



June 6, 2022

Good evening, my name is Tricia Akinwande and I am speaking on behalf of the Glen Ridge Diversity & Inclusion Association (GRDIA).

As many of you know, there have been several racial incidents that have occurred in our schools recently. Specifically, Asian American mockery with slant eye gestures and African American slurs with the use of the "N" word. We understand that these incidents are being addressed individually with the HIB process; however, we would like to address 1) the need for more swift actionable communication to the parents and school community when these incidents occur, 2) the need for communication to the parents and school community regarding the education and disciplinary actions regardless of whether the HIB claim is determined to be founded or unfounded; 3) the lack of transparency and inconsistency in the execution of the HIB process; and 4) the culture that has developed specifically at Ridgewood Ave. School (RAS) over the last 10 yrs.

The following is a consolidation of input we've received and how this administration can move forward on these such incidents:

1. Asian American mockery against a student at Forest Ave. School was reported in December 2021 by the parents to the FAS administration; however, an email was not sent to the school community until May 2022, six months after the incident occurred. African American slurs that occurred at RAS were not communicated to the school community until after one of the parents posted the incident on social media. Requested Action: When a racial incident occurs, the administration treats it as a priority: alert the parent(s); communicate it to the school community; and seek guidance on best practices used to educate students when these incidents occur.
2. There's a lack of understanding, consistency, and transparency with the HIB process. Requested Action: Since the HIB process is a Self-Assessment process we suggest that the process be shared with the school community for transparency and executed consistently. We are not suggesting that students' information be released, however, we do suggest that the incidents and the respective education and disciplinary actions be shared with the school community regardless of whether the HIB claim was assessed to be founded or unfounded. Since it is the school administration alone that is making this determination, transparency is key.
3. There's an extreme amount of discontent with the RAS administration in regards to the

manner in which the administration handles incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying. This was expressed from parents who've been in the district for as far back as 10 yrs to parents new to the district within the last 2 yrs. The perception is that the administration is dismissive; is not empathetic; and is preferential to students/parents involved in the HSA/GRAA/and other parents. Additionally, there is a lack of support for the students who are harassed. Requested Action: We suggest that there be outreach to the affected students, rather than waiting for the students to go on their own to school counselors. We also suggest anti-bias education for students who are the aggressors since there is seemingly a lack of consequences for those students.

Lastly, evidence suggests that the perception of this RAS administration is, "kids will be kids or boys will be boys and this is normal behavior that we've all experienced in our childhood." As a result of that type of thinking, many incidents are not perceived to be taken seriously and with the requisite amount of urgency that should be delivered.

We further suggest that the administration, specifically the Superintendent, speak to parents, students, administrators and faculty; and have an audit conducted of the unfounded HIB reports. We ask that the Superintendent seek consultation from a 3rd party independent evaluator of the school culture.

We implore this administration and BOE to go beyond reviewing HIB reports and take a closer look at the culture that exists in each of our schools. These are the formidable years of our children's ideological development and it's not only what they're learning within the books that will shape who they are - but what they are witnessing as acceptable behavior from the direction of the leaders of each school.

Thank you for your time.

Glen Ridge Diversity & Inclusion Association