates insisted that made me “not American.”

In all these moments, I never got mad or sad. I only became more determined to prove that I was, in fact, American. That I was *normal*. I won a Stowlion *and* a D.A.R.E Lion. I was a crossing guard who had the distinct honor of folding and unfolding Highland’s American Flag. I wrote *Valry*

instead of *Vidya* on my fourth grade assignments. I didn't tell my friends about our trips to visit family in India. I also didn't tell them, or anyone, about my classmates' father who sexually assaulted me while I was in elementary school. To admit that would also have meant becoming *not* normal. I did not call out racism when I heard and saw it. It's with a lot of pain that I look back on those letterman-wearing boys and my silence. To call out racism would have been especially un-American in Stow. No one ever said this outloud, of course, but we all knew it. Even when the harassment escalated after 9/11, I hid or forced myself to laugh along while not one teacher, administrator, or friend ever told me it wasn't okay. During these years, in my straining to be *normal*, I perpetuated the very racism that was hurting me and my few Black and Brown classmates. It wasn't until I left Stow altogether that I understood that what I really meant when I said normal, was white. The standard for so much of what was good or popular or safe was white.

In sharing these various experiences with classmates and other Ohians since, I often get a shocked response paired with an indictment of those "bad apple" individuals who shouldn't have treated me that way. But their condemnation of individuals doesn't explain the massive silence from the kids and adults around me. It doesn't explain my friends' comments who were not "bad apples." It doesn't explain the unwritten rules around talking about race. It doesn't explain why I spent the first few years of my teaching career mixing up the names of Black students but not white ones. And it certainly doesn't explain why 92% of Stow's population is white or why there is still only one Black cop in the city.

What does explain these patterns, patterns that extend beyond any of our individual behaviors, is racism— in particular, anti-Black racism. The Black Lives Matter movement is new in name but not in content. Since the founding of Stow by William Wetmore (thanks, fourth grade history!) and long before, the same forces of injustice which have led to current disproportionate arresting, sentencing, and killing of Black citizens by our government have also shaped Stow's majority white identity.

I have spent much of my ten years of teaching World and American History trying to understand these forces and unlearn the narrative I received in Stow. By examining this history, I have begun to heal the low self-regard and anxiety that accompanied never quite meeting the ephemeral white standard. I have learned how the desire to meet that white standard led me to both be able to celebrate Dr. King as an Exceptional Black Man and ignore the highly relevant truth in his declaration that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." In this message, Dr. King beautifully explains that all of us, even white and multiracial people, are damaged by white standards of intelligence, manners, beauty, etc. The silence that I witnessed as a child (from myself and from others) was exactly what King indicted in his *Letter From Birmingham Jail* when he wrote of the silent "white moderate" for being the most dangerous enemy of racial justice. Admitting the truth in Dr. King's words meant freeing myself from the impossible demands of whiteness in Stow and in our Nation. It also means I have life-long reparations to make.

This brings me to the "love" part of this letter. I'm here to tell you, if you want or need to hear it, that it turns out admitting our lives are shaped by racism (and sexism) is joyful, restorative, community-building, loving work! Shedding the mental health damaging fear of mistepping, of "rocking the boat," of not being *normal* enough, makes way for an infinitely more *beloved community* as bell hooks has so beautifully imagined it. Reckoning with our compounding moral debt, as Ta-Nehisi Coates calls it, requires that we move beyond the freezing properties of guilt

and reckon with our history. And, it takes a great deal more personal strength to offer my experiences and knowledge to you than to turn away from my hometown in anger forever.

So, in defense of Stow City Schools confronting the historical patterns of injustice that shaped us, I offer to you a history lesson most of us never got in the Stow Munroe Falls K-12 School System. I hope you'll forgive me in advance for using my Teaching Voice, it's not a habit I can shake. (And, if you ever had the wonderful Mrs. Saltis at Highland or Mrs. Horton at SMFHS, you'll know exactly how to read my voice).

Examine the chart below made up from US Census Bureau data for 2019.

| Political Area               | Black Population (2019) | White Population (2019) |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Stow City                    | 3.5 %                   | 92 %                    |
| Akron City                   | 30.1 %                  | 60.1 %                  |
| State of Ohio                | 13 %                    | 81.9 %                  |
| The United States of America | 13.4 %                  | 76.5 %                  |

What did you notice? Maybe the first thing you noticed is that I've only chosen to give you Black and White population numbers. While it's true that the demographic I belong to isn't represented here, this is because we are learning about a history in which Blackness (only then followed by other racial categories) shapes all that whiteness isn't. And, in my line of work, focusing on other stories (that certainly deserve time and understanding in equal measure) is usually a tactic used by white people to avoid talking about anti-Black racism. In addition to focusing on the experience of Black people in Ohio, I'm also not going to include the details that do show up in Stow's curriculum: the existence of systematic enslavement of Black people by white, our role in the Underground railroad, and Ohio's strong abolitionist community.

Maybe the second thing you noticed about the chart is that the concentration of white people in Stow is far above the National concentration. This is not a coincidence.

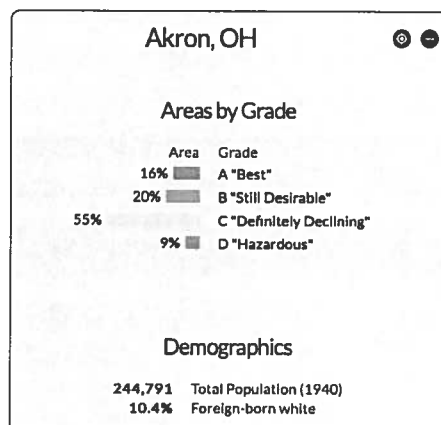
**The first thing we don't learn in Stow schools** is that Ohio's white residents were by and large not willing to allow Black people into their communities after the Institution of slavery ended. During the first half of the 20th century, about 7 million Black Americans fled lynch mobs, white Nationalist terrorist groups, unfair labor practices, and every day discrimination in the South to find a better life in the north. As industrialization was booming (see our very own Charles' Goodyear's invention of vulcanized rubber or Hoover's vacuum), northern business owners advertised gainful employment and housing for Black migrants and refugees in order to populate their assembly lines. In Ohio, between 1910 and 1930 Cincinnati's Black population increased from 19,639 in 1910 to 47,818 in 1930, and in Columbus the Black population increased from 12,379 to 32,774 in those same years. But the greatest increase was in Cleveland and surrounding areas, where the African-American population reached 71,899 by 1930, up from just 8,448 two decades earlier. Ohio Historians Andrew Cayton and William W. Giffin wrote that between 1910 and 1930, our cities set up elaborate barriers to the mixing of Black and White communities. In fact, in every census year

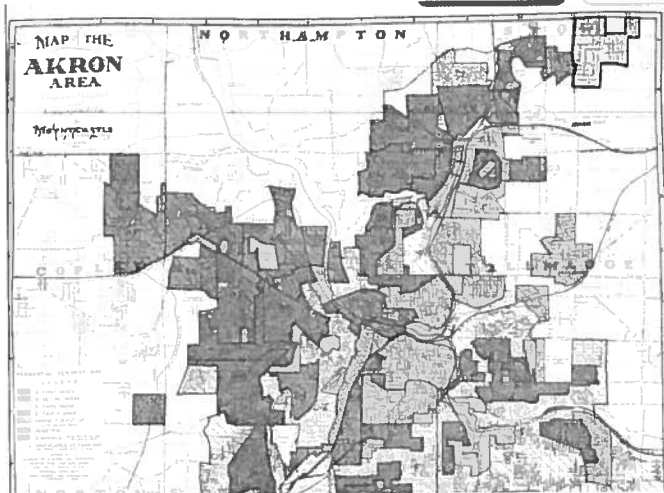
since 1890, cities of the Midwest are more segregated than those of any other region in the United States and Cleveland ranks in the top eight of those most segregated as of the 2010 Census.

