

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report Title: Misconduct & Divisive Ideologies:  
*A Parents' Plea for Course Correction, Transparency, and  
Political Neutrality in the Southern Lehigh School District*

Date: October 18, 2023

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## **BACKGROUND**

We are the parents of two children enrolled in the Southern Lehigh School District. In 2021, we asked some very basic questions of the Superintendent at the time in response to the announcement of an “Equity” survey being performed as part of a “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (DEI) initiative. Our key question was simple: “How does SLSD define Equity?” We asked because we were aware of a number of odd things being done in the name of “equity” around the country at that time. She artfully dodged our questions and then stopped responding to us entirely. To this day, even after reviewing thousands of records from the district, we still don’t have an answer to that most basic of questions.

Do you agree that “*the power structures within society and institutions are based on white privilege and white supremacy?*” Do you believe that at Southern Lehigh schools “*we have a significant percentage of our student body that [are] ... outright directly marginalizing their peers*” and are “*exhibiting racist and biased behaviors?*” Do you believe that we that “*systemic and institutionalized racism is promulgated in our curriculum, our culture, and our school community?*” Do you believe that our teachers should be encouraged to be “*less white,*” because “*to be less white is to be less racially oppressive?*” These are all direct quotes from the records we obtained and come from recent SLSD administrators and school board members and a training through which teachers satisfied professional training hour requirements. Do you believe that our schools administrators and counselors should be making active psychotherapeutic interventions in the lives of our children by enabling and supporting “*social transitions*” based on “*gender identity*” and hiding it from parents? Do you think our schools should be asking our students about their new “pronouns” and keeping secret records on “*gender identity*”? The records we obtained show that all of those things are happening.

If none of this is concerning to you and you agree with the world view that underlies those approaches, then the attached Report is likely to be of little interest to you. However, if you, like us, believe that parents play an essential role in the lives of their children, that the role of schools is education rather than social engineering, and that we should not judge people based on what they look like or from where their ancestors come but instead on their merits as individuals, then this Report may be both enlightening and concerning to you.

Anyone who attended or watched online school board meetings in our district over the past three years knows that they have at times been heated and emotional. Not only were people trying to understand what was happening with the DEI initiative, we were also discussing (sometimes arguing about) school closures associated with COVID-19, messy and ultimately ineffective attempts at remote learning, social distancing rules, and extended masking requirements. What

struck us most about those meetings was that it was obvious that well intended people on both sides were talking past each other because they simply didn't share the same definitions of important words.

Why were we not even speaking the same language on important concepts like "diversity"? We observed at the time that there really was no major misalignment on the core ideas, despite the rancor. People on "both sides" were in favor of more fairness and equality of opportunity, egalitarianism, and less discrimination, bigotry, and bullying. It's impossible, however, to reach an understanding of another's position, let alone agree on a mutually acceptable path forward, if we don't even have a shared understanding of what core terms mean. Some people, like us, were coming to understand, with great sadness frankly, that for some "diversity" no longer means looking beyond skin color but instead means forced "representation" based on it. "Equity" no longer means just returns based on effort and merit but instead means forced equal outcomes. "Inclusion" no longer means tolerance of individual differences and lifestyle choices but instead means required celebration of "identities," lest one be called a "bigot" or a "transphobe." The very meanings of these important words had shifted under our feet, in large part due to academic theories and practices generally falling under the umbrella of "social justice" studies (which includes "critical race theory" or "CRT"). The terms "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion" had in a very real way been hijacked and redefined to serve in the real-world application of "social justice" ideas. Our hope is that this Report will provide some much needed clarity on these issues. When words lose their shared meanings, our tether to truth frays.

When portions of the information included in this Report were made public over the past couple of years, many were compelled to ask whether DEI training and DEI-related curricula were right for our schools. The DEI initiative at Southern Lehigh focused on our racial differences rather than our shared humanity and shared values. The framework literally divides us into separate subpopulations and labels us as "oppressor" or "oppressed," assigning collective guilt based on our skin color as dictated by our DNA. Many in the community answered with a firm "No." Many community members found themselves (us included) speaking at public school board meetings for the first time in their lives, often invoking the civil rights movement and quoting Martin Luther King, Jr., arguing that we should judge people not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. Tempers flared and many cherished longtime friendships were damaged or lost entirely.

