NEWS RELEASE

Rally organized to protest Salt Lake City School District Reorganization Plan

Contact: Josie Valdez, 801-550-1206

Salt Lake City, 15 November 2015 -- Leaders of various cultural and ethnically diverse groups have come together to voice their concern over the recent reorganization plan which was announced by Superintendent McKell Withers and the Salt Lake City School Board. A rally is planned for Tuesday, November 17, at 6pm to voice concern over this issue.

Members of this group attended the school board meeting held November 3 to express their concerns. Presentations made by Josie Valdez, former vice-chair of the Utah State Democratic Party, Stanley Ellington, community activist, and Dr. Paula Smith, professor at the University of Utah, expressed the following concerns:

* Superintendent McKell has overstepped his authority and has not followed regulations outlined in State law.
* The board has failed to follow the procedures outlined in the Salt Lake City School Board Handbook.
* The reorganization plan has marginalized and demoted the Equity Department in the re-organization resulting in all ALL-WHITE administration.
* These WHITE administrators were appointed. The group demanded competitive hiring practices be followed to allow for qualified minorities to apply for consideration.
* The group demanded that the reorganization not be allowed to proceed until laws are followed, rules and procedures are observed and ethnic minority personnel be allowed to apply for positions within the administration.

"We are concerned about the callous manner in which this reorganization has occurred." states Josie Valdez. "The reorganization was done with little or no input from our ethnic communities. This is totally unacceptable when 57% of the students in the Salt Lake School District are ethnic students."

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Reorganization Plan   
Salt Lake City School District

**THE MAIN THREE POINTS**

School Board Responsibility

Relevant Equity Department

Competitive Hiring Practices

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Superintendent McKell Withers is leaving the District in 8 months**

* Why initiate a major reorganization now?
* This reorganization was announced and implemented without stakeholder input
* No input from educators in the District
* No input from the community
* No input from the Board of Education

* This reorganization was implemented without the required Board approval
* In the future –the following order should be followed:
* Obtain Stake Holder Input i.e. employees, community etc..
* Present the plan to the Board of Education where it can be discussed in a transparent and open manner
* The Board is composed of the elected representatives of the people, once they approve the plan THEN it should be announced and implemented
* **The Board of Education has initiated a nationwide search for a new Superintendent**
* Let’s allow flexibility in the organization for the incoming Superintendent
* DO NOT stack the District office’s with new personnel

* **We need to strengthen not weaken Equity efforts within the District**

* **Board President Heather Bennett invited the community to attend the Nov 17th Board meeting but did not allow for public input on the agenda**

**ASKS or DEMANDS TO THE BOARD:**

* Leave the organizational structure intact as shown in 2015-16 Budget approved by the Board

* Fill vacant Associate Superintendent vacancy as an interim

* Elevate the Director of the Equity Department to Associate Superintendent of Equity and Diversity (June 2014 recommendation of Equity Leadership Team)

* End Superintendent appointments

* Create an equal opportunity system where vacant administrative positions are announced and posted so that all potential candidates can apply and be considered

* Ensure that employment decisions are based on who is most experienced and qualified, not on who is the decision maker’s friends.

**Ms. Josie Valdez –** Highlights of Board presentation on November 3, 2015

1. *We are here to discuss a concern about a recent reorganization in the administrative structure of the District…recent actions of the Superintendent violate Utah code and your own Salt Lake City Board of Education Handbook procedures as follow:*

* *The Board is required by State Law to approve all employment contracts, salaries, benefits and dismissals.*
* *The Board is required by their own policy B-1 to review and approve recommended contracts and salary schedules for principals, teachers and other district employees.*
* *The Board may not approve any resolution, contract or appointment at a closed meeting…*

*…you as a Board have failed in your duties…as members of the Salt Lake City School Board you are elected to represent your constituents…we ask the following:*

* *Neutralize or nullify the reorganization actions until state law is followed*

*We demand that the Board adhere to the policy stated in your own handbook which grants you the power to approve all appointments.*

**Mr. Stanley Ellington -** Highlights of Board presentation on November 3, 2015

1. *To reposition the Equity Department to a lower or less than position, will reduce its importance and we ask that it not be done…to reduce the Equity Department to a level below the level of the Chief of School Improvement will be perceived as a systematic act of dismantling the Equity Department…we ask that the Board keep the Equity Department at its current organizational level and responsibilities or move the department to a higher level of oversight, control and advocacy…*

**Dr. Paula Smith -** Highlights of Board presentation on November 3, 2015

1. *…we also need an Equity Department that has the authority to ensure that inequity can be effectively managed as part of the responsibility of each and every principal in the District to ensure that we have administrators like this in place, we ask two things:*

* *We ask that the Board mandate that all hiring committees have representation from the communities that they serve. We believe that this will …help the District hire staff and administration that is reflective of the demographic makeup of the communities that Salt Lake District serves.*
* *We ask that the Board eliminate Superintendent appointments and allow a fair and open competition for these positions as recommended in the February 2015 –Human Resources Audit.*

*There are administrators of Color who have the education, the credentials, the experience and they deserve to be considered. The current appointment system is a form of Apartheid where advancement does not seem possible despite their qualifications.*