The Ohio State Law Journal, and most likely our SMFHS history textbooks, describe President Roosevelt's effort in the 1930s to address massive unemployment and economic damage during the Great Depression as him leading the charge on a series of federal job creation and social security enactments. Which brings me to **the second thing we don't all learn**: that racism was baked into the New Deal from the start. In Congress, Ohio Representatives (like Thomas Jenkins) compromised with Southern delegates to build a package of policies that would be administered on a local level as well as exclude federal protections for jobs held predominantly by Blacks: domestic and agricultural labor. During the drafting of the Deal, one southern employer testified that "a negro makes a much better workman and a much better citizen, insofar as the South is concerned, when he is not paid the highest wage." He and others urged the adoption of a "materially modified wage scale for unskilled colored labor" (Perea, J. 2011) In 1935, administrators who supported Black farmers were forced to resign by Roosevelt's Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace, and over half of the Black labor force were excluded from the Social Security Act through amendment to the Act which excluded agricultural and domestic laborers.

One of the federal departments created during the New Deal, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), was ostensibly created to financially assist American homeowners who had defaulted on their mortgage payments by purchasing and refinancing borrowers' housing loans. Homeowners, assisted by the HOLC, received lower interest rates and longer time frames on their loans. The administrators of the HOLC worked with predominantly white, local realtors, appraisers, and bankers in Ohio and across the US to create color-coded "Residential Security" maps, often referred to now as "Redlining Maps," which rated neighborhoods on a A-D scale (Green, Blue, Yellow, Red) of "Best" to "Hazardous" and determined who would receive economic and housing support and who wouldn't. The maps show how local bankers, including those in Akron, defined credit risks based on neighborhoods rather than on an individual's ability to repay a loan.

### Here is the Akron Area Map:





#### 8. Description and Characteristics of Area

This area centers around the district at Stow Corners occupied in the north part by Stow Corner home sites; on the east by Liberty Park Allotment and on the south by the Hollywood Allotment. This section was laid out in 1917 and is now 35 per cent built up. Average lot front 40 feet. Prices range from \$1500-\$4500 with the better and more expensive homes in the southwestern part of area. Thirty five (35) per cent of streets are paved; remainder, cindered; fair transportation; good school facilities. Outlying section. The cheapest homes in this area are located in the extreme northeast corner north of Bath-Stow Road. Trend is static to slightly upward. Property, if acquired, should be sold but not sacrificed.

#### **Here is Stow, highlighted in "Yellow" "Grade C"**

9. Location Stow Corners, Akron, Ohio

Security Grade C

Area No 1

Date Feb '39

## 1. Population

a. Increasing **Slightly** Decreasing *empty*  
 Static *empty*

b. Class and Occupation Office workers and laborers

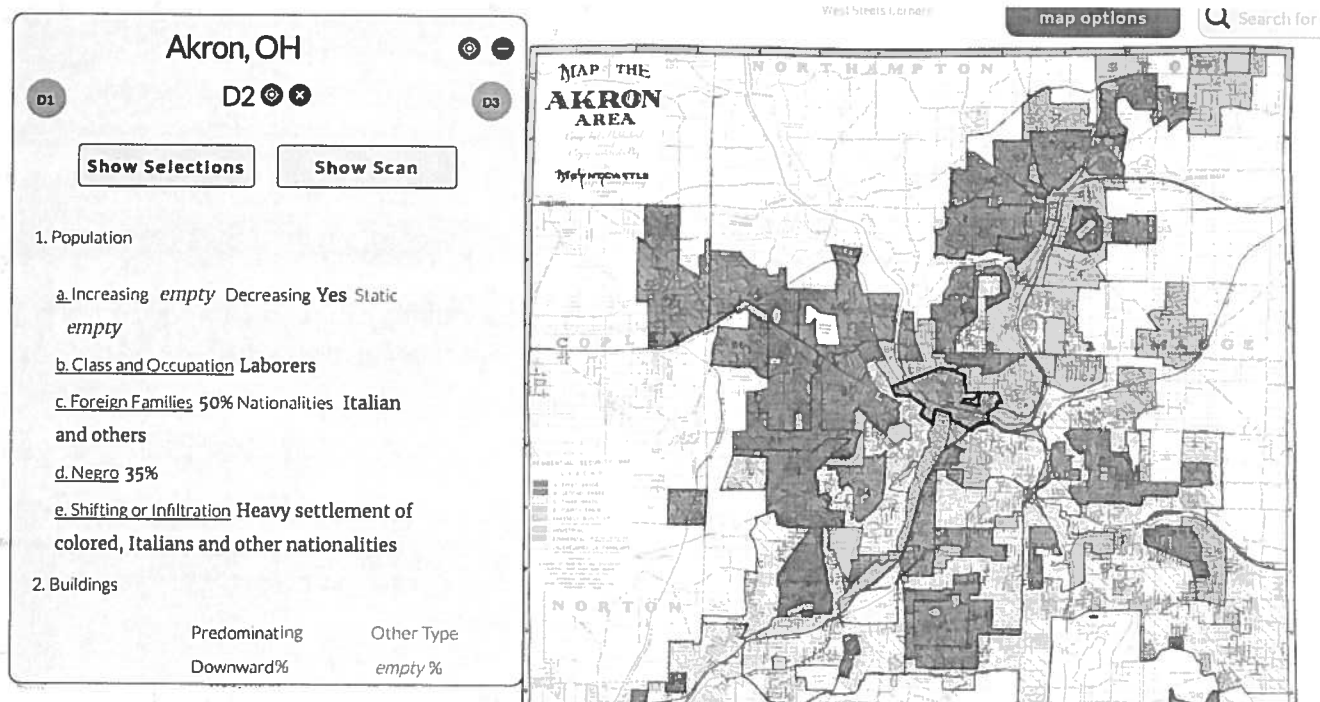
c. Foreign Families 0% Nationalities *empty*

d. Negro 0%

e. Shifting or Infiltration -

While Stow didn't receive the highest rating as places like Silver Lakes did, we can see that "Stow Corners" was marked as desirable in part because of the fact that "foreign families," "Negros," and people who might be *infiltrating* the area amounted to 0% of the population. White homebuyers in Stow were in the clear to receive government-backed loans.

**By contrast, below is a neighborhood in inner Akron, color-coded "Red" and graded "D3."**



When teaching American history in my classroom, this is the point at which I usually ask my students to point out the differences in descriptions between a yellow neighborhood and a redlined one. You can probably guess what they would say here, the most striking of which is that the

authors of the map mark this area as being infiltrated by "colored, Italians, and other nationalities." Black families, many of whom had fled racism and violence in the south, found that they could not get home loans near their places of work because they carried on their skin all the negative stereotypes that enslavement and then systematic violence during the Jim Crow Era left us with. And, if and when Black families attempted to buy homes in predominantly white neighborhoods, they were met with coordinated resistance.

While Black families were being whole-sale barred from accumulating wealth (bank savings, investment holdings, and/or home ownership equity), our Nation began to feel the losses of deindustrialization. Between 1974-2016, 40% of all Midwestern manufacturing jobs vanished, with Ohio being one of the hardest hit states at 54%. Black communities, those helped to build Ohio into the industrial power it was in the first half of the century, were disproportionately hurt.