It is fair to ask whether any of these issues matter now because the superintendent who put us on this dangerous path and other key players are gone and many (but not all) of the school board members referenced in this Report are no longer on the school board. What good does dredging up things from years ago do now? Aren't we just sullyng the good name of Southern Lehigh? The reader should remember, however, that except for the DEI initiative with Dr. Allen, the public is entirely unaware of the vast majority of the content of this Report (significant portions of which reflect ongoing conduct). If we didn't know what was happening then, shouldn't we be concerned about what's happening now outside of public view?

It's not as though our school board has at any time rejected the "social justice" approach, nor has our school board been forthcoming on a number of important and difficult issues. Our view is that we can't have faith in our district now if we aren't able to address what happened then. To those who would question making the matters detailed in this Report public (every one of them

backed up by the district's own records), we say that if you're more concerned about people knowing about what happened in our district than you are about what actually happened, we respectfully suggest that your priorities are dangerously misguided.

The attached Report is the result of more than two years of attempts to understand what is happening in our school district in the name of DEI. What we found in the thousands of records we obtained from the district in response to a handful of requests under the Pennsylvania Right to Know law surprised and disappointed us. This is what we get when ideologically motivated administrators and school board members put politics and ideology over students. The records have already led to an internal investigation by the district that found extensive wrongdoing, including a corrupt, no bid, *quid pro quo* contract with a "DEI consultant" and the improper disclosure of sensitive student data. This Report details additional misconduct (including hiding essential information from parents) and an embrace of inherently divisive ideologies.

As you read portions of this Report, you may find yourself feeling angry and frustrated, as we did, with the things that have occurred. Some of them are truly awful. We urge you, though, to have patience with those who serve us on the school board and in our schools, and with your neighbors as well. Our board members, administrators, teachers, and other SLSD staff are busy people who serve our community, a commitment which we hold in high regard. One of us was a teacher, so we know well the sacrifices that these people make for our children. The vast majority of them are doing a great job for us and our children and we should remember to thank them from time to time, even if we disagree with them on particular issues. Assume good intentions, ask questions reasonably, and give people adequate time to respond. Seek to understand where your views differ and why. Appreciate that people of goodwill and intent can see the same issue differently and can respectfully agree to disagree. Sometimes that simply will not be possible, but we think the ideas in this paragraph should always be your starting point for interacting with our public servants.

Our teachers are owed a much overdue apology. They show up to do their job: to teach our children mathematics, science, how to sort and categorize, and to read and write among many other essential skills, not to mention corralling energetic kids, getting them to focus, and as always, getting them to behave. We know many, many teachers and other staff members in the district. The vast majority of them just want to show up, do their job, and go home knowing that they made a difference in a child's life. They should never have been tarred by a superintendent and school board members as being part of "*systemic and institutional racism*" in our school district. They should never have been put in a position where they have to learn as part of professional training divisive ideologies, let alone be required as a condition of their employment to keep secrets from parents and take direction from elementary school children on whether to use a child's "new name" or their "deadname" when the teacher calls home. We know that no apology will be forthcoming from those who have said and done these things, but we nonetheless believe strongly that they are owed one.

Our intent is not just to point out what went wrong in our school district over the past years. We also make recommendations for what should come next. Our most basic thought is that if you have to hide what you're doing, you probably shouldn't be doing it; hence our call for increased transparency. The public funds our schools and we entrust our children to the care of our teachers. We have a right to know what's going on. The rest of our recommendations are based

on a handful of core concepts that include embracing a pro-human approach to equality and tolerance, one that focuses on “*advancing civil rights and liberties for all Americans, and promoting a common culture based on fairness, understanding, and humanity,*” while also providing “*an inclusive learning environment that recognizes both our unique identities and common humanity*” and “*encourages curiosity and critical inquiry, welcoming a diversity of opinions and perspectives, and teaching students to engage in civil discourse as a constructive means toward a better and more unified future*” (please visit the website for the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism at <<https://www.fairforall.org/fair-in-education/>>). Accordingly, we obviously reject any approach that would ascribe moral or legal blame to individuals or groups based on the color of their skin, their national origin, or other immutable characteristics.

Below we provide a high-level, partial list of key findings in the Report that you may find helpful in understanding to scope of our efforts and our findings. The Report itself includes numerous additional findings. The list below is *not* in order of importance and roughly follows the order of the sections of the Report itself.

