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## AUHSD and racial equity: How to repair the broken trust

By Sophie Braccini



Image provided

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During a mid-June Acalanes Union High School District board meeting staff acknowledged that trust had been broken with the district's families of color. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and with the release of a video showing teenagers from the district using racist profanity in front of a parent (two years ago), outrage mounted from the community, calling for deep change.

The meeting opened with heartbreaking testimonies from parents of students of color who had been discriminated against and/or bullied repeatedly in the district. Parents accused the high school administration as well as that of the district to have been side-stepping complaints and hesitating to take any action. Testimony after testimony painted the portrait of a community, starting as early as elementary school, where racism is dismissed by staff. In a like manner, some students also testified that bullying was seldom addressed and issues were swept under the

The Campolindo High School Diversity and Inclusion Committee had a gathering the night before the meeting that was attended (on Zoom) by approximately 100 community members, current Campo parents, future/incoming Campo parents, Campo student leaders, former Campo students, Campo administration and faculty, AUHSD superintendent and associate superintendent, Moraga School District parents, and community members. Ellide Smith, chair of the committee who called the meeting (see related article on Page A4) said that the general feeling from parents, students, as well as teachers is that policies about racism are vague and consequences are unknown. The district has seen the number of diverse students diminish because parents send their children to private schools. Students are not equipped to stand up in a culture where those who speak out are ostracized and criticized.

The group agreed that racism and unconscious bias are rampant. Campolindo High School counselor Patrick Turner has been the only black faculty/staff member at Campolindo. He has witnessed the pain of not only black students but other students of color as they encounter vile forms of racism, complicit biases, and microaggressions across the campus.

Amy McNamara, the district's associate superintendent, has been in charge of the district's equity policy for several years. She affirmed that a lot of listening is being done this summer and that change will happen through long-term work.

McNamara listed the actions that are being worked on within the district: to change the AUHSD mission statement to include race equity as a core value; to engage all students in a discussion about race to create a safe campus; to modify the curriculum in social studies and history; to establish more equitable grading practices for all students; to train all staff members and have them attend the Beyond Diversity training; to organize more parent information nights on this topic with parent leadership; to include more diversity when hiring new staff members; and to establish clear policies to address racist insults.

There is not yet a timetable for the implementation of these changes. All board members expressed their desire to support transformations in the new school year. McNamara noted that there is a highly activated group of young people who will be coming back to school in the fall and they will want to see change.

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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