The practice of redlining was not abolished until the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act, when my mother was 11 years old, and the damage it caused remains to this day. Among other research, a 2018 study shows that 3 out of 4 "redlined" neighborhoods have yielded a long-term wealth gap between Black and White families. In our country, for every one dollar a white family has in wealth, their Black neighbors have 8 cents. Nationally, 63% of houses are occupied by their owners. In Stow, it's 69%. In Akron, the number is 50%.

In Ohio, this wealth gap translates disastrously into educational funding policy. Which brings me to the third thing we didn't all learn in SMF schools: only by the fact of living in Stow, and not because of any other merits, the children in SMF have access to greater and higher-quality educational resources and funding than do their peers in Akron. To understand why this is, we have to look to history again.

In the 1950s and 60s, the Ohio government created multiple Civil/Human Rights Commissions at the state and local levels to address racial discrimination and disparity as well as respond to the Supreme Court Ruling of Brown v. Board which deemed racial segregation in schools to be unconstitutional. That's right, we tried to reckon with our racist past! The Ohio Civil Rights Act of 1959 created the Ohio Civil Rights Commission to enforce desegregation laws. The members of the commission initially conducted a study of discriminatory practices within the state and discovered that minority groups were commonly denied jobs and access to various businesses, including restaurants, bowling alleys, hotels, and innumerable other establishments. The commission faced massive resistance: businesses which were previously open to the public became private clubs, while white homeowners doubled down on refusing to sell their houses to Black people. Even more white people fled cities and into the suburbs (via the highways built with some of the New Deal money), where they could avoid the busing policies that Ohio state was using to integrate schools.

The color line, codified by redlining and worsened further by discriminatory practices, became altogether entrenched over this period. In 2015, the ACLU of Ohio ranked the state (tied with Pennsylvania) as the 4th most segregated school system in America. According to the Ohio State Government, in the 2018-2019 school year, the Value Added Ranking for Stow Munroe Falls City School District students put us at 810 and Akron at 841. The Performance Index Rating shows even deeper disparity. Stow Munroe Falls ranks at 318 while Akron ranks near the bottom at 699.

The NAEP (National Association for Educational Progress) puts Ohio in the bottom 4 states in terms of having the most disparate educational outcomes in Math between Black and White students in 2017, in the bottom 20 for the racial gap in one or more out-of-school suspensions, and

in the bottom 10 for the racial disparity in Bachelor Degree certification. These disheartening numbers reflect inadequate school resource disadvantages as well as scant future prospects for children who attend our underfunded schools.

Because Ohio's school funding system is so closely tied to property taxes, predominantly Black communities that have been systematically denied access to accumulating wealth have less money to feed into local schools. Predominantly white communities like Stow have the opposite: enough concentrated wealth to more substantially fund local schools.

In 1997, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in *DeRolph v. State* that our educational funding system is in fact *unconstitutional* due to its inequitably distributed funding to schools. Levy votes (which Stow residents are plenty familiar with) also contribute to the disparity because they can double or sometimes triple funding for local schools. Though the Ohio State Supreme Court has made the same ruling several times since 1997, Ohio's school funding system has yet to be made fully equitable. In the midst of these consistent rulings, the Ohio State Legislature has cut 20 percent of the budget and half the staff since 2000, even as the number of discrimination charges has increased. As a cumulative result of these phenomena, communities like the Stow Munroe Falls Public have far more access to economic resources for their children than do their underfunded neighboring communities, and reformers are left with few avenues to address this inequity.

Part of Stow's identity is that it is *not* Akron. I was taught growing up here that our community was safe and good. Not like Akron. Not Black. And while this fact, when understood in its full truth, is devastating, it also presents an opportunity. Racism in Ohio is a structure built over time that, no matter how complex, can be dismantled. Can you imagine a world after that?

The Stow Munroe Falls School Board has recently been deciding whether it is appropriate for board officials, and more broadly city citizens, to say the words, "Black Lives Matter." I understand why this debate is happening. The stakes are high for admitting that Stow is complicit in racism. It would mean losing a piece of our identity. **But I urge the board and our community to embrace this risk because the stakes of not embracing it are far higher.** We could be a part of a world in which no one drives up to a playground, sees a twelve year old Black student with a toy, assumes he is dangerous and shoots him dead. We could be a part of dismantling racism and we can start by just saying the words, loud and clear: Black Lives Matter.

After that, comes the real, joyful work. Advocate for equitable distribution of property taxes to all public schools in Ohio. Do something about whatever you heard at the luncheon for Black folks to tell you about their experiences. Audit the curriculum. Make meaningful and long-lasting partnerships with Black-led organizations in Akron and Cleveland who are leading the anti-racist charge.

You could even do something "radical" like integrate Stow schools with underfunded districts. Recent research on 9 different school districts (adding to the already existing body of work on the educational benefits of integration), finds that children of upper-middle class professionals have greater vocabularies on average than low-income students, which means that when mixed, low-income students benefit. Middle class families, like those in Stow, generally have greater financial and social stability that allow them to join a PTA or volunteer in classes, as compared with their low-income peers. Low-income students would benefit from this parent involvement. "Effective" teachers are more often found in economically mixed schools and districts

that can afford to pay them a decent salary. One of the common arguments against integration, mostly from white families, is that economic and racial integration will lower the quality of schooling for their children. The historical racism in this fear is made obvious by research that shows the opposite: diverse groups of students working and learning together tend to affect white children by causing them to “work harder and smarter,” “maintain test scores,” and become “more empathetic and less prejudiced.” Imagine *that* world.

While what I've said here isn't the whole story and isn't perfect, I hope you will take it as heartfelt testimony from one of your Stow daughters. I can tell you from ten years teaching in Middle School classrooms that our kids want to learn this history. They want to understand the silent messages they receive around race and inequality. So, I'll leave you here, with a poem by Ross Gay that my students so deeply love that we often read it three or four times together. *A Small Needful Fact* was written by Gay after the killing of Eric Garner by police in my current hometown of New York City.

# *A Small Needful Fact*

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**Ross Gay**

Is that Eric Garner worked  
for some time for the Parks and Rec.  
Horticultural Department, which means,  
perhaps, that with his very large hands,  
perhaps, in all likelihood,  
he put gently into the earth  
some plants which, most likely,  
some of them, in all likelihood,  
continue to grow, continue  
to do what such plants do, like house  
and feed small and necessary creatures,  
like being pleasant to touch and smell,  
like converting sunlight  
into food, like making it easier  
for us to breathe.

Copyright © 2015 by Ross Gay. Reprinted from Split This Rock's The Quarry: A Social Justice Poetry Database.

With much love and hope,

Vidya

Citations:

Giffin, William W. *African Americans and the Color Line in Ohio, 1915-1930*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2005, p. 232

Perea, Juan F., *The Echoes of Slavery: Recognizing the Racist Origins of the Agricultural and Domestic Worker Exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act*, 72 OHIO ST. L.J. 195 (2011).

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**Race in the Heartland Equity, Opportunity, and Public Policy in the Midwest**

Colin Gordon - *University of Iowa and Iowa Policy Project*, October 10th, 2019 (This report is a joint project of the Iowa Policy Project, Policy Matters Ohio, COWS, and the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN).)

Urycki, Mark., *Ohio School Funding Unequal 20 Years After Supreme Court Case*, Ideastream, April 25th, 2017.

