

Dear Emily,

I appreciate the sharing of your views. However, I must admit that I find myself scratching my head, as I'm not sure what your aim is. I sincerely worry that you are making assumptions and drawing conclusions about District 39 that are simply not true.

First, let me address the professional training programs you've written about. As we have stated before, while some panelists we worked with are affiliated with SEED, our teachers are not trained by SEED. We have no plans to establish an ongoing partnership with SEED. These panelists are members of our community and were invited to bring a wide range of qualifications and experiences. One is a staff member at New Trier High School and a school board member in Evanston.

We believe these types of programs help our staff to more deeply consider what a culture of empathy means through their own experiences. Let me give an example from my own personal experience. I am white, I move through the world as white, and I get treated a certain way as a result. I have a very good friend who is black, he moves through the world as black, and he gets treated a certain way as a result. He and I both understand that he does not get treated the way I do. That is the reality of our world. For me to empathize with his experience, I have to understand that I am treated differently than he is, only because of the way I look. This acknowledgement of how each of us is perceived is important for adults. It helps us understand differences and fosters a culture of inclusion in our schools.

I want to emphasize that the programs I'm referring to, and that you write about, were for parents and our adult staff. Adults have a range of experiences and an ability to process subtle points that is much greater than what we expect of our students.

And that's important to remember because of my second point: I need to keep reinforcing that we have no "empathy curriculum." We do have Second Step that is used for supporting social-emotional growth in District 39. Beyond that, as explained in my previous email, we engage students in promoting kindness and connections. Creating a culture of empathy is about developing an understanding of one another and promoting inclusivity. As I said previously: *"Again, there is no curriculum, but a way to help each other be aware and better understand differences."*

The District's empathy initiative is about creating a safe place for students to express their opinions, perspectives, and beliefs, where all students feel respected and included. The approach that is used across the District continues within a context of positivity and kindness toward one another, not shame or oppression. This is evidenced through the activities promoted across the schools such as recognizing small acts of kindness, using kind statements to "fill one another's buckets," and working across grade levels to learn more about each other.

I hope this helps you understand how we think about empathy and inclusion.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 18, 2017, at 9:21 AM, E. Downs <getdowns@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Ray and members of the D39 Board of Education,

Please read the email exchange below. I have the permissions of Dr. Lamia to share her email with you. Thanks for your consideration.

Best,
Emily

P.S

Background to the emails below:

In an effort to understand the relationship between empathy, shame and SEED's methodology of connecting lives by "acknowledging systems of oppression, power, and privilege," I came across this article:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/intense-emotions-and-strong-feelings/201104/shame-concealed-contagious-and-dangerous-emotion>

Dr. Lamia is a psychologist and psychoanalyst who works with adults, adolescents and preteens in private practice in California. She is also a writer and a professor at the Wright Institute in Berkeley, California.

<https://www.teensafe.com/experts/dr-mary-c-lamia-ph-d/>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Mary Lamia** <drmarylamia@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, May 11, 2017 at 4:58 PM

Subject: Re: Empathy Education and the National SEED Project

To: "E. Downs" <getdowns@gmail.com>

Dear Emily,

In my opinion you are absolutely correct that *"teaching children empathy in the context of power and oppression may have detrimental effects, either in the near or long terms."*

I have seen the same detrimental effects in using this approach with adolescents, young adults, and even with psychology graduate students. While the goal of the approach is to teach empathy, the empathy of those who are "on the upside of power and privilege" leads them to take on the shame of those in the target group. Ultimately, the recipients respond defensively to this shame or with coping responses (much like the target group has done in the first place) that involve: 1) attacking themselves; 2) attacking others; 3) withdrawal; or 4) avoidance.

