

Date : 9/29/2017 12:15:25 PM

From : "Denise Patterson"

To : "Lauren Rosenfeld"

Cc : "Shaunda Sandford" , "Denise Patterson" , "Patricia Griffin" , "James Lee" , "Joyce Brown" , "Martha Geitner"

Subject : Re: Bree Newsome

Good Afternoon Ms. Rosenfeld,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and concerns. We appreciate and value your feedback.Â Â

As part of its collaboration with Asheville Middle School (â€œAMSâ€), Americans Who Tell the Truth (â€œAWTTâ€), a project that, through portraits and narratives, highlights citizens who address issues of social, environmental and economic fairness, informed AMS that the author of *Hidden Figures*, Margot Lee Shetterly, would be available to speak with the eighth-grade class on September 29, 2017. *Hidden Figures* is the non-fiction, biographical novel and recent motion picture which chronicles the lives of three African American women working at NASA during the space race in the early 1960s.Â Â Â Â

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In preparation for Ms. Shetterlyâ€™s visit to AMS, eighth graders attended a screening of *Hidden Figures* and copies of the novel were purchased for eighth graders to read.Â In addition,Â using *Hidden Figures* as its primary text, AMS aligned its curriculum with AWTT to implement a Paideia project.Â The project resulted in students learning about active citizenship and their future selves.Â Additionally, several students created portraits of local heroes that will be displayed at the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville.

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Late this summer, AWTT notified AMS that Ms. Shetterly had a scheduling conflict and would not be available to speak at AMS on September 29th.Â Â As an alternative to Ms. Shetterly,Â AWTT invited Bree Newsome; she was not invited by Asheville City Schools.Â Ms. Newsome is a filmmaker, speaker and activist from Charlotte, North Carolina.Â In July 2015, Ms. Newsome was arrested in Columbia, South Carolina for removing the Confederate battle flag that was on display on the grounds of the South Carolina State House.

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School Board Policy 3535 states that the involvement of any visiting speaker regarding citizenship issues must be â€œcorrectly structuredâ€ by the schoolâ€™s professional staff.Â The policy also states that the advocacy of illegal acts by a speaker is not permitted.Â This Paideia project was specifically based upon Ms. Shetterlyâ€™s novel and its themes regarding citizenship.Â The policy strikes a balance between the vital role of our schools in exposing students to differing viewpoints with the need to present those viewpoints within the school curriculum.Â Â Given these considerations, the Asheville City Schools declined the offer of Ms. Newsome to participate as an alternative to Ms. Shetterly.Â

We greatly appreciate your time to express your thoughts and commitment to Asheville City Schools.

Educationally yours,Â

Dr. Denise Q. Patterson

Superintendent

Asheville City Schools
85 Mountain Street
Asheville, NC 28801

Office: Â 828.350.6145

Fax: Â Â 828.232.4185

On Fri, Sep 29, 2017 at 8:49 AM, Lauren Rosenfeld <lauren@lgrosenfeld.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. Patterson and Ms. Sanford,

I am writing to ask that Asheville City Schools reconsider their decision to disallow Bree Newsome from speaking at Asheville Middle School and ultimately reconsider the policy that would bar her from speaking at any of Asheville's schools.Â

Though Asheville City Schools' official policy bars speakers from advocating the breaking of laws, certainly there needs to be a reconsideration of the unequivocal language with which that policy is written, so that the policy would make an exception for acts of civil disobedience, the aim of which is to draw attention to unjust laws that reinforce oppressive systems.Â

Ms. Newsome took down the flag at the South Carolina Statehouse fully prepared to be arrested and in doing so, she stands on the shoulders of civil rights giants. It should also be noted that her disobeying the law in the name of justice led to the legal removal of that flag. She is a hero and a role model.

I believe it is important for our students to realize that being engaged citizens of our world, our country, our state, and our city means not only showing up at the voting booth, it means taking a stand for justice -- especially when the injustice is being perpetrated by the very government that was established to serve and protect us all equally.Â

Thank you for taking the time to listen and I hope that this issue will be reconsidered for future speakers, who, like Ms. Newsome, represent the courage it takes to move our society in the direction of true justice and equality.

Most sincerely,
Lauren Rosenfeld
(Mother of four children who have proudly gratefully attended Asheville City Schools)