April 2019 | Volume **76** | Number **7**

**Separate and Still Unequal: Race in America's Schools** Pages 20-28

[Issue Table of Contents](#) | [Read Article Abstract](#)

**Why School Integration Matters**

*Pedro A. Noguera* <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr19/vol76/num07/Why-School-Integration-Matters.aspx>

[https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Great\\_Migration](https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Great_Migration)

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/03/16/515788673/try-this-one-trick-to-improve-student-outcomes>



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Support of black lives matter resolution

1 message

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**Sebastian Kozar** <dawnandseb@att.net>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 11:57 AM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Cc: st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org

Dear SMFCSD board,

In regards to your current resolution, as a member of this community and having a child graduate from this district, I am glad you are addressing the issue of racism within our schools. Your statement seems very vague, a "blanket statement" if you will to the issue of systemic racism and in light of this movement needs addressed publicly. If you really want to show others in and out of this majority white district that you are trying to do better at making all feel welcome, I believe you need to go deeper and to have a clearer plan of action.

You stated that you met with community leaders to learn from their shared experiences and are starting a committee, but could you include more substance in your statement? Could you speak on 1 or 2 things your looking at starting to address, this gives a better outlook to myself and others what you are attempting to tackle as issues. Also, it might help to speak to black/minority parents and students past and present to let them lead the way on things they see or experienced to help achieve your goals.

We must do what we say or we lose credibility, deservingly so.

Moving forward, I encourage you to facilitate and support all minority students, families and more importantly educators for our district.

Thank you,

Dawn Kozar

52 Prentiss street

Munroe Falls

Sent from my iPhone



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Black Lives Matter**

1 message

**Jennifer Morris** <jsmor1002@hotmail.com>

Mon, Jun 22, 2020 at 11:25 AM

To: "St\_nbrown@smfcsd.org" <St\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "Johnson-Bowers, Lisa" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "Whitacre, Jason" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "St\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <St\_jwright@smfcsd.org>

Hello,

I am a mother to three students in the district. At this time, I'm concerned that there hasn't been a statement made concerning a few things. One, we've heard very little on the teacher who may or may not have been hacked. It was barely addressed. The statements that she may have made were hate filled and I hope a thorough investigation is occurring, and not just her word that she was hacked. I'm concerned that no statement on Black Lives Matter has been made public. Surrounding communities have made such statements, and we need to make sure our students who are black are made to feel that their lives matter. I have seen a statement that says that ALL (in all capital letters) need to feel safe and included. This is true, as educators need to make sure all students feel safe and included, but until each population is included in that, not all will feel this way. How are these objectives going to be met? Will there be training on diversity? Will diverse learning occur? We know not everyone learns the same, how will this be addressed? Training is currently occurring in Cuyahoga Falls, and it is extensive, and will include multiple levels that will build upon itself. How will Stow go about making sure different ways of learning is included and that language is inclusive at the same time? Is the curriculum going to reflect anti racism and show true history, and not the history that is currently taught and white washed?

At this time, Kent City Schools has a banner for Black Lives Matter as a symbol to their community that they are in this together. Are we planning on doing something similar? As a community, we should be standing beside one another, and the lack of communication stating that black lives matter puts more of a division in place instead of the ultimate goal of unity.

Thank you for your time,  
Jennifer Morris



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**FW: Systemic Racism and Stow Munroe Falls City School District**

1 message

**Cheryl Jamison** <cjjamison@msn.com>

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 11:29 PM

To: "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

**From:** Cheryl Jamison**Sent:** Sunday, June 21, 2020 11:28 PM**To:** st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org; st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org; st\_gbetto@smfcsd.org; st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org; st\_jwright@smfcsd.org**Subject:** Systemic Racism and Stow Munroe Falls City School District

Dear Board Members –

We have attached a letter outlining our family's experiences with systemic racism with the Stow Munroe Falls School District. We would appreciate your acknowledgement of receipt of this letter as well as any comments or questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Jim Jamison, Ph.D and Cheryl Jamison, LISW-S

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

**Letter - Stow School Board.docx**

15K



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Statement on Racism & Equity

1 message

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**Antoinette East-Jenkins** <aej1521@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 10:03 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Please see attached letter regarding the proposed statement on Racism & Equity. I would like for my comments to be read during the meeting on 6/22/20.

Thanks,

*Antoinette East-Jenkins*

**Antoinette East-Jenkins M.A.Ed.**

**Educator ~Volunteer ~Advocate**

**(330)338-2253**

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

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**Letter to BOE.pdf**  
224K

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To Members of the Board of Education and SMF Administrators

To say that I am disappointed and saddened regarding the statement being put out concerning racism and equity in the district is an understatement. Unfortunately I am not surprised. I was hopeful a few weeks ago when I was asked to attend the posture of listening meeting but that hope quickly diminished when a teacher went on a racial tirade and there seemingly has been no consequence for her behavior. What has happened however is a campaign to "protect other teachers from being "hacked" with an insensitive and completely ridiculous copy and paste Facebook post warning of this so-called hacking. While I'm glad that the district is re-evaluating its approach to inclusion and equity there is no point in doing so if you are not willing to do the hard work. The statement I read is weak at best and is an insult in my opinion. The use of "ALL" and "EVERY" in capital letters makes it clear that the message really is an "all lives matter" message and not really in support of Black Lives Matter and is completely tone deaf to the current circumstances. If you are not prepared to take a stance that Black Lives Matter, it would be better to make no statement at all. No one is suggesting that all lives don't matter, however:

1. "All lives" are not in jeopardy of dying in the streets under the knee of law enforcement.
2. "All lives" are not disciplined and suspended at higher rates
3. "All lives" do not feel uncomfortable in their schools and communities based on the color of their skin
4. "All lives" are not subjected to negative stereotypes and racism in everything they do and see
5. "All lives" don't deal with implicit bias and microaggressions on a daily basis

I am usually so proud of Stow, but today is not one of those days. While I appreciate the committee and the attempt at working towards a better tomorrow it cannot be done with the voice of one Black person. Part of the problem with the statement is that it is clear that it was crafted without the voice of or even thought of the feelings of Black people in the district.

Kent, Dublin, Hudson, Tallmadge & Akron have made strong statements about racism and Akron has declared racism a public health crisis. I expect more from Stow! Because I am not the type to complain without offering solutions, I would be happy to serve and bring additional resources with me to help us to get to a place where Black students and staff feel welcome, safe, and wanted.

Antoinette East-Jenkins  
160 N. River Rd. Munroe Falls, OH 44262



Bettio, Geraldine <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

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## Black Lives Matter

1 message

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**Meghan Radigan** <meghan.radigan@americanreading.com>  
To: "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>

Sun, Jun 21, 2020 at 8:29 PM

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### 2 attachments

 **letter.docx**  
13K

 **ATT00001.htm**  
2K

Board Members and Superintendent Bratten,

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I am writing as a parent, community member and taxpayer to hold my schools accountable. I have high expectations for my school district and expect them to make sure students are getting the best educational experience possible. As a country we are facing one of the biggest public health crisis in recent memory, racism. I am the mom of two recent graduates of SMF schools, both had excellent experiences in school. However their experiences were different than some of their friends and classmates because they are white. Their skin color allowed them to never experience the racism their friends and classmates did. I am asking the board to make it clear in a strong statement that racism is NOT acceptable and that Black Lives Matter. No student in the school district should ever feel that their district and schools do not have their best interest in mind. That means that you must let our Black students know that their lives matter. This is the time to be on the right side of history and make the right choice for our students of color. Students must feel safe and like their lives matter and right now it does not appear that is the case for our students of color. Please work together to make a strong statement in support of our Black students and families.

