

McLaughlin Middle School

Formal investigative report regarding: The Use of Unauthorized Instructional Materials

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INTRODUCTION

This report includes information derived from an investigation into the unauthorized use of staff instructional materials from a training on Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) that was sponsored by Great Schools Partnership. Specifically, it was alleged that an 8th Grade English/Language Arts Teacher at McLaughlin Middle School (Teacher) gave students a packet of materials that included a section entitled *Cultural Fluency 2.0 Microaggressions*. In this packet, on the page following the Surface, Snorkel, Scuba exercise, was a page that included *the Wheel of Power and Privilege*.

PRELIMINARY FACTS

The complaint that gave rise to this investigation was first brought to the attention of administration on May 1, 2025. Specifically, Kelly Williams received a call from a parent alleging that a teacher had given a lesson on white privilege and that students were told to fill out *The Wheel of Power and Privilege* as a wrap up to the district approved holocaust unit. The parents' complaint was that this activity was inappropriate and offensive and made their student uncomfortable, making them think that they should feel a type of shame because they are white and therefore have more influence in society.

In response to this complaint, the Superintendent of Schools and Human Resources were immediately notified, and the decision was made to launch an official investigation into this matter. The staff member involved was then notified of the investigation by Human Resources. As a precaution, the remaining leftover Microaggression packets were removed from the classroom. An example of the packet that a student handed in as well as an example of what students think microaggressions were collected as a part of this investigation.

INVESTIGATION PROCESS

1. The following person(s) were assigned to investigate this matter.

.Kelly Williams

2. The following person(s) were assigned as process observers in this matter.

Erin Murphy

3. Persons Interviewed:

- a. Five (5) students, including at least one from each period, were selected to be interviewed. For confidentiality purposes, the students interviewed have been assigned a number rather than using their full names or initials.
- b. The 8th Grade English/Language Arts Teacher at McLaughlin Middle School.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

8th Grade English Language Arts Teacher:

The Teacher disclosed that she was a “train the trainer” educator that worked with Great Schools Partnership to train Manchester School District Staff on Microaggressions in the months leading up to the complaint. The Teacher indicated that she had participated in the training during a February vacation Professional Development (PD) opportunity and then gave the training to staff on the March 2025 PD day. The Teacher indicated she had many extra copies of the packets on Cultural Fluency: Microaggressions 2.0.

The Teacher indicated that on the date in question, students were wrapping up the holocaust unit and it became apparent that there were a lot of sayings and slurs being used every day by students who don’t necessarily know the origin or meaning of the sayings. The Teacher thought it would be a good mini lesson to close out the Friday before April vacation (as well as the holocaust unit) with some examples of how our words and what we say really matters. The Teacher decided to use the Surface, Snorkel, Scuba activity within the Cultural Fluency packet that was given to staff with the students in her class. The Teacher intended the materials to be used as a personal reflection exercise for students to really understand what it means to make a microaggression towards someone, even if you think they are your friend. This exercise was not going to be graded or reviewed by the Teacher. It was just to get students to self-reflect. The directions at the end of the assignment were to turn the packet into the teacher.

While many just did the Surface, Scuba, Snorkel activity, others chose to move on in the packet, and this is where they found *The Wheel of Power and Privilege*. It is unknown how many students reviewed the section entitled *The Wheel of Power and Privilege*, as the Teacher disposed of the packets once the class was over.

The Teacher indicated there were 3 different class periods where the packet was distributed. The fourth class is a self-contained classroom where the students were doing an alternative assignment. These students were not given the packet, nor the context of the lesson. Approximately 60 students were exposed to the packet on Cultural Fluency

2.0 including *The Wheel of Power and Privilege*. The materials were not used in any other classes or shared with any other students beyond that single school day.

Student #1/Period C

KW: Bring yourself back to Thursday before vacation, can you tell me what you guys worked on in language arts class?

S1: The Micro aggression lesson?

I heard that there were parents complaining about it. I didn't think it was bad, I didn't think that much of it. I was confused that there were complaints about it.

KW: What was the discussion in class?

S1: she was saying microaggressions and to see if people thought they were offensive.

KW: What was the activity that you did?

S1: It was an optional thing where you could write about yourself and if you ever had microaggressions. There was a wheel, closer to the middle, more privileged. We were not told to do the wheel. She didn't say we had to do it. She said she wouldn't be taking it, it was for you to look at. Given the packet, in the packet we were supposed to look at the surface, snorkel, scuba and you could fill it out if you wanted to. We were looking at each page, when we got to the wheel, if you wanted to see where you were placed on the wheel you could do that.

KW: Were you told to leave the packets in the classroom?

S1: No.

KW: Were a lot of students participating?

