Date : 9/29/2017 5:24:10 PM
From : "Denise Patterson"
To : "Shaunda Sandford" , "Martha Geitner" , "Joyce Brown" , "James Lee" , "Patricia Griffin"

Two events within the last week have reminded us how important the community is to our schools, and how important the schools are to our community.

Last Friday, the principal of Asheville Middle School was unable to allow a guest speaker's offer to meet with 8th grade students. The principal made that decision based on the curriculum activities previously planned and a review of the policy again. We were later informed that the original speaker could not attend and another speaker would instead be available. After reviewing the policy again, we determined that the new speaker did not align with our policy currently in place.

Aided by social media, the communityâ€™s response was swift. By the day of our School Board Meeting this week, the administration and board members were hearing about the community concerns.

In an ideal world, that issue of the guest speaker would have been the only news to rally our community this week. In an ideal world, within this past week we could have deliberated on the topic, and either reaffirmed the decision and the interpretations of policy, or revisited the decision and extended an invitation to reschedule with Bree Newsome during her visit to Asheville.

It is with deep sadness that we remind the community that, instead, Asheville Middle School, our entire system, Asheville Catholic School, and our wider community was crushed this week by the tragic death of an Asheville Middle School student and an Asheville Catholic School student, and the serious injury of an Asheville High student--all three of whom are the children of a beloved Asheville Middle School teacher.

We are forever indebted to the community for its show of support to the surviving family, and the students, faculty, and staff of Asheville Middle School.

With regard to policy and public engagement, the school board stands committed to collaborating with the public, and to working with our administration, faculty, staff, students, and the stakeholders to revisit decisions and policies in a timely manner. Our first priority is meeting the needs of the students, and this week their well-being in the aftermath of tragedy really needed our focus and attention.

Moving forward, we ask that the community continue being engaged and passionate about their dedication and interest in our school district.

We will be revisiting the policies regarding the conduct and message of guest speakers on an upcoming board agenda for board review. The public notices will be sent so that the community can participate.

Thank you, again, for your continued dedication to Asheville City Schools.

Educationally yours,Â

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