Sincerely,

Meghan Radigan

319 Hiwood Ave.

Munroe Falls, OH 44262

Board Members and Superintendent Bratten,

---

I am writing as a parent, community member and taxpayer to hold my schools accountable. I have high expectations for my school district and expect them to make sure students are getting the best educational experience possible. As a country we are facing one of the biggest public health crisis in recent memory, racism. I am the mom of two recent graduates of SMF schools, both had excellent experiences in school. However their experiences were different than some of their friends and classmates because they are white. Their skin color allowed them to never experience the racism their friends and classmates did. I am asking the board to make it clear in a strong statement that racism is NOT acceptable and that Black Lives Matter. No student in the school district should ever feel that their district and schools do not have their best interest in mind. That means that you must let our Black students know that their lives matter. This is the time to be on the right side of history and make the right choice for our students of color. Students must feel safe and like their lives matter and right now it does not appear that is the case for our students of color. Please work together to make a strong statement in support of our Black students and families.

Sincerely,

Meghan Radigan

319 Hiwood Ave.

Munroe Falls, OH 44262



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Black Lives Must Matter at Stow**

1 message

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**Kae Gruner** <kaegruner@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 3:07 PM

To: st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org

Hello SMFHS School Board,

My name is Kae Gruner, and I graduated from SMFHS in 2006. As you know, recent protests in the US have led to a National conversation on a topic that has been plaguing black communities for decades. Racism is real, and unfortunately prevalent, in mostly white communities like Stow. While we are living in a somber time, it's also a time filled with hope and opportunity to show up for our minority neighbors, classmates, and colleagues.

I write to ask you to commit to adding diversity and inclusion education in our school system. I know this is tough, and it's easy to misstep as white allies, but silence is not the answer. You are leaders in this community, your voice matters, and people will listen.

Thank you & please reach out if you have any questions for me.

Best,  
Kae Gruner  
(formerly Eppley, class of '06)  
330-221-4706



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Statement to School Board**

1 message

**Becky Alexander** <ralexand1@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 19, 2020 at 11:07 AM

To: st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_padula@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, "Brown, Nancy" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, Jeffrey Hartmann <st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org>

Hello,

My name is Rebecca Alexander and it's my understanding that the board is meeting on Monday, June 22nd. Since we are unable to attend in-person, I'd like to submit this comment via email to be read aloud for public record on behalf of myself and the citizens of this community. It's my understanding that since the Coronavirus started, the Board livestreams these meetings we will be able to hear these statements:

I love this community. I'm proud of this community. My formative education allowed me to grow up and become a successful, published author. There are no words to describe how grateful I am for that. I'm grateful for the teachers who loved and supported me: for the wisdom of Sra. Eiber, for Mr. Putka's creativity, Mrs. Bhatia's kindness.

And I've heard from so many friends that they didn't feel supported as people of color growing up in the same school system. I am surprised that you have yet to issue a statement saying Black Lives Matter almost a month after George Floyd's death, when almost every other company and institution has issued one, not because they are pandering, but because it was the right thing to do.

The school's silence is sending a message to former POC graduates and most importantly, current students. Change, real change, starts at a local level, and it starts with education.

I'd like to see the board issue a message stating that Black Lives Matter along with a plan of action (just like the Kent school system did WEEKS ago). My goal here isn't to shame or rabble rouse, but there are moments in history, when you have to decide who you are and what you stand for. This is one of those moments, where we as a community MUST come together and say that we represent love, acceptance and tolerance- that we believe Black Lives Matter and that we do not/ will not tolerate racism.

Saying "Black Lives Matter" doesn't mean you're saying cops are bad, it's not some sort of self-loathing statement about whiteness. Simply stated, it's a way of saying we recognize the systemic problems that minority members of this community face. That we see and acknowledge systemic police brutality. That we understand the pain the black community is going through right now, and that we, as a community support and will continue to support our minority members.

I stand with the minority and POC communities of Stow and Munroe Falls.

We need to hear from you. Please don't let your silence be the message you want to send.

Sincerely,

6/25/2020

Stow-Munroe Falls City School District Mail - Statement to School Board

Rebecca Alexander  
187 Fox Run Drive  
Munroe Falls, Ohio  
44262

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Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**SMFHS Statement in Support of Black Lives**

1 message

**Charles Eppley** <eppleyca@gmail.com>

Thu, Jun 18, 2020 at 10:52 AM

To: st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org

Dear SMFHS Board Members,

I am a 2004 graduate of SMFHS. I currently am a faculty member at Oberlin College. I owe a lot of my success to my quality education - but also the circumstances bestowed upon me by my white privilege and middle class upbringing. The city of Stow is diverse economically, racially, and politically. I am writing to ask how SMFHS plans to move forward in our current social transformation, and reckoning, with institutional racism in this country.

What plans does the SMFHS school board have for addressing the disproportionate killing of Black people in this country - how is the school providing care and support for its Black students at this moment of social transformation, which as you know is plagued by reactionary political and literal violence against Black people? What sort of programs or initiatives will the school adopt to correct decades of legal, social, and financial discrimination against Black communities - even in our shared city of Stow?

I would love to see the SMFHS school board make a public statement of support to Black Lives Matter - and to come up with actionable plans for specific changes to curriculum, scholarships, antiracism efforts, funding of Black student groups, and college preparation opportunities for Black students. I am especially concerned for young Queer and Trans Black students and students of color. I do not recall any support for LGBTQ groups or students during my time at the school, unfortunately, which caused me great and lasting personal pain. I hope that things have changed, and that the school is willing to actively care for and publicly support its Black student body.

Thank you for listening and your consideration.

Best,  
Charles Eppley, PhD

Visiting Assistant Professor  
Department of Art  
Oberlin College



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Silence is not the answer**

1 message

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Sarah Sue <ssimpso3@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 16, 2020 at 1:58 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

To whom it may concern,

As an alum of SMFHS, I, in addition to many other students, are shocked by the social media silence by the school district. I started my education at Akron Public Schools until my family moved to Stow. In Akron, I was surrounded by a diverse student population. When I moved to Stow, I found quite the opposite, a lack of diversity and a separation between white students and black students. I know you can't control the diversity of students in the community, but what can be controlled is inclusion. Starting with education is the first step. In this world, more than ever, we need to communicate and educate our children with diversity in this world to help spread understanding, acceptance, and even love.

In recent news, an Akron girl was shot while driving in her car with her Grandma. This story of course, hit close to home. But what I thought was a positive from this, was the quote from Danny Horrigan, my history teacher while I was at SMFHS. He said "I feel that it is essential to say clearly and loudly: Black lives matter," Horrigan said. "Na'Kia Crawford's life mattered."

I feel that a similar statement should be made by SMFHS to reach out to the black community and let them know you hear their voices and they are not alone. When I was in school, there were many suicides. Many of those were black students and staff. My private clarinet instructor, Miss Kellam was one of those tragedies. After her death, there was no help offered to students who were mourning her loss, especially a loss from suicide. In addition, George Garrison, and Shawn Blackwell took their own lives. Nothing was said or done to help ease the students pain or confusion.

To prevent history from repeating itself, now is the time to speak up. If there are any staff members posting racial comments or making statements on social media, action needs to be taken. As school board members, you need to hold people accountable for their actions, now more than ever. As a high school student, you weren't sure how your voice could be heard, or how you could get adults to understand. As an adult, I am making my voice heard by sending this to you all. I hope you hear. I hope you understand that things need to change. I hope this reaches you on a personal level that will actually get you to realize things need to be said and done.