### **PARTIAL LIST OF FINDINGS**

#### ***What They Think of You: Beliefs and Intentions of Key Players***

- Superintendent believed that “*a significant percentage of our student body...are either passively, or outright directly marginalizing their peers, using unacceptable language and generally exhibiting racist and biased behaviors*” (p.15)
- Superintendent believed in “*critical race theory, transformational learning theory, and culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogy,*” basing her entire SLSD-funded PhD thesis on the notion that “*racism is engrained within society and culture and that institutional racism exists*” and that “*power structures within society and institutions are based on white privilege and white supremacy....*” (p.16)
- Superintendent designed professional development / training intended to develop “*critical consciousness*” (*i.e.*, adopting a Marxist conflict-theory world view) (p.17)
- SLSD Committee determines that the problem with our community is that it is “*conservative*” and that a “*vision shift is needed for real change.*” (p.18)
- Superintendent believes “*fighting against racial disparities*” is the “*vital work*” of our schools (even without evidence that those disparities are due to racism or discrimination) (p.18)
- Superintendent believes that SLSD plays a “*critical role*” in “*ensuring understanding of issues around identity, power, privilege, the historical context of oppression, and bias*” and that English Language Arts and Social Studies are the good avenues to introduce this framework (p.19)
- Director of Curriculum confirms the district remains committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and that there are ongoing changes to literature used in courses. (p.20)

- Superintendent commits to expanding and strengthening the districts work in “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” based on the death of George Floyd, which she attributes to “*institutionalized and systematized racism.*” (p.22)
- Superintendent sends links to community for CRT-based materials. (pp.22-23)
- Superintendent confirms that (i) SLSD was in the process of revisiting all curricula to weave in DEI content, including in Math, Science, and other STEM courses, (ii) curriculum reviews and updates would next target the district’s English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies courses because those courses lend themselves to teaching about “*power, privilege, false narratives, historical oppression and the experiences of marginalized groups*” is key, and (iii) “*...There will be significant changes in curriculum coming as we work through these areas over the rest of the year*” (i.e., 2020) (p.23)
- Superintendent works with DEI consultant to ensure DEI proposal includes “direct teaching of these issues [CRT-based DEI] to students.” (p.24)
- School board member believes that “*systemic and institutionalized racism is promulgated in our curriculum, our culture, and our school community.*” (p.27)
- School board member believes that our students must be educated about “*system racism*” and that “*there’s more needed than just an assembly here and there and a club....*” (p.27)
- School board member dismisses request from taxpayer requesting to participate in a controversial DEI training by writing to another board member that she has “No words” and that “We are living in the Upside Down.” (p.28)
- Superintendent and school board members take urgent action to remove from SLSD website a story about a woman who went to drug ridden neighborhood in Philadelphia to help the people there because it was a “*white savior*” narrative. (p.29)

***The DEI Debacle: A Flawed Proposal, a Corrupt Relationship, and a Flawed DEI Report***

- School board approves divisive “DEI proposal,” but district cannot define “Equity” (p.34)
- Superintendent confirms the district is “*focused on equity work*” but can’t (or won’t) define “equity.” (p.36)
- School board member refuses to answer taxpayer’s question of “*What does Diversity mean? What does Inclusion mean? What does Equity Services mean?*” (p.37)
- DEI Proposal was directly based on Critical Race Theory (CRT) (pp.45-50)
- “Equity Surveys” and their subsequent analysis were deeply flawed and had a pre-determined outcome. (pp.54-59)

- DEI Report provides no evidence that disparities in academic outcomes are in any way based racist conduct or systems at SLSD. (p.58)
- DEI report was tainted by an undisclosed and unresolved conflict of interest. (p.62)
- Superintendent had serious and undisclosed conflict of interest with DEI consultant, violating board policies. (pp.63-65)
- Superintendent guided DEI consultant to modify DEI proposal to include training and curricula changes directed at students. (p.66)
- SLSD recklessly disclosed highly sensitive, private student data to the DEI consultant in violation of FERPA and school board policies. (pp.70-78)
- SLSD failed to obtain necessary consents from parents before disclosing highly sensitive student data to DEI consultant. (pp.76-77)
- Contrary to statement of interim superintendent, improper disclosure of highly sensitive student data was not “inadvertent,” but rather at the specific direction of former superintendent (pp.80-81).
- Despite telling the school board and the public that no sample DEI training modules were available, superintendent was in possession of those sample training modules. (pp. 81-94)
- Despite telling the school board and the public that no training of teachers by the DEI consultant had occurred, numerous SLSD employees had attended a training program provided by the DEI consultant. (pp.95-97)
- School board refused to release investigation report on superintendent’s misconduct for five months after it was complete (pp.94-95), thereafter releasing only a portion of the report (p.96).
- Investigation by outside attorneys confirmed extensive misconduct and corruption by former superintendent (pp.97-99)