The adaptive response to internalized shame, both for the target group and those on the upside, must involve learning with interest; to be curious about, and interested in, the experience of the other while owning what one feels. Nobody *makes* another person feel a certain way. But it is important to understand that another person's behavior, demeanor, etc. can be a stimulus that triggers emotional memories and a particular emotional response in us. In addition, our beliefs are a composite of our emotional memories that have been linked by our cognitions to an ideology. Thus, people have varying beliefs about many things, and learning about them without judgement is important.

I hope this helps to guide your teaching and parent education. I wish I could offer resources, however the programs you mention have been the mode, regardless of their negative impact.

All best to you,
Mary Lamia

Mary C. Lamia, Ph.D.
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On May 11, 2017, at 1:32 PM, E. Downs <getdowns@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Lamia,

I am a parent in the New Trier School District located just north of Chicago. I have 7 children ranging from 18 all the way down to 14 months. Five of my children attend these schools. Most people move to this district for the excellent public education.

Our local K-8 school district (WPS D39, 3500 children) has begun an initiative of creating a culture of empathy within our schools. We are a predominately white population (approximately 85%), and understandably, learning to understand those of differing backgrounds and cultures is beneficial for everyone both in and out of community.

In support of this initiative, our teacher training and parent education/seminar night have been lead by those are apart of the National SEED Project. (I assume that this will also be apart of the empathy curriculum taught to children.) This group is supportive of creating conversations of understanding by "acknowledging systems of power, oppression and privilege." (<https://nationalseedproject.org/about-us/about-seed>)

The founder, Peggy McIntosh, wrote a couple of articles on white privilege. You may be familiar with her writings. (<https://nationalseedproject.org/about-us/white-privilege>)

My concern is that teaching children empathy in the context of power and oppression may have detrimental effects, either in the near or long terms. Telling a child that they are inherently oppressive because of the color of their skin, their gender or their sexual sexual orientation seems like a circuitous and confusing route toward empathy. While I can see how this would be beneficial for adults and mature adolescents, for children this seems like it could produce harmful side effects of shame and resentment.

So, is it possible that teaching children empathy in this context could lead to greater social divisiveness as it may create strong emotions of shame and resentment?

Additionally, I think there may be more straight forward ways and curricula to teach empathy. Do you know of any?

I know you are an expert in this area, and any suggestions, thoughts or guidance you can provide would be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Emily Downs
Wilmette, IL

Good morning,

Thank you for taking time to reach out and show support for our efforts.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 18, 2017, at 8:21 AM, Sheetal Shah <sshah1@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

I want to thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. My family (two boys ages 2 and 6) and I recently moved to Wilmette and we appreciate these efforts to recognize differences. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy.

Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. We hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. We hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year and I look forward to see how this dialogue develops. We are responsible for this next generation and this is a step in the right direction.

Sincerely,

Sheetal Shah

Hello,

Thank you for taking time to share your thoughts. I will be making a public statement at the next Board meeting.

Ray



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 15, 2017, at 11:21 AM, E. Downs <getdowns@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Ray,

Thank you for your response to my questions from the last Board Meeting. I just wanted to clarify and follow up with some questions. While this is addressed to you, I've cc'd the BOE and welcome any of their thoughts and responses as well.

I've put the questions in bold to hopefully make your reading easier. Also, instead of including my questions within your email below, I've just quoted some of your email statements around which I'm seeking clarification. Additionally, I've attached my comments from the April BOE meeting as I recognize that it's virtually impossible for you to have time to go back and watch the video.

I recognize that you are very busy and I always appreciate your responsiveness to the community. Please stick with me through this email.

First of all, I want to reinforce and clearly state that I support empathy. With that in mind, here are some of my thoughts and requests for clarification:

1. Regarding the "increased reports of before/after school incidences, racial and/or religious tension, and social conflicts/bullying within social media." My question was and still is simply a request for data.

- **What are the actual numbers associated with these reports, or is this a "gut-feel" statement regarding the increases meaning the district has no data but it just seems like there has been an increase?** For example, are there any information like the following:

In the 2015-2016 school year there were 'x' number of before/after school incidences with respect to racial tension involving 'x' number of students.