Thank you for your time,

Sarah Altieri



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Support your Black Students and Families

1 message

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**Chris Hendricks** <chris.hendricks@duke.edu>

Tue, Jun 16, 2020 at 1:58 PM

To: "st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org" <st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org>, "st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org" <st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org>, "st\_padula@smfcsd.org" <st\_padula@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>

As an alumni of Stow Public Schools, I'm incredibly disappointed at the lack of support this school district has shown for the Black and Indigenous People of Color, in your schools and communities, particularly during these times of turmoil. I'd encourage you to review statements made by neighboring school districts, such as Kent City Schools and Twinsburg City Schools. Your silence is deafening.

At minimum, we need to see a statement of support from Stow Schools. Tell your students you are not only distressed about the current events, but you plan to take actionable steps against racism. Tell them Black Lives Matter. This is not about a political statement, this is about an expression of value and appreciation for marginalized communities.

Faculty, staff and students need educational opportunities to understand and discuss the impacts of systemic racism, along with resources to guide anti-racist behaviors. As a school district with over 90% white faculty, staff and students you have a role and responsibility to educate and elevate community resources that support Black and Indigenous People of Color. Please step up Stow, silence is NOT an option.

Black Lives Matter.

### Chris Hendricks

Program Director

Recreation & Physical Education

Duke University

Box 90548, 117 Wilson Center | Durham, NC 27708

Office: 919-681-2824 | Fax: 919-681-6181

### Chris Hendricks

Director of Outdoor Adventures

Duke Recreation & Physical Education

Box 90548, 117 Wilson Center | Durham, NC 27708

Office: 919-681-2824 | Fax: 919-681-6181



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcscd.org&gt;

## SMFCSD & Racial Equity Call for Action Follow-Up

1 message

Liz Light &lt;liz.light3377@gmail.com&gt;

Tue, Jun 16, 2020 at 9:03 AM

To: st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_kstoicoiu@smfcscd.org, st\_tgummere@smfcscd.org, st\_tbratten@smfcscd.org, st\_mmanley@smfcscd.org, "Whitacre, Jason" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcscd.org>, st\_gbettio@smfcscd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcscd.org, st\_jwright@smfcscd.org, st\_kchapman@smfcscd.org, st\_scarsella@smfcscd.org, st\_lswinsburg@smfcscd.org, Kathleen Schmidt <st\_schmidt@smfcscd.org>, st\_bangely@smfcscd.org, st\_cgriffin@smfcscd.org, st\_paul@smfcscd.org, st\_acottrill@smfcscd.org, st\_tburdette@smfcscd.org, Jason LePard <st\_lepard@smfcscd.org>, st\_ehaught@smfcscd.org, st\_treen@smfcscd.org, Amanda Murray <st\_amurray@smfcscd.org>, st\_love@smfcscd.org, st\_sdeitrick@smfcscd.org, st\_dulbricht@smfcscd.org, st\_lacoste@smfcscd.org, st\_muckleroy@smfcscd.org, st\_ladner@smfcscd.org, Megan Postak <st\_mpostak@smfcscd.org>, st\_long@smfcscd.org, Julie Alexander <st\_alexander@smfcscd.org>, st\_kreiner@smfcscd.org, st\_mgries@smfcscd.org, st\_paradise@smfcscd.org, st\_cottrell@smfcscd.org, st\_yanchunas@smfcscd.org, st\_beres@smfcscd.org, st\_vanorman@smfcscd.org, Jeffrey Hartmann <st\_jhartmann@smfcscd.org>, st\_merz@smfcscd.org, John Moyer <leading219@gmail.com>, st\_badar@smfcscd.org

Hello SMFCSD Community,

On Thursday, 6/4 I emailed a letter calling on SMFCSD to make a public statement addressing the murder of George Floyd and other Black people by police in an act of solidarity with the Black community as well as to outline actions the district will take to intentionally support Black students and families and develop school cultures of anti-racism.

I was thankful to access the Board of Education meeting on 6/8. The district's decision to hold a listening luncheon in which community members shared their experiences with racism was an appropriate first step in more fully conceptualizing the district's responsibility and capacity to confront racism. I expected board members to name the concerns raised at the luncheon and explore actionable ideas based on the resources shared. However, no plans were made to follow the insights gained from the luncheon. The language used by Superintendent Bratten and the two board members that did speak did not explicitly address the concerns of racism and SMFCSD's role in perpetuating racial inequity.

The "6 basic areas," as outlined by Superintendent Bratten, including policy, curriculum, staff and student professional development, "social emotional expectations" for students, intermediaries, and diversifying hiring are certainly areas where work can be done. The opportunity presented itself to open with these 6 areas so that the board might begin addressing each area of growth and how resources might fold into these areas. To essentially close the conversation on this agenda item by listing these areas without any substantial discussion was a missed opportunity.

Compounding with the district's continued inaction regarding the support of Black lives, the statement released on 6/8 regarding a teacher "allegedly" making "offensive comments" felt empty, vague, and offered no commitment to action. Having viewed the comments myself, the district's statement lacked the seriousness with which racist and hateful language, specifically targeted at Black women, requires. This again felt like a missed opportunity.

I understand that those in the field of education have been uniquely challenged in jobs that are already extremely challenging at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. That being said, racial inequity must be met with the same level of urgency and thoughtfulness as the pandemic. While introspection and critical dialogue are necessary to develop sustainable change, **processing and action are not mutually exclusive**. Acute action is needed for SMFCSD to clearly affirm its stance as an anti-racist institution in support of Black lives.

My original requests still stand. I would like to establish a line of communication between myself and SMFCSD leadership in order to be informed of any action plans as well as resources being consulted. I am also interested in starting a dialogue and resource shares among SMFCSD and interested alumni. That being said, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. Attached is a PDF copy of this email for ease of reference and sharing.

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Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to your response(s),

Liz Light  
(330) 245-6746



**SMFCSD Call for Action Follow-Up.pdf**  
43K



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Your Silence is Deafening - Black Lives Matter

1 message

Rachel Jamison &lt;rjamiso1@kent.edu&gt;

Mon, Jun 15, 2020 at 4:38 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Hello,

My name is Rachel Jamison, former student and resident of Stow.

I am writing to you this afternoon because I am deeply concerned with your lack of response to the current climate in our communities.

It has been three weeks today since the death of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. As I'm sure you know, George Floyd's death sparked outrage across the United States, causing many people to begin to take to the streets and reach out to officials to demand change and raise attention to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Government officials, corporations, and even other schools in the area have made it known that they stand against racism and stand with their constituents, customers, staff, faculty, and students of color. I have attached the statement from Theodore Roosevelt High School in Kent, issued last week, as an example.

Many people think that "this does not happen in our community." It does. It does happen in your community. It has happened for years. It will continue to happen. Your silence is deafening.

I wonder if the name George Garrison rings a bell? He was a Stow Student. He was a member of my brother's Boy Scout troop. He was one of the kindest people I have ever met. He was black. That was his crime in the eyes of your students. George Garrison is dead. George Garrison was bullied for being black. And George Garrison committed suicide because of it.

Your silence is deafening. Your silence can be deadly.

George is only one in a string of examples of discrimination and racism in the Stow-Munroe Falls School District. If you give your community the opportunity to speak, really speak, and really be heard, they will tell you. Do you not believe them? Do you really believe it doesn't happen here?

Please, please, do something. A statement denouncing the actions of one teacher is not enough. Please, say something. Tell your black students, black staff, and black faculty that their lives matter. That you support them. That you will do everything in your power to stop the needless racism and discrimination they face in your schools. In your community. Please, take action. There is no time to wait.

Please.

