



Building Bridges for today's students to cross into tomorrow's world with equity, innovation and optimism

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James Montesano, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

November 2, 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

I have received a number of inquiries regarding a Social Studies alternative assignment that was given to four (4) 7th grade students who were absent from class when the lesson on enslavement was taught. The subject of enslavement during the Colonial Period is part of the New York State Social Studies standards.

The assignment asked the students to read primary source documents from individuals who were aboard a slave ship. Students then had to complete a worksheet that required them to write a paragraph describing the Middle Passage voyage from the point of view of the individuals in those primary sources. This worksheet also included an "extra challenge" that stated: "With Classmates, role-play people aboard the slave ship who are justifying and arguing against the slave trade". Students were not asked to complete the extra challenge. The resource used was a workbook entitled, "Focus on US History: The Era of Colonization and Settlement", by Kathy Sammis, published in 1997.

The teacher has been counseled to use only resources that are approved by our Board of Education. Further, the teacher is working with our Middle School Principal to communicate to the students involved and their families, to underscore that the activity used in the assignment was not appropriate and to address any concerns they may have regarding this experience.

I am sharing this information with you to inform you of the facts as it has drawn attention via social media within the community. This morning, members of our administrative team met with representatives of the Nyack NAACP who have offered their support to the District in making this a positive learning experience. I was heartened by the sincerity and compassion of these community leaders to support the teacher, our students, and the District.

As a school district, we recognize our students' learning experiences are enhanced when there is a continuing and open dialogue between the community and the schools. Recognizing our community's high level of interest in the education of children, I wanted you to be aware of these events.

Sincerely,

James J. Montesano, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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**Si ou bezwen enfòmasyon tradui an kreyòl, rele Jocelyne Abraham nan 353-7044.
Si le hace falta información traducida en español, llame a Yesenia Polanco 353-7042.**