



UTAHNS FED UP WITH BOARD MEMBERS WHO MANIPULATE PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND VIOLATE TRUST THROUGH UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT TOWARD COLLEAGUES, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS

October 7, 2021

TO: Superintendent Sydnee Dickson

Mark Huntsman
Laura Belnap
Cindy Davis

Randy Boothe
Janet A. Cannon
Scott L. Hanson

Molly Hart
Stacey Hutchings
Matt Hymas

Carol Barlow Lear
Kristan Norton
Brent J. Strate

RE: Letter of Reprimand re: Letter of Reprimand

Dear USBE Superintendent and Members listed above,

Utah State Code 53E-2-201 is simple enough—it asserts that parents have the “primary responsibility for the education of their children,” and that state and local school boards are to provide them with “extensive support and assistance” in that effort.

We take this authority seriously and are unaware of any other time when parents have felt compelled to reprimand you as USBE members for embodying the very intolerance you claim you won’t tolerate in our children’s schools—until now.

Since Member Natalie Cline was sworn in as Board member approximately nine months ago, you have openly mischaracterized, criticized, marginalized, and ostracized your colleague for nothing more than representing a worldview at odds with your socially extreme political leanings. Member Cline was duly elected to represent the families of her district, and her seat at the board is in no way lesser than any of yours. Your aggressively antagonistic treatment of her creates every appearance of the USBE being a hostile work environment. You can’t possibly engage in this kind of public behavior and honestly expect parents to trust you to turn around and create “safe” school environments for their children when you can’t even it pull it off in your own office.

If Member Cline has drawn your resentment, it’s because she’s exposing how you, the board, are very, very bad at supporting every day moms and dads in helping their kids receive the apolitical, academically-focused educations they deserve. Instead, you open the door to the emotional and psychological exploitation of kids by:

- 1) Expecting and enabling schools to use Social Emotional Learning (SEL) techniques on students. The intent of Social Emotional Learning is to expose students’ private lives, emotional needs, and familial belief systems to the scrutiny of teachers, faculty, and other students. Surveys ask children scholastically irrelevant and subjective questions such as “Do students in your school need support or help [to] recognize and defend human rights” or “need support or help with respect for other cultures and viewpoints.” (CTE Counseling Program Survey, CTEsurveys.com) Improper and intrusive curriculum is not limited to these examples. ([8th Grade Review-Second Step \(by topic\) from Lisa \(utahparentsunited.org\)](https://www.utahparentsunited.org/8th-Grade-Review-Second-Step-by-topic))

Social Emotional Learning environments reward and celebrate personal attitudes and circumstances that are deemed “acceptable” because they fit a progressive outlook (i.e., favoring collectivism over individualism, gender non-conformity over gender norms, race essentialism over non-discrimination, subjectivity over objectivity, outcome disparities as ipso facto proof of discrimination, etc.) Conversely, children whose thinking doesn’t conform to this mold are told their attitudes are “not inclusive,” “insensitive,” “biased,” “privileged,” and “racist.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPWrnBA2274>) In an SEL framework, schools displace families as the main definer and transmitter of personal and social values—this is unacceptable to parents. (<https://nepc.colorado.edu/blog/social-emotional>)

- 2) Failing to “respect, protect, and further the interests of parents in their children’s public education” and failing to “promote and encourage full and active participation and involvement of parents at all public schools,” as stated in Utah State Code 53E-2-201.

The April 2021 Internal Governance Audit of the Utah State Board of Education found that the USBE is **not** following the mission and vision for public education in 53E-2-201 and instead has created its own competing vision and mission for Utah schools. “USBE’s mission focuses on creating equitable conditions and does not mention their role in preparing students with occupational skills, character development, and assessment for accountability” and “USBE’s vision lacks ... loyalty and commitment to constitutional government.” By ignoring the statutory direction of Utah lawmakers on public education, the USBE is shortchanging students academically and diminishing parental involvement. Your direction aligns with politicized, well-funded special interest groups, not with the values of Utah families. (<https://le.utah.gov/interim/2021/pdf/00002916.pdf>)

- 3) Hiding the board’s racial and sexual identity activism by advising your staff and USBE-formed ACEESS advisory committee on how to conduct meetings so as to circumvent GRAMA requests. The lack of transparency and attempts to hide what’s going on behind closed doors at the USBE is unethical and damaging to civic accountability. ([march-2021.pdf \(academicintegritymovement.org\)](#))
- 4) Reading what you wanted to read into Member Cline’s personal social media posting of the LGBT flag and then overreacting based on subjective feelings, not objective facts, to the point of pretending an actual threat existed to the safety of students at Layton High. Manufacturing fear in children to score political points is emotionally manipulative and abusive.

You could have avoided all the drama instead of inviting it, but that would have meant having a constructive dialogue with Member Cline to understand her motivations instead of jumping to irrational conclusions. Your quickness to use inflammatory and defamatory language in your reprimand to describe Member Cline only proves the literary truism that people should write what they know about. And you’ve shown zero indication that you want to know anything about her widely-held position that students should be recognized as individuals, not stuck with labels or categorized into boxes and groups and then socially experimented upon like science lab specimens. Or the conviction that students should go to school to learn universal truths, foundational knowledge, and critical thinking skills, not to be divided by race, subjected to sexualized instruction, or inexpertly psychoanalyzed for “the right” attitudes.

You have injured public confidence in the board’s ability to constitutionally, ethically, and fairly conduct its business on behalf of Utah families. You have enabled special interests (UEA, NEA, CASEL, Utah Pride Center, etc.) to shift the focus of schools from academics, the arts, and sports to social activism, identity politics, and institutionalized discrimination. You are selling out our kids to “experts” who only want to use them as a means to their ends. And you are attempting to silence the Constitutionally-protected free speech rights of Member Cline and parents who are demanding transparency, accountability and oversight, and who are refusing to be intimidated by your lack of tolerance for ideological diversity and freedom of expression.

We expect you will continue along this same trajectory until you are checked and balanced through legislative and public pressure. Please consider this reprimand as part of the public record documenting your unprofessional conduct and statutory malfeasance.

Signed,

Academic Integrity Movement
We CAN Act

Utah Patriots
Utah Freedom Coalition

Utahns Against Common Core
Constitutional Defense of Utah