Please don't stay silent for fear of making waves. Your silence is violence. Your silence is deafening. Your silence can, and will be, deadly.

Thank you,  
Rachel Jamison

**Statement-to-TRHS-Community-Regarding-the-Current-Social-Climate-June-2020.pdf**

134K



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**Black Lives Matter**

1 message

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**Mary Rasinski** <marykrasinski@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 14, 2020 at 12:25 PM

To: "st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org" <st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>, "st\_jwright@smfcsd.org" <st\_jwright@smfcsd.org>, "st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org" <st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org>, "st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org" <st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org>

Dear SMFHS School Board,

I am a SMFHS graduate from the class of 2005. As I've grown up, I've been both proud and grateful for my formative education. I can't help but notice that during these times, when it's more important than ever, you have yet to issue a statement saying that Black Lives Matter and demonstrate some sort of plan for inclusion and diversity going forward at SMFHS.

The community is watching, not just you, but all local businesses, and we MUST, I repeat, MUST send the message to all minority members of this community that we will not, cannot, we refuse, to tolerate racism. That we believe their lives matter. That we recognize the pain that they are feeling right now and we, as a community, will work to end the bias and unfairness that they face every day. That's the only right side to be on. It's the least we can do.

Your minority students are watching. The younger generation is watching. They are listening. And your absence of this message IS sending them a message. I ask that you please issue a statement and most importantly, develop a plan to ensure your minority students feel welcome.

Black Lives Matter!

Sincerely,

Rebecca Alexander

--

Mary Rasinski

marykrasinski@gmail.com  
www.maryrasinski.com



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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## Black Lives Matter Support

1 message

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**Lindsay Dunphy** <lindsaymdunphy@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 14, 2020 at 12:24 PM

To: st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org

Hi SMFHS school board,

I am a graduate of SMFHS class of 2006. Thanks to Stow I have had many opportunities in my life including now living in one of the most diverse cities in the world. When I think about diversity in stow, I think about how one of my black classmates committed suicide because other white students bullied him for being different. How do you commit to educating our youth about diversity? How do you commit to inclusion in our school system? Nothing was done then and I find your silence deafening now. It is not a time to stay silent. It is a time to stand up for your minority students. Where is your urgency? And your bravery? I plead you to take a stand. We are all watching, especially your black students. Stand up for them. It will make our whole community better. Thank you.

Lindsay Dunphy

Sent from my iPhone



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**SMFHS 2020**

1 message

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**Becky Alexander** <ralexand1@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 14, 2020 at 11:48 AM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Dear SMFHS School Board,

I am a proud SMFHS graduate from the class of 2004. As I've grown up, I've been both proud and grateful for my formative education. I can't help but notice that during these times, when it's more important than ever, you have yet to issue a statement saying that Black Lives Matter and also demonstrating some sort of plan for inclusion and diversity going forward at SMFHS. Yes, I saw your message about generic racism but, to be frank, that isn't good enough. The community is watching, not just you, but all local businesses, and we MUST, I repeat, MUST send the message to all minority members of this community that we will not, can not, refuse to tolerate racism. That we believe their lives matter. That we recognize the pain that they are feeling right now and we, as a community, will work to end the bias and unfairness that they face every day. That's the only right side to be on.

Your minority students are watching. They are listening. And your absence of this message IS sending them a message. I ask that you please issue a statement and most importantly, develop a plan to ensure your minority students feel welcome.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Alexander



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**SMFHS 2020**

1 message

**Becky Alexander** <ralexand1@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 14, 2020 at 11:48 AM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Dear SMFHS School Board,

I am a proud SMFHS graduate from the class of 2004. As I've grown up, I've been both proud and grateful for my formative education. I can't help but notice that during these times, when it's more important than ever, you have yet to issue a statement saying that Black Lives Matter and also demonstrating some sort of plan for inclusion and diversity going forward at SMFHS. Yes, I saw your message about generic racism but, to be frank, that isn't good enough. The community is watching, not just you, but all local businesses, and we MUST, I repeat, MUST send the message to all minority members of this community that we will not, can not, refuse to tolerate racism. That we believe their lives matter. That we recognize the pain that they are feeling right now and we, as a community, will work to end the bias and unfairness that they face every day. That's the only right side to be on.

Your minority students are watching. They are listening. And your absence of this message IS sending them a message. I ask that you please issue a statement and most importantly, develop a plan to ensure your minority students feel welcome.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Alexander



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

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**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

1 message

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**Miguel Carvalho** <carvalho.miguel@gmail.com>

Fri, Jun 12, 2020 at 10:44 PM

To: st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

I have been frustrated by a noticeable lack of a response to denouncing systemic racism, police brutality and at the very minimum saying "Black Lives Matter" over your Social Media Platforms since the Murder of George Floyd. I am a POC alumni who went through the very hallways you represent and have countless stories of myself and my peers being bullied, tormented and ostracized by peers and teachers alike at Stow Schools. Stow is 91% caucasian and I assure you the other 9% know it and feel it everyday whether it be in Fishcreek, Kimpton, The High School, even going to Target or Handel's.

I am speaking out for my peers and a teacher who did not survive High School.

For my former Band Director, Linda Kellam. She loved her students and connected with each one she taught. She took her own life after a skiing trip in January of 2002, during the second half of my Freshman Year. The other band directors were amazing sources of comfort and helped us through our grief like a family.

For my friend George Garrison. We were Boy Scouts together and his father was a professor at Kent State. George committed suicide with his father's service rifle at 14 in 2003 after being bullied for being tall, lanky, and black. One of my worst memories of High School was passing out flyers at his funeral and seeing all of his friends crying right along with the people who bullied him.

For Shawn Blackwell who was so funny and likeable and ready to enlist in the Navy. He was 17 in 2005, my senior year, when his body was pulled out of Crystal Lake after taking his own life. Shawn was bullied as well for being different, for being smart, and for being black.

For Billy Porubsky, my friend who went down a dark road after graduation. Mental health issues left Billy with little options for sustainable employment and for reasons unknown, Billy was knocking on doors in a Stow Neighborhood one night in 2017. The police officer who took him to the Haven of Rest would end up shooting Billy twice in the chest on the sidewalk after an argument.

I carry these stories with me every single day and am thankful that I have been able to find support and understanding throughout my life to fight my own trials with racism in the community and to keep their memories alive. When I was in Stow Schools though, I often felt alone and knew my POC peers did too.

I need to see at the minimum a new statement from Stow Schools not just talking about something a staff member said and an umbrella statement about racist language and being distressed by current events. Tell your students you are not just distressed by current events, you are willing and starting to take an active stance against racism in all forms and will be a place where students of color can feel safe first and foremost.

Your website says at Stow Schools, you "Provide Inspiration to Make a Difference in the World". Make a difference in the community first, and watch more students become inspired. They are watching.

My name is Miguel Carvalho and I want you to do better. Black Lives Matter.