In the 2014-2015 there were 'x' number of incidents of before/after school incidences with respect to racial tension involving 'x' number of students.

In the 2013-2014 there were 'x' number of incidents of before/after school incidences with respect to racial tension involving 'x' number of students.

2. CRC Involvement - my understanding was that the purpose of CRC was to independently, with some input from the District, help determine what the community felt was important to help D39 fulfill its mission. **However, it sounds as though the CRC is more of a research entity used to support the district in current initiatives and knowing how to best implement those initiatives. Do I understand this correctly?**

3. Curriculum Clarification - Thank you for clarifying that there is no new curriculum. **However, are any strategies and conversations that happen outside the context of 2nd Step simply considered supplemental materials to our social emotional learning curriculum?** It seems like there is a lot of social emotional training occurring that is outside of the confines of a curriculum and is therefore, without structure and transparency. Social emotional learning is good and necessary, yet it must be well defined since many of the topics are teaching values that families feel strongly and very differently about. **Do we need to broaden our SEL curriculum to be in line with the empathy initiative?**

For example:

"The culture of empathy strategic goal goes beyond diversity in terms of race, religion, and gender identity."

How will you be handling those discussions, specifically about religion and gender identity?

As parents, my husband and I are very intentional in the values we teach our children regarding these topics. While our teaching always includes respect, kindness and compassion, some values may be different from those of others around us. Therefore, we are the ones who are and want to continue to be the interface when it comes having these sensitive conversations. If the school would like to be having these conversations, I believe they need to do it via the parents.

4. D39 and the National SEED Project

I am concerned that D39 is "not opposed to the organizational goals" the National SEED Project has of focusing on "systems of oppression, power, and privilege." Included in their goal is a focus on white privilege, male privilege and white supremacy.

<https://nationalseedproject.org/about-us/about-seed>

<https://nationalseedproject.org/itemid-fix/categories/conference-appearances>

Given this context, is it true that D39 is not opposed to this organization's goals?

In August, our teachers were trained by a national SEED representative "who spoke about engaging in conversations about race, inclusion, and diversity, and

preparing ourselves to do so while recognizing our own feelings involved," and that during the training, "We also talked about strategies that we could use to help students *if/when* conversations start. " **Therefore, if and when these conversations arise will these conversations be in the context of oppression, power and/or privilege?**

Furthermore, the two SEED representatives at the December empathy night presentation were introduced by Ms. Jackson. She introduced SEED and spoke at length regarding their work with the organization. I am concerned that while several administrators, including yourself, were in attendance, no one seems to have known anything about SEED or the speakers' affiliation with them. **How is it that everyone except Ms. Jackson was ignorant of the National SEED Project organization up until my mention of them at the April BOE meeting?** D39 needs to do a better job of understanding the backgrounds of those who will be training our teachers and parents.

Finally, I too support conversations and learning that build empathy and understanding. However, I do not support the goals of the National SEED Project to have these conversations within the context of power, oppression and privilege. This is not healthy for our children.

I know we all want what is best for the children of D39. I believe that this empathy initiative is one of fostering and reinforcing a culture of empathy. I support empathy and I am supportive of working together to continue the great tradition and mission of D39.

I know this has been a long email, and I appreciate you taking the time to consider my thoughts and look forward to your response. I am always happy to discuss these things and collaborate on solutions as partners in education.

Best,

Emily Downs
Wilmette Resident 12 years
D39 Parent

The following are my comments from the D39 BOE Meeting on April 25, 2017:

"Hello, My name is Emily Downs and I live in Wilmette. I have lived in and had children in this district for 12 years. Prior to that we lived in New York, Boston and the Bay Area.

Recently, I have had the opportunity to attend our 4th grade innovation fair, school's open house, and parent teacher conferences. I was blown away with the amount of goodness occurring. Students are engaged and learning in different ways and different medium. At the innovation fair children were recognized problems to be solved, invented a solution and then articulately explained and demonstrated their solutions. Their creativity and ingenuity reminded me of their beyond their years.

