

To the Editor:

We are writing on behalf of the Unitarian Church of Evanston Racial Equity Action Leadership Planning team and the Unitarian Church of Evanston Ministerial Team, and its Board of Trustees to address the unconscionable racist messages sent to the District 65 School Board and Superintendent. As an Evanston faith community and as the spiritual home to many families with children who attend D65 schools, we feel compelled to speak out against hate and to demonstrate our support for the D65 Board members who are striving to build a school system that values respect, justice, and equity.

We fully support District 65's carefully considered, fully-informed decision to support the D65 students whose need is greatest. We believe their plan is grounded in professionalism, discernment, and a long-term vision of fairness for all students, and will benefit the entire community. Equity in education does not mean the same experience for every student, but that each student is given the specific resources they need to achieve equitable outcomes.

We are appalled at the irresponsible Fox News report from August 6, 2020 that sparked the racist response and threats. This misleading report is a betrayal of the community trust, and it demonstrates a lack of journalistic integrity, a failure of professionalism, and a complete misunderstanding of Evanston's educational needs. It resulted in letters to District 65 Board Members and Superintendent that contained "violent imagery and veiled threats". We believe that Fox News should apologize to the Evanston community and work with the District 65 Board to determine what actions should be taken to address this egregious misuse of information and its unsettling consequences.

Shannon Lang, the mother of a fifth-grader, states: "I fully support Superintendent Horton's and The District 65 School Board's return to school plan. I know that putting the needs of our students most in need is the right thing to do -- those on Free & Reduced lunch, those with IEP's, those in Special Education, those who are emerging Bi-Lingual students, and those who academically struggled in the spring."

It is the responsibility of all Evanston community members to work together toward an educational system that meets students' needs equitably and addresses the gap caused by a history of unjust policies and discriminatory allocation of resources. The Board's reopening efforts are a demonstration of that work and of our community's commitment to creating a school system where all families and residents can thrive.

Very truly yours,

Becky Crawford, Martha Holman, Shannon Lang (D65 parent), Beth McDonald (D65 parent), Gail T. Smith, and Sarah Vanderwicken for the Racial Equity Action Leadership Planning team

Rev. Eileen Wiviott, Acting Senior Minister, Rev. Karen Gustafson, Interim Minister, Rev. Susan Frances, Director of Congregational Life, and Kathy Underwood, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Jessica Tomell-Presto, Unitarian Church of Evanston Board President, and District 65 parent.



Unitarian Church of Evanston

Affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

A Green Sanctuary and Welcoming Congregation living out our commitment to the earth and affirming the worth and dignity of all people.

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