

BASD RESPONDS TO RACISM ALLEGATIONS AND EVENTS

The Burlington Area School District has compiled the following information to clarify recent events within the district.

Allegation of a BHS Athlete Using a Racial Slur

On Monday, October 26, 2020, Burlington Area School District received an email alleging that a Burlington varsity football player used a racial slur toward a Westosha-Central football player at a game at Westosha on Thursday, October 22.

The Burlington Area School District takes these concerns seriously. District administrators immediately investigated the claim by interviewing the Burlington athlete (with a parent), the Burlington athletes shown in video footage as being in the vicinity during the play, game officials, and the Westosha Central head coach.

During the game, a Westosha student reported to his coach that a Burlington player used a racial slur. The coach then talked to the game officials. Game officials say they heard the Burlington player use a vulgar word, but not a racial slur. According to WIAA policy, game officials immediately eject a player from the game if a racial slur is used.

We believe in good sportsmanship and expect our athletes to show respect for others at all times.

Virtual Classroom Disrupted

During a Wednesday advisory meeting on October 28, an unauthorized person disrupted a virtual classroom. The person repeated a racial slur several times before the teacher was able to disconnect the meeting. Parents of the students in the class were notified (see below) that this unfortunate event occurred.

The police are investigating to identify the caller. Anyone having information on this is encouraged to contact the Burlington Police Department.

Anti-Racism Policies

The Burlington Coalition presented a sample Anti-Racism Policy at the April 13, 2020 Board meeting. Since March 2020, the Burlington Area School District has been rewriting all of its policies including:

- 5516 - Student Hazing
- 5517 - Student Harassment
- 5517.01 - Bullying

At the request of the Burlington Coalition for Dismantling Racism, the School Board will be discussing anti-racism and harassment/bullying policies at their November 9, 2020 meeting. Representatives from the Burlington Coalition for Dismantling Racism will speak about the sample policy they presented to the district to request a status update.

(Draft of Policies attached)

In Conclusion

The Burlington Coalition for Dismantling Racism claimed in its press release on November 6, 2020 that "BASD reportedly has not held any of the perpetrators accountable for their behavior." In the case of the virtual meeting, the perpetrator has not yet been identified.

Further, the press release claims that "It is our understanding that this is not the first time racial slurs have been thrown around on the football field." This assertion is speculative, as we are not aware of any other incidents.

The Burlington Area School District rejects all forms of racism. We do not tolerate racist behavior because we understand how traumatic this can be for all students and especially students of color.

Letter sent by BHS Principal, Eric Burling to families following virtual class incident:

Dear BHS families and students of Mrs. Yanke's advisory class,

Earlier this morning during Mrs. Yanke's sophomore advisory class an unknown caller entered the scheduled Google Meet. Prior to Mrs. Yanke being able to block the uninvited caller, the caller repeated the "N" word multiple times. Mrs. Yanke disconnected the caller within seconds and asked the advisory students to sign off immediately. The use of the "N" word is abhorrent and has no place in our schools or community.

Burlington High School resents these hateful acts of bigotry and empathizes with our students and families, especially students and families of color, who may be traumatized by these incidents. An incident like this deepens the hurt, outrage, and frustration felt by our community and adversely affects our efforts to build a greater sense of community. BHS remains committed to serve as a school that is inclusive and supports an anti-racist culture that rejects all forms of racism.

We are working with the district's Technology Department and our school resource officer to investigate this incident. Any information you or your student may have can be reported to our anonymous tip line on the [Burlington Area SD App](#).

Any students that would like to talk about this incident or other incidents happening in their lives should speak with a trusted adult such as a school counselor, teacher or a parent.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Eric Burling
BHS Principal