S1: Yes, more of the kids who were around her.

KW: Was there any discussion about high school or the holocaust unit?

S1: She explained that this was to end the holocaust unit.

Student #2/Period C

KW: bring yourself back to the Thursday before vacation, you were finishing up the holocaust unit?

S2: yes

KW: Were you given a packet?

S2: Yes

KW: What was the discussion with the packet?

S2: We talked about microaggressionswe were asking questions, different microaggressions could sound like an insult but it could not be or it could be Saying your good at English because of their race could be a microaggression.

KW: Were you given activities from the packet?

S2: We all filled out the wheel, but we were not asked to do so, we watched a bunch of videos and just talked about it.

KW: Shows the surface, snorkel scubawere you asked to do this?

S2: yes

KW: Was she going to collect it?

S2: She said even if you gave it to her she was not going to read it.

KW: What did she say about the wheel?

S2: She didn't say anything, you didn't have to fill it out.

KW: Did she collect the packets after you left or tell you not to take them?

S2: Not sure if she said to collect but didn't care if we took them.

KW: Was this brought up with prepping for high school?

S2: She was hearing people use microaggressions and people didn't know what they were but she also tied it to the holocaust

Student #3/Period E

KW: What activities did you do in language arts class

S3: Microaggressions

KW: How did this come up?

S3: I don't remember

KW: Were you given a packet

S3: Yes

KW: Explain what you went through in the packet and what you were told to do

S3: A lot of people did the wheel on microaggressions

KW: Did she say it was an assignment?

S3: I know the other one was an assignment (KW shows the surface, snorkel, scuba) but I don't think the wheel was an assignment.

KW: Did she say to leave the packets in the room?

S3: She didn't care if we took them.

KW: Was there any discussion about the holocaust with the packet?

S3: I don't remember, I remember watching a video that was on microaggressions

KW: Anything else you remember about this lesson?

S3: People were participating

Student #4/Period E

KW: What activity/lesson did you guys do in language arts

S4: It was about microaggression

KW: How was it introduced?

S4: It went with the holocaust unit, didn't want to start poetry.

We had studied it before with the holocaust and The Hate You Give she said we were going to do a lesson on it.

KW: Were you given a packet?

S4: Yes

KW: What were you told to go to in the packet?

S4: She went through it with us, what a microaggression was, what does it mean.....we went to the wheel of power and went through them and how to address them.

KW: Were you told to fill out the wheel.....?

S4: Yes she said we could circle what applies to us but said she wasn't collecting it, we did the surface, snorkel and scuba activity. She said that she was not going to collect it, she didn't want to make it uncomfortable for anyone.

KW: She didn't say leave the packets?

S4: No she said she didn't want to collect them.

KW: Anything else you want to share

S4: I liked the lesson, it opened my eyes to things we didn't think about, some of the resources in there were a little awkward. She didn't say we needed to share it. It opened my eyes and I hope it opened others.

Student #5/Period H

KW: How was the lesson on microaggressions introduced?

S5: She was very open minded to how we felt about it, she took it easy at first, wasn't overloading us, it is a harsh topic. It can be a harsh truth that people have said before and they aren't made up. She had a packet that we got and a slideshow.

Giving an example of a teacher saying a name wrong, where are you from.

Lists of stuff that have been said.

KW: Were you given activities to do?

S5: We had this power wheel, and you circled what your stance would be....a white male looks more powerful.

KW: What was the discussion on that?

S5: In our world this is how it seems to be.....that if you look at businesses and how they hire you would have a better chance of getting a job.

KW: Did she say you have to fill this out or was it optional?

S5: We were told to fill it out but it wasn't going to be graded.

KW: Were there any other activities?

S5: There were some where there would be a scenario, there was a prompt and you would write how you would feel in the situation....like a teacher calling a student the wrong name repeatedly.

KW: Did she collect the packets?

S5: No

KW: Did she tell you guys not to take them?

S5: She didn't say if we can take them or not

KW: Anything else you want to add?

S5: No

FINDINGS

- The Teacher used unapproved curriculum materials and exposed students to materials that were not designed for students.
- The use of these staff training materials violated Manchester Board of School Committee (BOSC) policies Instruction-101, Instruction-118, and Instruction 141 in that these materials were not part of the BOSC's approved curriculum.
- Although students were not asked or assigned to do the *Wheel of Power and Privilege* exercise, it was reasonably foreseeable that students might go beyond the Surface, Snorkel, Scuba activity and view the materials without proper context or support. As a result, there was at least one student who felt shame as a result of viewing the materials.
- This was an isolated incident and there were no other known instances when such materials were given or shared with students.
- The district did not have permission to use these or share these materials with students.