



October 18, 2021

Indivisible Kirkland Letter of Support: Protect Teachers

Indivisible Kirkland is a grassroots organization that started in 2017 and comprises approximately 700 members, most of whom live or work in Kirkland. Indivisible Kirkland's mission is to promote progressive ideals in order to advance justice, equity, and inclusion through civic engagement at the local and state level. IK partners with many other organizations on the Eastside, and focuses specifically in fostering partnerships with BIPOC-led groups. Some of Indivisible Kirkland's stated values include advocating for equity, pursuing inclusivity, engaging in acts of allyship, dealing in truth, and continuing to learn as an organization. These relationships and these values are the underpinning of all of our advocacy work.

More information about Indivisible Kirkland can be found on our website:

<https://www.ikwa.info>.

To contact Indivisible Kirkland: info@ikwa.info.



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Dear LWSD Directors, Dr. Holmen, Associate Superintendents, and Principal Bede,

Indivisible Kirkland is reaching out because our members all live within the boundaries of the LWSD and a great many currently have students in the district. As an organization that believes equity and anti-racism work must be foundational for all institutions, we have been greatly concerned by how staff who are doing that work are being treated by the District.

Eastlake High School, which prides itself on its equity work, is a good example of how words have not translated to actions that support the staff actually doing the work. The recent instances around Patriot Day (see our previous communication [Case Study: EHS/Equity Lens](#)) and around a teacher being secretly videotaped by a student, show that the school and the District prioritize white comfort over BIPOC staff safety, truth and justice. There has been no accountability for those who have actually caused harm; instead the BIPOC staff are often scapegoated. And very little direct, clear communication with the students, community, and district has happened in either case. The students are being silenced when they do try to discuss how their teacher is being treated or when they attempted to discuss the Patriot Day controversy. Despite the district and the EHS's commitments to "building bridges," they ignore, or even burn, those bridges, the minute the situation becomes uncomfortable. Using silence or intentionally vague communication to avoid upsetting [white] folks, is simply upholding racism at the cost of BIPOC students and staff.

The real question is, what do we want for our students? All students have a right to a truthful education that challenges and expands their thinking and prepares them to engage authentically and fully in the complex world we inhabit. For our children to receive this education, we must protect the thoughtful, kind, honest teachers who teach abolition, decolonization, anti-racism, science, and truth.

These teachers should be the standard-bearers for all educators, something the District itself acknowledges on its Equity and Family Engagement page. The Vision and Mission listed on this page are unapologetically anti-racist and honest, a tone and approach that should be a model for the District. The Vision and Mission say the District and its educators will:

- Commit to the legacy work of racial, gender and ability equity for all and the intersectionality therein;
- Disrupt the status quo;
- Be unified in the community of unrelenting abolitionists working to intentionally achieve educational and social justice to ensure that all students have freedom to choose their paths in the world;
- Engage in intentional, strengths-based legacy work by pushing boundaries through storytelling and abolitionist teaching;
- Disrupt the system that threatens the educational freedoms of our community;
- Work to harness and include the power and wisdom of historically marginalized communities;
- Push boundaries and decolonize curriculum and mindset.

The LWSD and its schools must protect the teachers who commit to this Vision and Mission, who commit to being the standard-bearers of truly transformative education. Otherwise, we will lose these priceless teachers and staff members. Already, we've lost our previous Black Equity Director and the only Black principal in the district. Hiring and retaining BIPOC staff is an enormous challenge, made all the more difficult when those staff are targeted and abused for bringing the District's Equity Vision and Mission to life.

We urge the administration to:

1. Engage with impacted BIPOC staff to identify required measures to provide support, build trust, and provide protection. If necessary, seek professional assistance to conduct such an assessment.
2. Make a districtwide statement on how the Superintendent, Director of Equity & Family Engagement, and Assistant Superintendents of School Communities will stand with and protect all administrators and teachers who commit to the LWSD Equity and Family Engagement Vision and Mission.
3. Ensure the EHS Leadership team conduct a postmortem and develop a plan forward that allows students and teachers to reflect on Patriot Day through an equity lens. Begin and follow through with a restorative justice approach with those who have caused harm to take accountability and restore trust with teachers and students.
4. The adoption of a decision methodology that supports equitable and inclusive decisions.
5. Consult and contract with an outside group experienced with approaches of restorative and transformative justice through an equity lens focus.

Thank you for your time and consideration. As always, we welcome further discussion on this topic (info@ikwa.info).

Sincerely,

Indivisible Kirkland