

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Equity Training Concerns

Hello,

I am emailing regarding the equity trainings we've had at [REDACTED]. To say that I am upset about all of this would be an understatement. For you to understand the gravity of how I feel, I will let you know that I am actively looking for a job elsewhere.

To start off, it is wildly disheartening that at the beginning of every one of those trainings, someone says something like "We want everyone to feel safe and comfortable sharing how they feel." This notion would be true if no one disagreed with what was being shared and taught. When one person yesterday slightly spoke about the fact that this isn't "their truth", more than one person had an extremely condescending response to it. How are we supposed to provide a "safe space" for our students, when the adults in the building can't even be open to the fact that other people don't feel the exact same way they do? What about diversity of opinion?

I sat there yesterday and felt so much shame for the fact that I am a Christian, that I believe what the Bible says, and that I go to church every Sunday. The number of times these things were brought up in a negative light was truly shocking to me. How is it equitable that this is what I believe, but this training teaches it is wrong and immoral? This is my truth, but no one wants to hear that. The only truth that people want to hear at these trainings is anything that goes along with what is being shared. I am no longer able to stay quiet and just put my head down. I shouldn't have to listen to what everyone else believes to be true, while I just stay silent.

I want to be loud and clear about the fact that I will literally support any student, no matter what they are going through. It is not my place to push what I believe onto a student, nor should it be our job as a school or a district. I am not here to argue with you, or anyone about who is right and wrong. Do parents know that teachers are receiving these kinds of trainings? I will tell you right now that I have been sharing a lot of these things with parents and they are beyond shocked.

If we were talking about equity and how to help our students, why aren't we ever being trained on how to help students who are homeless? Why aren't we receiving tools on how to help students whose parents are divorced? What about students whose parents are in and out of jail? Where is the equity for these students? Why are we spending so much time on this specific topic? I can tell you right now that daily, I encounter multiple students who deal with the issues I listed above. I have not had to navigate a student who has gender identity issues. I am not saying that this doesn't exist. I am also not saying that we shouldn't be trained on it. I think we should absolutely know how to help these students. What I am saying is that it is absolutely shocking to me that we are expected to sit through hours of training about the ins and outs of these things.

I used to feel like I was safe, welcomed, accepted at [REDACTED]. That's why I chose to stay when I had the chance to move to [REDACTED]. Now, I regret that I didn't go. I have been struggling to live my truth because I see the way people respond when someone tries to. I hear the horrendous things said about people who don't take these trainings as gospel truth and run with it. It is not my employer's job to decide how I feel about these topics and tell me what is true or not. Can you imagine if it was the other way around? Can you just imagine if someone who goes to church every Sunday was shoving what we believe to be true down the throats of others? I can guarantee you that I probably wouldn't have a job.

As a Christian, I come to work every single day with nothing but love to give to my students. I literally don't care what the topic is that my student is navigating. Whether it be gender identity, homelessness, depression, anxiety, extreme behavior issues, sexual orientation, literally anything, my goal is to love them through it. I don't need to sit through a training teaching me in depth about "Safe Spaces" for that to be true. As educators, it is our job to meet students where they're at.

I hope that in the future, the trainings offered are applicable to all students. I hope that we let these conversations happen at home. I hope that if a student feels like school is their only safe space, then we can have those conversations. This is a public school, where children come to learn about math, science, reading, social studies, etc. When did all these political and social topics become a part of what we're teaching students? What if all these hours going into this training were spent learning about how to give students tangible skills to cope with anxiety? What if these countless hours were instead spent on learning what to say when a student tells you their mom just went to jail?

The workplace should be a neutral space. The countless negative jabs at religion yesterday did not make me feel like I was in a neutral space. The political topics being brought up did not make me feel like I was in a neutral space. The last time we had this training, there was a video shared. It had countless politicians shown in an extremely negative way. These politicians were all from the same political party. That absolutely did not make me feel like I was in a neutral place. I can't even grasp the fact that these things are truly being shared and taught.

I've spoken with educators and staff in other local districts and while they do have some similar training, they do not have anything even close to what we have in scope and length on these few topics. They are as shocked as I am. One teacher in the Chippewa Falls District told me "if this ever comes to our district, I will not stand for it." I've also spoken with many parents that open-enroll their children simply because of these kinds of trainings happen at the ECASD.

I would once again like to reiterate the fact that I am not invalidating the journey students face regarding yesterday's training. I would also like to reiterate that it's not our job to force our opinions on social and political issues to these kids. It is simply our job to love them, meet them where they're at, and support them.

Regards,
[REDACTED]