



J. Michael Clára
Salt Lake City School Board
District Two

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12 December 2015

DELIVERED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
Dr. McKell Withers, Superintendent
% Salt Lake City School District
440 East 100 South
Salt Lake City, Utah 84104



Re: Equity Leadership Team Meeting

Dear Dr. Withers,

You will recall, that at the last Board meeting, I asked if you were going to respond to the concerns of the community, in reference to your District reorganization plan. You replied:

“...there is no avoiding it, I’d be happy to meet with any group”¹

To that end, I have been asked my members of the community, to reach out to you and request that you attend the Equity Leadership Team meeting scheduled for this Tuesday, December 15, 2015. We are aware that you held several meetings with members of the Equity Leadership Team. Unfortunately, you excluded the community members of the Team. I can’t stress enough, this botched reorganization plan and its subsequent implementation is of paramount concern to the community and employees of the District. In my opinion, this issue should come before the entire Equity Leadership Team and you should not be excluding the community component of the Team.

Additionally, I would request that you address the so called “misinformation” about your plan, which is supposedly floating around out there. In the last Board meeting, in response to my question about your actions, you replied:

“Clearly, people have been given misinformation and that has been leveraged negatively”²

As one who has been elected to represent the interest of the citizens in Salt Lake City, I can assure you that it is the naked display of your actions that is so detrimental, not some elusive spirit of befuddlement.

By way of illustration, your Public Information Officer released a statement that summarized a meeting you held with select members of the Equity Leadership Team and the Board of SLASA.

¹ See video: Mr. Archuleta Addresses the Board of Education <https://youtube.be/kU0-k5OT8rE>

² *Ibid*

Those members consisted of the employees of the District. The employees voiced the following apprehensions:

- Those ...concerns centered on how we as a district can better emphasize the importance of excellence in equity, and all equity issues, in our schools and our communities
- How the district can work to have the ethnic makeup of the district administration more closely reflect the diversity of our students
- Expressed concerns about the sustainability of Dr. Christy's new role
- Concerned about using one-time funds for her [Dr. Christy] new position could lead to discontinuing the position after only one year, which could send the message to schools that equity issues were not a high priority for the district
- They said strengthening Dr. Christy's job title would help school administrators realize the seriousness of her work and equity work in general.
- They voiced their concerns about the increased need for recruiting and retaining administrators of color in the highest levels of district leadership.
- There was disagreement over whether Dr. Withers proposed plan would be more beneficial to furthering the district's equity goals than another structure
- Was there appropriate input from stakeholders on this particular plan ³

Make no mistake, these concerns are valid and were put forward in response to words that came out of your mouth and straight into the ears of the administrators present. The first sentence of the letter states:

"The purpose of this memo is to summarize a meeting with Superintendent McKell Withers had with a group of educators last Friday." ⁴

I want to underscore, the opposition to your reorganization plan is based on the plan itself, NOT "misinformation" as you would have us believe.

In conclusion, I will remind you of a letter I presented to the Board of Education in the summer of 2014:

"On behalf of the residents and students that I represent, I am submitting this letter to express my support for the...creating of the position: Associate Superintendent of Educational Equity & Diversity." ⁵

This recommendation came from the Equity Leadership Team, at the time you were opposed to the idea. It does now appear that you are moving closer to accepting the need and reality for such a position. We look forward to discussing this further with you.

Shalom,

J. Michael Clára
Board Member, District 2



³ Jason Olsen –District Reorganization Memo 11/03/15

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Michael Clára letter to Board President Kristi Swett –Associate Superintendent of Educational Equity & Diversity 06/03/14