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From : "Eric Howard"
To : "Eric Howard"

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 ofÂ *Hidden Figures*, Margot Lee Shetterly, would be available to speak with the eighth-grade class onÂ September 29, 2017.Â Â *Hidden FiguresÂ* 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 ofÂ *Hidden FiguresÂ* and copies of the novel were purchased for eighth graders to read.Â In addition,Â usingÂ *Hidden Figures*Â 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 onÂ 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

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