As I walked through the halls at our open house I saw walls decorated with expressions of kindness, respect, compassion and other time tested virtues and expressions showing excited and engaged students learning to be forces for good in the world.

Parent teacher conference continually leave me inspired and in awe of our teachers. They care about who my child is, and they learn and solicit my feedback as we partner in educating my children. An underlying and significant aspect of these conferences is the teachers' desire to really understand and engage my child in meaningful learning. Additionally, as my children had had varying special needs, the school was proactive and professional in seek a collaborative course of action. These meetings often included a meeting room filled with professional each seeking to help my child, amidst the many in the school. In a district of over 3500 students, they are focusing on my **one** child! As a mother of many children, I get how it can be challenging to really focus on the one, yet how important that is! In my years in this district, I have not run into one "dud" teacher. Not to say that our teachers are perfect - to expect them to be more than human is inhumane. However, they are passionate about helping each individual child learn in the way that that child learns.

This year, the district's number one initiative is to create a climate of empathy in our schools. I understand that this is a proactive approach. My background in computer science has trained me to approach problems in a process oriented, data driven manner. And right now, I am having a hard time understanding a few things:

- 1 Problem - My first question: what is the problem that this initiative is trying to solve? I understand that recently there have been more racial and even religious incidents, however when asked exactly how many there are, the number of incidents ranges from 3-10. As a rough estimate, If we have had 35 students involved, this represents one one hundredth of our overall district population. That means 99% of the students are not exhibiting issues in this area, or they already have a way to resolve the issue such that it does not merit priority one initiative. I understand and feel these problems are

important to address. However, why is our current system not sufficient? Why do these problems call for a priority one district wide strategic initiative? Again I'm simply interested in the data that these decisions were based on.

2 CRC and community support Survey - Where is the report from the March survey? These are important results to help us understand parent perspective. Furthermore, I don't understand why we have begun so much work on this initiative prior to receiving the results of the survey or even the CRC report itself. Again, where is the data to support the decision?

3 Training program and Implementation Curriculum - Has training curriculum to ensure best practices in helping us go about this sensitive subject matter been appropriately vetted? Based on the information in the board materials regarding the teacher training - I am concerned.

In August and last week our teachers took part in professional development days. The August training was led by an individual strongly affiliated with an organization called the National SEED project.

Seed has good intent to **“to drive...societal change toward greater equity and diversity. “they seek to connect our lives to one another and to society at large by acknowledging systems of oppression, power, and privilege.”** These intentions initially seem to create empathy.

Additionally founding principles of Seed include white privilege, and then added male privilege and even heterosexual couple privilege, etc. They want the educate the members of these varying groups to recognize their “unearned advantage, which can also be described as exemption from discrimination.”

If I understand this correctly, this training will build a culture of empathy by teaching our children and teachers that they or their peers are inherently flawed and oppressive if they are white, male or even have heterosexual parents?

To me this sounds like it can quickly turn into a subliminal shaming curriculum: White children are flawed because they are white. Our sons, husbands and brothers are flawed because they are men. Our children of heterosexual parents are flawed because they have a mother and a father in the home.

This discourages unity and divides children of all races, genders and homelife situation. It is divisive and confusing. This will plant destructive seeds of doubt, resentment and inadequacy that will tear at the identity and self esteem of all children.

This curriculum seems to want to first break down our students and teachers - to recognize their flawed natures because of their identity. Because, it is not until they recognize how oppressive they are can they actually even be compassionate, kind or respectful.

The message is confusing. It can quickly shift from collaboration and understanding, to simply tearing down one group in order to elevate another. We know from our gut instincts and history this never works for any group. It only leads to long term, ugly results.

