

The Anderson News

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Ben Carlson • Publisher
P.O. Box 410 • Lawrenceburg, KY 40342
(502) 839-6906 • Fax (502) 839-3118
bcarlson@theandersonnews.com

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To: Superintendent Sheila Mitchell
Anderson County School Board members
All members of each site-based decision making council

From: Ben Carlson and Christian Marnon
The Anderson News

Below you'll find questions posed for an upcoming news article in The Anderson News. We thank each of you in advance for your time and consideration.

The questions are based on documents produced by the Kentucky Department of Education.

We've provided a printed PDF of each.

The first is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Our Schools, produced by Thomas Woods-Tucker, deputy commissioner and chief equity officer, office of teaching and learning. We will refer to it as document one.

The second is Guidance on How Districts Can Facilitate Conversations About Race-based Stress and Trauma. We will refer to it as document two.

Along with questions derived directly from those documents, we are requesting supporting materials. To expedite this process, we ask that material to be provided via thumb drive or email if possible. Materials such as books that are not able to be provided electronically, we ask be made available for public inspection.

If an open records request is required to accompany the request for these materials, please let us know and we will gladly provide such a request.

Our plan is to produce a news article in the Sept. 8, 2021 edition of The Anderson News to let our readers know how you respond to these questions, including if you choose not to respond. We ask that we receive responses to each question from one specific person, and to have that person's name attributed to each response. To have responses included in that article, we need them no later than noon, Friday, Sept. 3. Please note that if we file open record requests for supporting material, that information will be included in subsequent reporting.

Because we are providing this package of material to Superintendent Mitchell, each member of the Anderson County Board of Education and each member of each school's site-based councils, we welcome feedback and comments from anyone wishing to respond. Please note we delivered a printed package for each site-based council member listed on the middle school's website, which listed the names of

those from 2019-20. If there has been replacements, please ensure they receive a copy of this package. We would ask that those wishing to comment do so by the noon, Friday, Sept. 3 deadline.

Questions

Document one, page four

The final bullet point says "Educators, schools and districts must commit to listening to those seeking to be heard and to ensure that young people of color feel valued and safe in school and the community."

What specific steps has the district or its site-based councils made to ensure young people of color feel valued and safe in school? If those steps have not been taken, why not?

Document one, page six

The final bullet point calls for acknowledgment that "diversity, equity, inclusion and social emotional learning are all drivers within our curriculum — they should go hand in hand with teaching and learning."

Has the district or any of its site-based councils acknowledged this? If so, how has it been acknowledged? If not, why hasn't it been?

Has the district or any of its site-based councils implemented in its "teaching and learning" diversity, equity, inclusion and social emotional learning? If so, please provide specific examples to including training documents, documents, videos or other medium used in classrooms. If not, why not.

Document one, page 10

Under subheading for inclusivity, the page mentions critical pedagogy, an educational philosophy linked to Paulo Freire and others that incorporates elements from fields like the human rights movement, civil rights movement, disability rights movement, indigenous rights movement, postmodern theory, feminist theory, postcolonial theory and queer theory. It has also been used to connect social or political change directly to education.

Has critical pedagogy or any of its elements been incorporated in any curriculum by the district or any of its site-based councils?

If so, in what specific courses of study has it been incorporated. Please provide specific examples (pages from texts, videos, web addresses, etc.).

Has it been incorporated into training for staff? If so, please provide specific examples (pages from texts, videos, web addresses, etc.).

If not officially incorporated, are any teachers using any aspects of it as part of their teaching philosophy? If so, in which specific courses of study and specifically which teachers?

If this has not been incorporated into the curriculum or is not being used as part of any teaching philosophy, why not?

Document one, page 13

This page discusses KDE's "racial toolkit." Has that toolkit been provided to the district? If so, how is it being used or implemented? If not, why not? Please provide a copy of all components of that tool kit.

Document one, page 15

This page asks if the district has an Equality and Inclusion Action Plan or is equity included in your district's strategic plan?

Does the district have either? If so, please provide copies of those plans or plans. If not, why not?

Document one, page 18

The first bullet point says "Most of our students are Caucasian and need exposure to more diversity and assistance with

unintentional biases." Do you think that applies to the Anderson County school district? If so, why? If not, why not?

Document 2, page one

The third paragraph says KDE believes that conversations about racial trauma and implicit bias are needed across Kentucky regardless of the racial makeup in our schools.

Has the district, its site-based councils or staff initiated those types of conversations? If not, why not?

If so, please provide specific examples of literature, training, web addresses or other materials provided to teachers and staff to direct those conversations.

Document 2, page one

The sixth bullet point on that page calls for the creation of a "safe space" for dialogue. Has the district or any of its site-based councils created such a space?

Have such spaces been created outside of the approval of the district or its site-based councils?

If not, why not?

If so, provide any training documents, literature, web addresses or other medium used to facilitate that dialogue and/or train staff to lead such dialogue.

The seventh bullet point calls for students and staff to "learn about and acknowledge our own biases and seek to grow by participating in training in equity and diversity, implicit bias, cultural responsiveness, cultural humility and anti-racism."

Has the district or its site-based councils put in place programs, literature, videos or any other means to have staff and students acknowledge their own biases? If not, why not?

If so, please provide any training documents, literature, web addresses or other medium used to facilitate that learning.

The 10th bullet point calls for the district to "teach how to be an upstander when racism is witnessed." Has that teaching been done? If so, please provide any training documents, literature, web addresses or other medium used to facilitate that training. If not, why not?

The 12th bullet point calls for schools to "Begin efforts to implement an anti-racism framework in your school or classroom." Has the district or its site-based councils taken any steps to implement this? If not, why not? If so, please provide any training documents, literature, web addresses or other medium used to facilitate that implementation.