

Jason Golden  
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Williamson County Schools Superintendent

Superintendent Golden,

Over the past few months my husband and I have become very concerned about the new ELA curriculum, Wit & Wisdom, that has been implemented this school year for our 2<sup>nd</sup> grader at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary. He is currently in the online class. The new curriculum has a high intensity focus on race that is highly inappropriate for 7- and 8-year-old children. We are a bi-racial family, Asian and White. This class has been very harmful to our son's identify and self-esteem. Our son never questioned his race or identity until this curriculum. Now, he tells us that he isn't American, he isn't white. He is Thai. He is ashamed of his white half.

I have shared my concerns with Principal \_\_\_\_\_. She assured me that she would share my concerns with her superiors. I continue to see no change in the curriculum and no additional communication from the school or administration.

The story of Dr. King and his 'I have a Dream' speech is beautiful and uplifting. This is the world that our child lived in until now. He was color blind. But this Wit & Wisdom curriculum has changed that. It is far more harmful than helpful. It depresses him. It is dark and divisive. It paints a picture of a world with only white and black people. It paints a picture of poor black people being attacked by evil white people. Our child is only shown evidence of how evil white people are to black people and Native Americans. Some of the stories that his class spent months reviewing and studying include:

- The Story of Ruby Bridges, the first black student to integrate New Orleans public schools. The aggressive white mob held signs with ugly words protesting her presence.
- The young high schoolers who went to eat at a white only diner and were refused service and attacked with boiling coffee down their backs and ketchup thrown in their faces.
- White firemen in Birmingham sprayed young black kids against a wall with hoses ripping off their clothes and leaving bruises on their bodies.

During the initial presentation of Ruby Bridges' story the teacher asked my son, "How would you feel if you were Ruby?" My son responded, "I would be happy to be with 3 hitmen to protect me." The teacher pressed, "No, how did Ruby feel?". My son responded, "She was sad and nervous to meet the new teacher". Again, this was not the answer the teacher was looking for. She went on to ask another student. On a Flex-Day our son was assigned to read the story about the high schoolers who were attacked and refused service in a diner. We read it together. His response was "this story is so sad".

This content has been used for months to teach reading, writing and analysis. These are very dark topics for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to spend the majority of their time learning. This has been going on

for weeks and weeks and now months. It is depressing. Our son is not getting anything out of this other than the shame of being half white. He has come to hate his class and his school because of this curriculum being allowed in a second-grade classroom. It is certainly not age appropriate for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to learn this content at this young age. With the proper context this content could be appropriate for middle schoolers or high schoolers, who have a far greater level of maturity to consider and evaluate past injustices based on our present-day values.

We demand that this curriculum cease immediately. We expect 2<sup>nd</sup> graders to learn basic educational concepts and not be force fed story after story of racial aggressions and evils committed in the past. This is not how we create a better world for our children. This curriculum only highlights race and creates further division among the new generation. We want our child to be colorblind and value people for who they are and not the color of their skin or for past evils and mistakes committed by other people in history. We want a program that unites people, not one that divides people into categories.

We have spoken with and read social media comments from other WCS parents that also have issues with the new curriculum across elementary grade levels. It seems like the majority feel the curriculum is repetitive and moves too slowly to hold the attention of students in K-1 and addresses topics inappropriate for grade levels 2-5. When inappropriate, depressing topics continue for weeks, they negatively impact our students as we have directly experienced. Life for students during COVID has been depressing enough.

Mr. Golden, we ask that you set up either an in-person or a zoom meeting with us, the principal, school board representative, and an appropriate person in charge of curriculum, so we can discuss how to prevent future harm from this curriculum. We would also like to invite additional parents with whom we have spoken to join us as well so you can hear from parents across grade levels. We believe that together we can solve this issue. We look forward to hearing from you or your assistant regarding a meeting. Thank you for your time and attention to this most important matter that affects not only our child, but so many young children in our school system.

Best Regards,

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