### ***Divisive Ideologies Fed into SLSD by University Partners***

- SLSD participated in “Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence” to remake local school districts in the name of “*social justice*” and “*anti-racism*” (which, to be clear, no longer means “against racism,” as it used to). (pp.101-109)
- In arranging presentation by an outside professor, superintendent states that “*we’re looking at issues around gender identity and beyond binary and what the means for district and school leaders creating equitable systems, environments, policies, and staff professional development.*” (p.103)

- SLSD spent at least \$15,000 to participate in and support the “Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence” (pp.104-105)
- Superintendent arranged for attendance by numerous SLSD employees of professional training sessions held by the “Greater Lehigh Valley Consortium for Equity and Excellence,” including sessions on “*Devising an Equity Audit*,” “*How Leaders Can Operationalize Equity and Transform their Systems*,” and an annual summit on “*Gender Identity Equity*.” (pp.105-109)
- SLSD administrator received stream of social justice activist materials from professor at Penn Graduate School of Education (p.109-110).
- Superintendent attended numerous social justice training sessions sponsored by Penn Graduate School of Education (p.111-113)

### ***Social Justice Training and Materials at SLSD***

- SLSD conducted numerous social justice training sessions and distributed social justice materials to SLSD employees. (115-149)
- 42 SLSD employees trained on “White Fragility” (based in Critical Race Theory), which argues that (i) our teachers should strive to be “*less white*” because “*to be less white is to be less racially oppressive*” and (ii) our teachers should get involved in organizations “*working for social justice*.” (pp.117-127)
- Principal endorses “21-day challenge” for faculty and students; associated materials are all “social justice”-oriented and based on Critical Race Theory, including such ideas as “*race is a social construct*” (pp.128-131)
- Principal shares training opportunity with school counselors on “*how to incorporate social justice work into your school environment*.” (pp.133-134)
- School counselors satisfy “academy training hours requirements” (professional development training) by reading articles or watching documentaries on “*systemic racism*” and “*white privilege*.” (pp.134-135).
- Social studies teacher distributes social justice-oriented materials that includes tips like “*Avoid using language like ‘mom or dad,’*” to “*give space for using preferred pronouns*,” and “*use your professional development days to gain more diversity and inclusion training*.” (pp.136-137)
- “Social Emotional Learning” materials and links from CASEL focused on “Racial Equity” were distributed to SLSD principals, vice principals, and at least one K-3 guidance counselor; the materials encourage cultivating “*racial self-awareness*” and using “*SEL as a Lever for Equity and Social Justice*.” (pp.137-140)

- SLSD spent at least \$28,200 on “Social Emotional Learning” training and materials with Thom Stecher and Associates; services proposal includes “curriculum” for students and professional development titled “*Diversity and Equity through an SEL lens.*” (pp.137-140).
- At least one SLSD employee attended a course on “cultural competence” (which is the application of critical race theory (CRT) to education). (pp.146-147)
- SLSD possessed (specific use was unclear from records we obtained) a resources list titled “Resources for White Parents to Raise Anti-White Children,” which included recommendations to read resources such as (i) The 1619 Project, (ii) How to be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi, and (iii) White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo. (p.148)
- Email from Superintendent to all SLSD in senior positions (principals, vice principals, etc.) encourage them to attend a professional development session titled “Elevating Educational Equity through Social Emotional Learning.” (pp.147-148)

