

Date : 9/27/2017 2:49:15 PM

From : "Shaunda Sandford"

To : "House Fairies"

Cc : "april.dockery@ashevillecityschools.net" , "Shaunda Sandford" , "Patricia Griffin" , "Joyce Brown" , "Martha Geitner" , "James Lee"

Subject : Re: Poor example AMS disinviting Bree Newsam!

Ms. Hammond,

Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns. We value your feedback and we understand how this contributes to strong school communities as well as the success of our students.

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.

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In preparation for Ms. Shetterly's visit to AMS, eighth graders attended a screening of *Hidden Figures* and copies of the novel were purchased for eighth graders to read. In addition, using *Hidden Figures* as its primary text, AMS aligned its curriculum with AWTT to implement a Paideia project. The project resulted in students learning about active citizenship and their future selves. 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. As an alternative to Ms. Shetterly, AWTT invited Bree Newsome; she was not invited by Asheville City Schools. Ms. Newsome is a filmmaker, speaker and activist from Charlotte, North Carolina. 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 "correctly structured" by the school's professional staff. The policy also states that the advocacy of illegal acts by a speaker is not permitted. This Paideia project was specifically based upon Ms. Shetterly's novel and its themes regarding citizenship. 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. Given these considerations, the Asheville City Schools declined the offer of Ms. Newsome to participate as an alternative to Ms. Shetterly.

Thank you again for your passion and commitment to Asheville City Schools, and I hope we can all work together to ensure the success of all students.

Best,

Shaunda

On Tue, Sep 26, 2017 at 7:48 PM, House Fairies <[ashevillehousefairies@gmail.com](mailto:ashevillehousefairies@gmail.com)> wrote:

Â This is shocking. I got to see Bree Newsam speak last year --it is such a shame to hear that kids who could be grappling with how to transform feelings about injustices they or others face into concrete action for positive progression. This action to disinvite is utterly scary, dangerous and disappointing. Â I do not support this decision it is not on alignment with the Asheville Community or what I thought AMS was. As parent of an eighth grader at Asheville Middle I am utterly disappointed. Â

Jacquelyn Hammond

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**Shaunda Sandford**  
**Board Chair**  
**Asheville City Schools**  
**cell: 828-273-9445**

**"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."**

