

SCHOOLHOUSE RIGHTS

934 N. Main Street, Rockford, Illinois 61103
[REDACTED]

June 18, 2020

Williamson County School Board

Attn: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Franklin, TN 37064

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am an attorney for SchoolHouse Rights, a legal advocacy group assisting parents and students in keeping their schools safe from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and related ideologies. CRT is a racist, sexist, and anti-American ideology that teaches divisive concepts and sows hostility between people of different backgrounds in the name of so-called social justice. Under the guise of non-threatening language such as equity, diversity and inclusion, and culturally responsive teaching, curriculums steeped in the rhetoric and philosophy of CRT have been unknowingly adopted by many school boards. These curriculums run contrary to many state and federal laws against discrimination, most notably Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any educational program receiving federal funds or other federal financial assistance is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI addresses a number of discriminatory actions, including racially hostile environment claims. Racial and national origin harassment is defined as unwelcome conduct based on the person's perceived race or national origin. It can take many forms, including slurs, taunts, stereotypes, name calling, or graphic content. These acts need not be targeted to any particular individual to create a racially hostile environment. If a student is harassed based on race, and the harassment is sufficiently serious to distract the student from his or her education, the school has an obligation to take prompt and effective steps to end the harassment. The age and circumstances of the victim are taken into consideration when evaluating the environment. *See Racial Incidents and Harassments Against Students: Investigative Guidance*, 59 Fed. Reg. 11448, 11449.

It has come to our attention that the *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum in use by the Williamson County School District promulgates elements of CRT, and has created a racially hostile environment for students in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In only second grade, students are asked to spend *nine* weeks focusing on the civil rights movement as part of their English and Reading curriculum, and this unit requires reading stories of abuse by whites against blacks. Not only are some of the stories used in the curriculum dark and violent for a

second grade audience, but the content is charged with race blaming, racial stereotyping, and graphic descriptions of racial violence committed only by white people. These lessons include:

- Showing white people forcing young black children against a wall and spraying them with fire hoses ripping off their clothes and leaving bruises on their bodies. *See Martin Luther King Jr. and the March to Washington*, pg. 22-23.
- Teaching racial slurs to children in discussing how words can be used to attack and disrespect people. *See Ruby Bridges Goes to School*, pg. 24 and 25. *See Teacher Edition*, pg. 7.
- Describing an “angry crowd of white people” and showing the people holding racist signs. *See The Story of Ruby Bridges. See Teacher Edition*, pg. 285.
- Describing the crowds of white people as “howling,” “vicious,” and “angry, scary, mean, loud.” *See Teacher Edition*, pg. 285, 205, and 190.
- Showing white people at a “white only” diner throwing boiling coffee down the backs of black students. *See Zoom Meeting*, 2nd grade course.
- Asking children to role play a controversial racial scene from a story. *See Teacher Edition*, pg. 275.
- Teaching children vocabulary like “inferior” and “superior” in reference to race. *See Teacher Edition*, pg. 334-336. *See Separate is Never Equal*, pg. 26-27.
- Teaching students that the Mendez family “fought so white people would stop thinking they were better than Mexican people.” *See Teacher Edition*, pg. 354.

These are just a few examples from the second grade curriculum that create a racially hostile environment for students in the Williamson County School District.

The curriculum instructions for teachers anticipates student discomfort, and warns teachers that students may feel “hesitant,” or “overwhelmed,” and there may be “struggling” with the content of the lessons. The content is so unsettling it is suggested that students are taught “nonverbal signals” to help them better communicate about such uncomfortable and emotional topics. *See Teacher Edition* pg. 7-9. Young second grade students in the district have reported feeling racial guilt and told their parents they are not “white” or do not want to be “white.” These students are unable to receive the full benefits of their education due to the racially-charged atmosphere created by the *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum.

School administrators received various letters and complaints from parents and were put on notice of the racial harassment in the *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum. In particular, one letter dated March 23, 2021, from the Dixon family complained of a racially hostile environment for their bi-racial second grade son. They shared that their son was struggling with his self-esteem and sadness as a result of the material in his second grade classroom and reported their son rejected his white half

and no longer wanted to identify as an American. In response, rather than addressing the racial hostility of the classroom and curriculum, Superintendent Jason Goldon offered to segregate their son and provide him an alternative curriculum. This is not an acceptable solution. The Williamson County School Board is on notice of racial harassment in their classrooms due to the use of a racially charged curriculum and has an obligation to protect children.

The *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum and reading materials contain graphic racial content that is not age appropriate and is harmful to children in the district. It is our hope that the Williamson County School Board will cooperate with federal law and specifically Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and remove all curricula that promote racial stereotyping or racial guilt, or create a racially hostile environment with respect to race. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kellie J. Miller, Esq.
Director, SchoolHouse Rights

cc:

[Redacted list of names]