It is true, I will never know what it feels like to be a native american man, or the child of homosexual parents. Nor will anyone ever know what it like to walk the path that I have walked. Yet, our focus should be on building up all people by applying and continuing to work on time tested virtues of love, kindness, respect and compassion for all people.

This philosophy does not seem to be based on time tested virtues, and thereby, is somewhat of a social experiment on our children. I do not wish my children to be involved in a social experiment. It is far, far beyond the scope of public education.

There are other curriculums in the realm of character education that can help us to achieve the goal of having an empathetic culture in our schools with greater clarity and less risk of damage to everyone's self worth.

In conclusion, I would ask that you please

- 1 Clarify the problem we are trying to solve**
- 2 Determine valid community feedback**
- 3 Vet a character education program that has been chosen based on extent of the problem we have**

"Based on my years of experience walking our school's halls, attending school functions and interacting with teachers and school professionals, I do feel like the overall climate is one of empathy. It is NOT perfect and it does have it's problems. However, overall my vantage point sees a climate of empathy.

"Nevertheless, my view is limited. If it is indeed found that our schools are or have the potential to be non-empathetic places of learning then yes, let's continue on this strategic initiative with a clear connection to principles that build self esteem in all children and people. But please, continue with care. I ask you to take seriously your responsibility and the public trust to use our community tax dollars responsibly and to educate our children.

Thank you."

---End of my comments from 4/25/17 BOE meeting

On Thu, Apr 27, 2017 at 9:42 AM, Ray Lechner <lechnerr@wilmette39.org> wrote:

Hello Emily,

Thank you for asking questions at Monday's Board meeting. This email is a follow up to your questions regarding our recent work concerning Empathy.

Wilmette District 39 shared the strategic goal "School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy" in the fall. Here is a portion of our strategic plan document in which we explain the current situation and the reason for this goal:

School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy	
Situation	<p>There is a need to better develop empathy, instill respect, and promote acceptance of responsibility within our school communities. Currently, debates regarding the difference between social conflict and bullying are occurring among a variety of people in and out of the educational setting. Potentially, some situations defined as "bullying" could actually be incidences of typical social conflict for the age group. Education of all stakeholders is in this an area for District 39 and continued efforts should be made in developing a common understanding.</p> <p>The district takes cases of bullying seriously and investigates all reports of bullying. In particular, there have been increased reports of before/after school incidences, racial and/or religious tension, and social conflicts/bullying within social media settings. These incidences are known to have an impact on student attendance as it contributes to social avoidance. Therefore, proactive measures need to be made in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.</p>

Our focus is on developing empathy for all members of our school community, staff, students, and parents. There is ***no*** training "curriculum," rather discussions and learning around ***many*** topics such as social conflict, bullying & teasing, social avoidance, diversity among people, and inclusiveness. We want to increase diversity awareness and to encourage the use of empathy as a way to address these

topics that contribute to the school community and culture.

Currently, we have developed a draft of an Inclusivity Statement. D39 has a long history of embracing inclusion. Some of our earliest work involved special education and supporting children with IEPs in the general education classroom. The special education inclusion work D39 spearheaded 20 years ago, is common practice in schools across the nation today.

The draft Inclusivity statement is intended to enhance the communication of our district beliefs as reflected in the district's mission statement: District 39's mission is to nurture, guide, and challenge students to become creative thinkers, collaborators, and socially responsible, compassionate, and productive citizens of a global society. We plan to share a draft (not a final product) publicly in June, or next fall.

Questions: "When will the CRC parent survey results be made available?"

"Why is the district addressing this initiative prior to the CRC's work?"

"What is the context and structure of the conversations among staff, students, and parents?"

Response:

The Community Review Committee will be presenting to the board at the June Board Meeting. At this meeting, they will share a report on the work this year which would include the results of the parent survey. District 39 is working with CRC by being proactive in contributing to the learning process for our staff. However, the CRC report will provide us information that the district will consider when outlining our next steps.

