

## **PREFACE**

**After several attempts at submitting this op-ed and contacting the editor of a local paper, I realized that I was being ignored. It was not so much that my op-ed was so important, it was the unjust, unAmerican feeling of being censored that bothered me most. Coming off the heels of a school board election where some had free range to advocate for their positions, as well as defame and demean their opponents - the very same people who advocate for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion by the way - and then when the attacked defended themselves, the forums were shut down. It was a disheartening experience. My hope is that public forums will open again for debate and discussions and people will feel free to continue to ask questions, to make suggestions, and to advocate for our children. Bad ideas will fall on their own, there is no need to censor. In the meantime, I keep this quote in mind, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."**

**Sincerely,**

**Bethany Berk**

## **OP-ED:**

### **Navigating the Challenges of DEI Initiatives in Public Education, K-12**

**In today's public schools, a wave of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives has permeated every aspect of our children's education. One of the most alarming consequences of the DEI initiatives is the gradual replacement of traditional academics with a focus on social-psychology and identity politics.**

**Social Emotional Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Comprehensive Health Education have taken center stage, while core academics and traditional grading are losing their significance in the face of data-driven systems. These new education models are just a few pieces of a convoluted puzzle of overlapping programs.**

**Programs like Portrait of a Graduate, Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child, (WSCC), Challenge Success, sustainability initiatives and the equity audit work to reinforce the DEI narrative. These initiatives cloaked in the language of welcoming, inclusivity and diversity have now set their sights on expanding into school-family and school-community “partnerships.”**

**Unfortunately, these programs are experimental, as they lack evidence or studies to support their claims, leaving parents overwhelmed and unsure about their effectiveness. As parents delve deeper into these initiatives and discover their political and philosophical underpinnings, questions arise regarding the use of these frameworks and the proper role of K-12 public schools.**

**Fundamental questions have been overshadowed and the answer to the most pressing question about the effect of these changes in academics is still unknown. The system's focus on DEI has created an environment in which the pursuit of academic excellence is seen as morally inferior and the administration's boilerplate answers are frustratingly opaque and full of jargon.**

**Compounding the problem, the funds feeding the bureaucratic machinery behind these changes are self-sustaining, prioritizing its own interests over the concerns and well-being of families and local communities. Furthermore, school committees align with these bureaucratic institutions and are composed of attorneys, DEI specialists, political activists, and well-intentioned but misguided individuals who dismiss dissenting voices, suggesting that those who disagree should leave.**

**In light of all this, it has become necessary to engage further with our public schools, to continue to ask questions, and learn about the laws that protect our constitutional and civil rights, and more importantly provide our children with supplementary education, alternative viewpoints, and critical thinking skills that will inoculate them from indoctrination into esoteric, political ideologies posing as academics.**

**We must recognize the erosion of academic programs in our public schools and the risks of the encroachment of DEI initiatives into our family and community life. By actively engaging in our children's education by challenging the DEI narrative and setting healthy boundaries, we can reclaim the purpose of K-12 public education and ensure a brighter future for our children.**