

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Student Presentation at February 11 Board Meeting

Saline, Mich. February 11, 2020- Members of Saline High School student-led group Society for Student Resistance presented stories and demands the Saline Area Schools Board of Education meeting. Speakers include Karamba Kaba, Andru Campbell, Sunny Jun, and Nicolas Ventura. Many other students and community members spoke during public comment in support of the student-generated demands. These students demanded that the School Board take the following actions (full list of demands with details attached):

- Implement a strong district-wide policy which holds students and staff accountable for any and all hate speech
- Immediately collaborate with students and community stakeholders to develop a clear plan to support healing, empowerment, and positive mental health for all marginalized students
- Actively work to recruit, hire, and support the retention of staff from a variety of diverse and underrepresented identities and backgrounds
- Mandate and empower all district employees to receive training around culturally-sustaining, anti-oppression, and abolitionist teaching.
- Mandate and integrate culturally responsive curriculum in all levels of schooling across all subjects.
- Develop a stronger reporting mechanism supported by thorough training and education which empowers students and staff to stand up to all hate and discrimination in any building in the district.
- Develop a clear, intentional, cross-district plan for lifting up and celebrating marginalized student and staff identities in order to take steps toward repairing harm and growing safe and inclusive environments for all students.

These demands represent the voices of diverse students at Saline High School and what they feel they deserve. These demands are being presented because of a history of discrimination, oppression, and injustice concerning racial identities and other marginalized identities that students and staff hold throughout the Saline Schools community. The recent racist incidents are just moments in a larger system of injustice.

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SOCIETY FOR STUDENT RESISTANCE SALINE AREA SCHOOLS

As the newly formed Society for Student Resistance, we challenge the Saline Area Schools Administrative Team and Board of Education to listen to and affirm these demands, which include the expectation that at every step in our collective work towards liberation, student voices and the voices of people of color in our community must be centered.

- 1. Immediate collaboration with students, community stakeholders, and credible, experienced racial justice and anti-oppression professionals to develop a clear and transparent plan to support healing, empowerment, and positive mental health for all marginalized students.**
 1. Create a trauma response team that is trained to support students and staff when they are harmed by hate and discrimination in the school district and/or community.
 2. Sustain programming that will support and affirm the positive development and growth of marginalized students.
- 2. Implement a strong district-wide policy which holds students and staff accountable, through appropriate and transparent means, for any and all hate speech.**
 1. There is no formal Saline Area Schools policy directed at hate speech by itself.
 2. We need to know what it constitutes, what the consequences are, what is related, and classifying hate crimes. Hate and discrimination need to be separated from bullying. We want to see STRONG *transformative justice* - not minimally effective restorative justice.
 3. We expect to see this implemented with transparency and broad input from stakeholders within 4-6 weeks.
- 3. Actively work to recruit, hire, and support the retention of staff from a variety of diverse and underrepresented identities and backgrounds.**
 1. Throughout the entire district, our staff is made up of majority white heterosexual employees.
 2. The hiring process needs to be more open and welcoming, and absolutely must involve diverse students and other stakeholders. There needs to be full transparency around teacher, counselor, and staff demographics so that a taskforce can ensure that our schools offer visual representation and safety to marginalized student groups.
 3. Direct and transparent action must be taken to fund and support the retention of diverse teachers and staff. Budgeting around this demand must be direct, intentional, and transparent.

4. This must be implemented with annual reporting starting in this summer's new hire.
4. **Mandate and empower all district employees to receive training around culturally-sustaining, anti-oppression, and abolitionist teaching.**
 1. Too many teachers in our district have yet to go through training. It shows.
 2. It is essential that we have all of our staff educated with this curriculum in order to further bring it into their own students' learning.
 3. The change of this training from being semi-mandatory to mandatory and continuing this training should be transparent, completed with input and approval from anti-racist students, teachers, and community stakeholders, and should be made official within the next 2 weeks.
5. **Mandate and integrate culturally-responsive curriculum in all levels of schooling across all subjects.**
 1. Any cultural class is currently an elective outside of the curriculum. This needs to change.
 2. There needs to be more information on Black history than slavery and the civil rights movement. It needs to be more than Black history being integrated as well. Bring cultural background and current events into the required curriculum starting at a young age; SAS must actively resist the erasure of all marginalized cultures. Our cultures are not just an elective: it is just as important as white history and white teachings.
 3. All classrooms need to be spaces for anti-bias and anti-oppression learning if we expect to prepare students for participation in a global society.
6. **Develop a stronger mechanism for reporting hate speech and bullying that empowers students and staff to stand up to all hate and discrimination in any building in the district through training and education.**
 1. The report process we have now, hornet hotline, is not sufficient to student needs.
 2. There is a need for anonymity in the reporting process. As of right now, the administration is able to use the phone numbers used to alert hornet hotline, in order to try and help. Due to this, comfort is lacking in reporting bullying, harassment, etc. because students have to see a counselor or staff member to officially report it. This also includes a strong process for addressing a situation in a direct matter, centering around the students and their health.
7. **Develop a clear, intentional, cross-district plan for lifting up and celebrating marginalized student and staff identities in order to take steps toward repairing harm and growing safe and inclusive environments for all students.**

1. All students deserve to see themselves and feel centered in celebrations, events, and affinity groups throughout the district. Student voice must be centered in the development and implementation of this plan.
2. The diversity of families and backgrounds in our community must be consistently and intentionally celebrated and affirmed at all levels and in all spaces.

Saline Area Schools Superintendent Scot Graden's letter to the community has committed to "continuing to listen as we move forward and establish additional actions to support our students as we "stand for anti-racism, respect, and inclusion of all students." These demands represent the voices of diverse students at Saline High School and what we feel we deserve if we are to feel safe and empowered in our schools and community. Finally, we expect to hear from the Board of Education and Administrative team at Saline Area Schools within two weeks to begin a formal dialogue around these demands.