For teachers:

During the August Institute Day, Pat Savage-Williams spoke about engaging in conversations about race, inclusion, and diversity, and preparing ourselves to do so while recognizing our own feelings involved. The audience was D39 staff only and focused more on introspection rather than strategies for students. We are learning together about the world around us.

At our grades 5-8 Teacher Professional Day in April, we held book talks in many different topic areas:

- *Whistling Vivaldi* - Stereotyping and how it affects what we do
- *The Power of Resilience* - How to foster resilience in ourselves and our students
- *Empathy, Why it Matters and How to Get It* - Why empathy is important
- *The Homework Myth* - The purpose of homework
- *The Other Wes Moore* - Fostering high expectations for all students

We also talked about strategies that we could use to help students *if/when* conversations start. Some of these strategies came from Teaching Tolerance and include strategies such as talking circles, checking in with students before/during/after conversations, and teaching students strategies (like keeping their hands down while others are talking) so they have time to listen and think about what others are contributing to conversations. The rest of the day was devoted to grades 5-8 curricular team meeting and having discussions about curriculum, instruction and technology.

For students:

The only curriculum resources used by teachers district-wide is Second Step. Second Step is the social emotional learning resource that we have used for many years. Here is a link for more information:

<http://www.cfchildren.org/second-step>

This year, all that the D39 schools did was to engage students in promoting kindness and connections. The culture of empathy strategic goal goes beyond diversity in terms of race, religion, and gender identity. It is about developing an understanding of one another and promoting inclusivity. Again, there is no curriculum, but a way to help each other be aware and better understand differences.

Regarding SEED PROJECT question:

Although the speaker at the teacher institute day and a couple of Parent Night panelists may be affiliated with SEED, these events were ***not*** SEED sponsored events.

SEED is not our focus, but the group is knowledgeable about and emphasizes holding conversations around inclusivity, diversity and equity. We are not opposed to the organization's goals, however, we have no plans to establish an ongoing professional development partnership with SEED.

Here is more information: <https://nationalseedproject.org/about-us/about-seed>.

Thanks,

Ray

Raymond Lechner, Ph.D.
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools
[847-512-6030](tel:847-512-6030)

Hello Jenny,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 11, 2017, at 10:53 AM, jenny.zhang12015@gmail.com wrote:

Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

I want to thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy. Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. We hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. We hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year.

Sincerely,

Ling-Jenny Zhang

Laura,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
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On May 10, 2017, at 5:19 PM, Laura Smith <laura.ie.smith@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

Thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. I appreciate your action on topics that matter deeply to a healthy and safe culture. Ours is a community with an abundance of privilege and, sometimes, a shortage of perspective (as evidenced in some comments in opposition to the initiative at the last board meeting).

I support your work in Creating a Culture of Empathy. I hope the opposition is seen for what it is; evidence for the need of greater development of empathy in our community. Carry on!

Sincerely,
Laura Smith

Hello,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 10, 2017, at 9:07 AM, Matthew W Krupski <mkrupski@sbcglobal.net> wrote:

Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

I was recently made aware of District 39's Empathy Initiative and some opposition that was raised at a recent board meeting. As a parent of four current District 39 students, please know that the opposition does not speak for me and what I imagine is the silent majority. I support your efforts to shape well rounded, kind, conscientious, and considerate students. I think this initiative will complement the other excellent non-academic teachings (second-step, the development of growth mindset, and the focus on mindfulness) that our students currently receive.

Sincerely,
Matt Krupski

Hello,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 10, 2017, at 10:35 AM, Wang Suning <wsuningnju@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Lechner and Members of the Board of Education,

I want to thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy. Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. We hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. We hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year.

Sincerely,

Suning (Parent of student in Harper)

Hello Kate,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.

Thanks,



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 9, 2017, at 10:17 PM, Kate Kustermann Rivera
<KATEKUSTERMANN@msn.com> wrote:

Dear Dr Lechner and District 39 Board members -

I want to thank you for developing the 2016-2017 strategic initiative 'School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy'. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy. Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children, so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. I sincerely hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. I hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year.