### ***Curriculum Changes and Library Audit***

- Superintendent and Director of Curriculum target English Language Arts and Social Students for “*equity and diversity*” remake. (pp.151-152)
- Director of Curriculum confirms that a library audit has been completed to identify additional “DEI” materials to be added, and that those materials “*can then be used as part of instruction.*” (p.152-153)
- As a follow-on to the “library audit” conducted by the Director of Curriculum, SLSD purchased a number of books intended for elementary level students (Hopewell/Liberty Bell and Intermediate School), including: (i) What is White Privilege, (ii) What is the Black Lives Matter Movement, (iii) What does it mean to Defund the Policy, (iv) What is Anti-Racism, and (v) How Can I Be An Ally?; all of these are based on the “oppressor/oppressed” framework for viewing the world and call on reader to become “activists” (pp.160-164)
- SLSD employee recommends a lesson on “*pronoun usage.*” (p.157)
- SLSD employee notes that she frequently brings in supplemental materials on “diversity/inclusion” (i.e., outside of approved curriculum) (p.158)

### ***Manipulation of Superintendent Search for Political Purposes***

- Superintendent and politically aligned school board members manipulate job description for superintendent hiring search so as to not “*make the hill any harder to climb in the election*” (referencing an upcoming school board election) by omitting reference to “*equity*”; they decided to omit reference to “*equity*” even though they were aligned that “[the district] *desperately NEEDs someone who understands and values equity*”; in doing



so they intentionally excluded a member of the search committee who was not politically aligned with them (pp.165-167)

### ***Board Member Advocates Hiring Based on Race***

- School board recommending hiring based on race in violation of state and federal law, as well as multiple district policies because there was no way to “legitimately” “diversify staff.” (p.169)

### ***Gender Ideology at SLSD: Secret Policies and Egregious Violations of Parents Rights***

- SLSD has adopted the “gender affirming care” model of dealing with “gender identity issues” by allowing, enabling, and supporting the active psychotherapeutic intervention of “Social Transition” of students without the knowledge of their parents. (pp.183-191)
- SLSD adopted a secret policy and practice on gender identity issues without public review and board approval. (pp.184-187)
- SLSD’s secret gender identity policy was vetted with the administration for consistency with district-wide practice. (pp.187-189)
- SLSD actively sought out “*different sets of names and pronouns for use in school and use in contact with Parents*” (p.190)
- SLSD maintains separate and secret student records on gender identity matters. (p.192)
- SLSD takes guidance from gender ideology activist organization GLSEN, an organization that describes its work “*grounded in racial justice*” and “*gender justice*,” and which is dedicated to “*transform[ing] K-12 educational systems*” and “*dismantle[ing] all identity-based oppressions.*” (p.197-204)
- SLSD counselor distributes and endorses GLSEN Model Policy on Transgender Students, with not a single objection from any other counselor; she stated that the model policy “*emphasizes what we all know are the right ways to handle student privacy.*” Among other things, the model policy requires for gender affirming care, use of new names and neo-pronouns, hiding gender identity information from parents, and allowing biological boys in the bathrooms, locker rooms, and sleeping quarters of biological females (on school trips) (p.199-204)
- SLSD adopted GLSEN “Safe Space” program, thereby endorsing its precepts and encouraging the use of the GLSEN website as a resource for students; by displaying a GLSEN “Safe Space” sticker or poster, that teacher commits to “*not disclose [gender] identity information*” to parents and to “*affirm students’ chosen names and pronouns,*” among other things. (p.205-212)
- Multiple SLSD counselors were trained by the gender clinic at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) on “gender ideology” and “gender affirming care”; training

included concept that “gender” is “socially constructed” (*i.e.*, not tethered to biological sex in anyway); the gender clinic at CHOP provides “gender affirming care” for children as young as three years old and has performed “gender affirming” double mastectomies on young girls as young as 13. (pp.216-219)

- Training materials from CHOP gender ideology / gender affirming care training session discussed at least two “grade level meetings” in SLSD; training materials distributed to at least 17 SLSD employees; training materials recommend books to teach elementary school children about “gender ideology.” (pp.218-220).
- Superintendent acknowledges that CHOP gender ideology training materials have been used as a resource in SLSD. (p.226)
- Vice Principal and Counselor conspire to hide nature of bullying incident from the parents of a student who identifies as “transgender.” (p.227)
- SLSD disregards safety of biological female in interaction with transgender student in school bathroom, resulting in hospitalization for a severe panic attack; SLSD’s failure to protect this student materially contributed to subsequent suicide attempt. (pp.229-232).
- SLSD disregards safety of biological female in interaction with transgender student in school bathroom, despite associated threat by the transgender student to “*ruin the rest of [the biological girl’s] school life.*” (pp.232-233)

[*End of Executive Summary*]