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DEI Policy Message from the Board of Education

1 message

Haldane Central School District <connect@haldaneschool.org>
Reply-To: Haldane Central School District <connect@haldaneschool.org>
To: mshields@haldaneschool.org

Sat, Apr 26, 2025 at 1:04 PM

Dear Haldane Community,

On Tuesday, April 22, the Board faced a difficult decision. Just a few hours before our Board meeting, our legal counsel recommended that we temporarily suspend the district's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy. They advised us to take this step by April 24, 2025, so that we could certify district compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Doing so would protect the district from potentially losing \$450,000 in federal funding that primarily covers special education services and free and reduced price lunch.

Given the speed with which the federal government is cancelling funding for projects and activities, we were genuinely concerned that they would withhold this funding from Haldane. The loss of the funds would have a meaningful impact on programs and services for our students.

Although we had been tracking the U.S. Department of Education's demand that states and districts certify compliance, we learned of legal counsel's concern about the specific wording of our district's DEI policy at the last minute. We believed the most prudent response was to suspend our policy – not abolish it.

This brief pause gives us time to consider the potential short- and long-term implications on our students if the federal government were to withhold funds. It also gives the Board an opportunity to explore minor language revisions that would not alter the spirit of the policy. The Board plans to complete the policy review in time for the issue to be acted upon at our May 6, 2025 meeting. This business meeting is open to the public and we welcome you to attend.

We understand that community members have questions and concerns about this decision, and we will continue to be transparent as we move forward. We remain committed to the well-being and success of all students and staff, and to the aims of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy, which are codified in NY State law by the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA). This was a strategic decision rooted in our responsibility to protect educational programming for all students.

Sincerely,

Haldane Board of Education

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