Best regards,
Kate Rivera
(Harper school)

Hello Chip,

I appreciate your sharing this personal information, as well as your support for our efforts. Please know, that we are moving forward.

At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update, on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.

Thanks,



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
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On May 10, 2017, at 7:47 AM, Chip Hinshaw <chabuhi@gmail.com> wrote:
To the District 39 School Board of Wilmette:

I'm not sure why anyone would be opposed to their children learning how to treat one another with respect, but I'll offer my two cents on why this program needs to continue forward:

- 1 My daughter, Kaelyn, goes by the nickname KK.
- 2 Certain classmates call her "KKK".
- 3 Kaelyn is bi-racial.

I would have expected this sort of thing 35 years ago when I grew up here. That it's happening in the year 2017 is pretty pathetic. The program is needed, and perhaps the parents of those students should be made to attend with their children.

- Chip Hinshaw

Good Morning Hiranda,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.

Thanks,



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 9, 2017, at 10:42 PM, Donoghue, Hiranda

<hiranda.donoghue@walgreens.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

As a parent of two of the few biracial children in District 39, I want to thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy. Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. We hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. We hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year.

My husband and I chose Wilmette because of the quality of the schools and the character of the community. I am deeply saddened that 20-30 of my neighbors felt the need to go to you to oppose the empathy initiative.

Kind regards,

Hiranda S. Donoghue

Director and Managing Counsel, M&A Legal

Walgreen Co. | 104 Wilmot Road, MS#1446, Deerfield, IL 60015

Telephone 847 315 4399 | Mobile 224 723 0219

hiranda.donoghue@walgreens.com

Hello,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.

Thanks,



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Superintendent
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On May 9, 2017, at 9:20 PM, Jill Antolini <jillantolini@sbcglobal.net> wrote:
Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

I want to thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy. Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. We hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. We hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year.

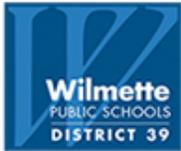
Sincerely,

Jill Antolini
Harper Parent

Good morning,

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.

Thanks,



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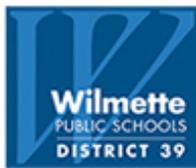
On May 9, 2017, at 6:06 PM, Girisha Chandraraj <girishaandsarah@me.com> wrote:
Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

Thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. This initiative is very important to me as a D39 parent. I appreciate your attentiveness to diversity and inclusion, and to creating a mindset and environment that I believe is critical to our children's sense of safety, well-being and developing self-esteem, as well as to their development into professionals and global citizens that make positive contributions and connections. I was able to attend your Dec. 6 building empathy panel discussion, which I found to be thoughtful and productive. I strongly support this initiative and hope it will continue annually, building on what you learn.

Sincerely,

Sarah Chandraraj

Thank you for expressing your support toward our strategic initiative. At the June 19th Board Meeting there will be a CRC report summarizing findings/recommendations. Additionally, there will be a separate Strategic Plan update on this topic. Our plan moving forward, will be to continue this work, using the CRC report as guidance.



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On May 9, 2017, at 2:45 PM, Stephanie Khanna <stephanie.khanna@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Lechner and members of the Board of Education,

I want to thank you for your thoughtful contribution to the 2016-2017 Strategic Initiative - School Climate: Creating a Culture of Empathy. Every student benefits from teaching kindness and empathy. Bullying because of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity is especially damaging to children so thank you for opening conversations and crafting tactics to prevent it from occurring in the future. We hope there is an overall reduction of bullying and an increase in respect and responsibility to continually improve the school climate. We hope this initiative will continue annually, building upon what is learned each academic year.

Sincerely,
Stephanie and Rajeev Khanna
Parents to Aiden (3rd) and Avani (1st) Khanna- Harper Elementary School