

Fort Bend ISD statement re: “Civil rights probe shows Fort Bend ISD disproportionately disciplined black students,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 7, 2018

FORT BEND ISD (August 10, 2018) – Fort Bend ISD is addressing misunderstandings in the August 7 *Houston Chronicle* online article regarding the purpose of OCR’s compliance review. The article mistakenly states the OCR made “determinations” and implies that the District omitted the OCR’s “concerns and statistics” in its July 26 press release to deceive the community and hide the truth. It has never been disputed that African American students have historically been disciplined at higher rates than their peers in Fort Bend ISD. This is a concern throughout the nation. The purpose of the OCR review was to determine if the Fort Bend ISD’s policies and procedures were causing the racial disparities in violation of Title VI, the federal law that prohibits race discrimination in education. After six years of investigation in which the District fully cooperated with OCR investigators, the OCR did not make any “determinations” or findings that the District engaged in any discriminatory practice.

OCR procedures call for OCR investigations to be concluded within 180 days. The point lost upon the author is that after six years there was no basis to conclude that the District had engaged in any discrimination.

In an effort to finally bring the investigation to a close, Fort Bend ISD agreed to enter into a resolution agreement with the OCR. Importantly, the agreement is not a settlement agreement reached after the OCR made negative findings. Instead, the resolution agreement provided that the OCR would end its ongoing investigation if the District periodically reviews its discipline procedures, continued to train educators on the District’s discipline procedures, and tracked and monitored student discipline data. The agreement makes clear that there was no determination or acknowledgement of noncompliance or liability. Given that the OCR’s requests for review, monitoring and training were in alignment with the District’s existing practices, the District was agreeable to resolving the OCR’s compliance review in an effort to avoid ongoing legal costs and distraction caused by the six-year old investigation.

During the pendency of the investigation, the District reviewed its disciplinary practices. This review resulted in the District implementing new initiatives, including use of restorative discipline practices, use of behavioral plans, and training of staff regarding best practices. The District’s efforts have fostered positive and supportive learning environments for all students and led to positive results on campuses such as Missouri City Middle School. This new approach to discipline was the subject of a positive [2016 article](#) published in the *Houston Chronicle*, which also included a parent’s account of improvements that she witnessed firsthand.

“The fact that minority students experience disciplinary consequences at higher rates is a problem that has vexed school systems throughout the nation,” said Dr. Charles Dupre, Superintendent of Schools. “But, importantly, after six years of investigation, the OCR did not conclude that our district’s discipline practices were the cause of any numerical disparity. We have worked very hard during the past six years to implement the best disciplinary practices available in hopes of improving student outcomes. We are proud of these efforts and remain steadfast in our commitment to provide an educational system that allows all students to reach their full potential.”

##