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

## Stow Alum Call for Action

1 message

**Madeline Koewler** <madeline.koewler@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 9:19 PM

To: st\_bratten@smfcsd.org, st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_kchapman@smfcsd.org, st\_scarsella@smfcsd.org, st\_lswinsburg@smfcsd.org, st\_schmidt@smfcsd.org, st\_bangely@smfcsd.org, st\_cgriffin@smfcsd.org, st\_paul@smfcsd.org, st\_acotrill@smfcsd.org, st\_tburdette@smfcsd.org, st\_lepard@smfcsd.org, st\_ehaught@smfcsd.org, st\_treen@smfcsd.org, st\_amurray@smfcsd.org, st\_love@smfcsd.org, st\_sdeitrick@smfcsd.org, st\_dulbricht@smfcsd.org, st\_lacoste@smfcsd.org, st\_muckleroy@smfcsd.org, st\_ladner@smfcsd.org, st\_mpostak@smfcsd.org, st\_long@smfcsd.org, st\_alexander@smfcsd.org, st\_kreiner@smfcsd.org, st\_mgries@smfcsd.org, st\_paradise@smfcsd.org, st\_cottrell@smfcsd.org, st\_yanchunas@smfcsd.org, st\_beres@smfcsd.org, st\_spalchesko@smfcsd.org, st\_vanorman@smfcsd.org, st\_jwyant@smfcsd.org, st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org, st\_merz@smfcsd.org, st\_obraza@smfcsd.org

Superintendent Bratten, SMFCSD Administrators, Teachers, Staff, and Board Members:

My name is Maddie Koewler. I am an alumna of SMFHS, class of 2010. I attended Highland, Lakeview, Kimpton, and Stow-Munroe Falls High School.

I am calling on SMFCSD to take this historic opportunity to reflect on and address the ways in which it contributes to systematic racism by not teaching it in classrooms. Anti-racism begins in the classroom with students understanding that government, laws, and non-profits, and businesses were designed to benefit a privileged few and perpetuate racism today. I took AP Economics, AP US History, and AP US Government - classes that I loved and directly lead to the career in public policy that I have today - and I was not aware of the systematic oppression that occurs in every facet of life when I graduated from SMFHS. SMFCSD continues to do a disservice to its students by not informing them of the oppressive structures that surround them and how to counteract them should students have the chance. I feel a responsibility in my privileged position of designing public policy to not contribute to the systems that have oppressed Black people, People of Color, Native Peoples, people with low incomes, and other underresourced communities. These are skills I wish I learned in school from a young age.

Will SMFCSD commit to training teachers on anti-racism and requiring that systematic oppression be addressed throughout - more than just one lesson - humanities classes? It is a necessity if SMFSD is interested in fostering the leaders of the future.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Maddie Koewler



Bettio, Geraldine &lt;st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org&gt;

**Re: Call to Action Emails**

2 messages

Liz Light &lt;liz.light3377@gmail.com&gt;

Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 1:15 PM

To: "Whitacre, Jason" &lt;st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org&gt;

Cc: st\_tbratten@smfcsd.org, st\_mmanley@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_kchapman@smfcsd.org, st\_scarsella@smfcsd.org, st\_lswinsburg@smfcsd.org, Kathleen Schmidt <st\_schmidt@smfcsd.org>, st\_bangely@smfcsd.org, st\_cgriffin@smfcsd.org, st\_paul@smfcsd.org, st\_acottrill@smfcsd.org, st\_tburdette@smfcsd.org, Jason LePard <st\_lepard@smfcsd.org>, st\_ehaught@smfcsd.org, st\_treen@smfcsd.org, Amanda Murray <st\_amurray@smfcsd.org>, st\_love@smfcsd.org, st\_sdeitrick@smfcsd.org, st\_dulbricht@smfcsd.org, st\_lacoste@smfcsd.org, st\_muckleroy@smfcsd.org, st\_ladner@smfcsd.org, Megan Postak <st\_mpostak@smfcsd.org>, st\_long@smfcsd.org, Julie Alexander <st\_alexander@smfcsd.org>, st\_kreiner@smfcsd.org, st\_mgries@smfcsd.org, st\_paradise@smfcsd.org, st\_cottrell@smfcsd.org, st\_yanchunas@smfcsd.org, st\_beres@smfcsd.org, st\_spalchesko@smfcsd.org, st\_vanorman@smfcsd.org, st\_jwyant@smfcsd.org, Jeffrey Hartmann <st\_jhartmann@smfcsd.org>, st\_merz@smfcsd.org, st\_obraza@smfcsd.org

Hi Jason,

Thank you for your response. I am contacting you as the point of origin you referenced in your email. I am not representing an organization and those who contacted you are simply concerned alum and community members who are anxious to be a part of the conversation as the district moves forward in addressing these concerns. I reached out to fellow alum and community members, as well as some former teachers, who I presume reached out to others eager to voice their concerns as well.

I am aware that this level of contact and request for action, as well as the conversations needed to address issues regarding racial inequity may be uncomfortable. I myself have begun these difficult conversations with family, friends, and colleagues who I never imagined touching on the subject with. In my experience, people do not reach out because of a "template"; they reach out because they care.

The request for SMFCSD to issue a public statement as well as plans for action to intentionally support Black students and families as well as how the district will work toward school cultures of anti-racism still stands.

That being said, I am very interested in participating in the move forward to address these concerns. I was made aware there is a School Board meeting this evening at 5pm. Please let me know how to access this meeting as well as any opportunity to register for public comment. I noted the agenda item "Board Update from Friday Afternoon Listening Luncheon and Follow-Up Action Steps" and am wondering if the Listening Luncheon was in regard to these issues of concern. If so, please let me know what stakeholders were involved if this was not made public to the community.

Please know that my request comes from a place of care and concern as well as an understanding of how important leadership from school districts like SMFCSD will be as we strive towards communities that are safe, equitable, and enriching for all people. I and others like me look forward to learning more about how SMFCSD will move forward. If you would like to contact me, I am available by phone or Zoom and can let you know my availability.

Best,

Liz Light

(330) 245-6746

On Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 8:56 AM Whitacre, Jason &lt;st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org&gt; wrote:

Good morning -

I wanted to reach out to you for a couple of reasons. One, to say I received and read the emails. Given that I received several with exact phrasing and wording, I can only assume a template came from a point of origin, and I would certainly be happy to hear from that organization directly (also, at least one email left the "sample letter" attached).

Two, the district is moving forward with its own review, had an initial listening session with some community members on Friday afternoon, and will continue that path forward.

Thank you,

Jason Whitacre  
President, Stow-Munroe Falls City School District Board of Education

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**Liz Light** <liz.light3377@gmail.com>

Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 4:33 PM

To: "Whitacre, Jason" <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org>

Cc: st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_jwright@smfcsd.org

Hi Jason,

Thanks for your response. What is the best way to stream the meeting? I see the district's YouTube page but don't see any public information on how to access the live meeting. I've CC'd other board members in case anyone else can advise on accessing the meeting live.

I look forward to the continuing conversation,  
Liz Light  
(330) 245-6746

On Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 1:04 PM Whitacre, Jason <st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org> wrote:

Hi Liz -

I was responding on my own behalf, as a single board member, and simply wanted to give those who sent emails both an update and an acknowledgement that I had read them. Tonight's meeting is a work session with no public comment period. Regular meetings do have those comment sessions.

The level of contact is not uncomfortable, I was simply working to facilitate a slightly more streamlined point of communication. I was attempting to convey that I was, and still am, listening.

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]



## Woodland Elementary

1 message

Mon, Jun 8, 2020 at 2:47 PM

To: st\_jwright@smfcsd.org, st\_nbrown@smfcsd.org, st\_gbettio@smfcsd.org, st\_ljohnsonbowers@smfcsd.org,  
st\_jwhitacre@smfcsd.org

Chantel Covino is an Intervention Specialist at Woodland Elementary. I have attached some of her Facebook interaction. Is this the kind of mindset and hateful behavior that is accepted in the Stow County school system? My concern is what kind of interventions and persona is being presented to children. Is this the type ignorance you want to represent Stow?

**2 attachments**

WOODLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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**Charm Cardio**  
High-Intensity Interval Cardio  
at 1000 & 1010

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