



Your School Put Out a Statement Following the Death of George Floyd, but Did Anything Change?

By Educator Barnes – August 28, 2020

When George Floyd died after a police officer had his knee on his neck for over seven minutes, protests happened around the world. In addition to protests, organizations felt compelled or guilted into putting out a statement to address the situation. Some statements were vague stating the organization supports humanity, diverse people, and peaceful protest. Don't get me started about why adding the word peaceful in front of protest is problematic

and judgmental. Other organizations put out stronger statements explicitly stating they support the Black lives matter movement and change in America. Some even went as far as to list actions the organization would take.

Months later, have we really seen any change from these organizations that put out fancy statements that may have not even been written by the person whose name was signed on it? Some Black employees were confused and gave the side-eye after reading the statements their employers released. For example, some employees at Nike said that Nike's public statement didn't match the reality for Black workers of the company.

Schools are not exempt from Black parents and educators seeing a disconnect from the statements the school or the district released to the reality inside of the school buildings. Black lives matter, but Black students are still getting suspended for wearing their hair in styles that are commonly worn by Black people. Black lives matter, but the administration won't support the social justice conversations Black teachers embed into their lessons. Black lives matter, but the higher up you look at the district's organizational ladder the fewer Black people you see.

Black people are sick and tired of performative reactions. We want proactive measures implemented and maintained. It's time to put the pressure on and demand answers, especially in our schools. The first step I suggest is to take the letter or statement the school has posted and highlight what the school leader claims the school is allegedly doing or is going to do and ask for tangible actions and the specific deadlines for those actions.

My twin sons' school district reopened 100% remote. On Wednesday, the school board approved a reopening plan. Afterward, each principal sent out specific guidance about the changes. What I appreciated most is that my sons' principal reopening guidance included the action the school took around equity. She didn't stop with the letter she sent out at the end of the school year; she went ahead and took action.

FOCUS ON EQUITY

You may have read in the [letter](#) earlier this summer from Crooked Creek administration that we are committed to ensuring equity for our students and community. As a staff we have:

- ❑ Reviewed all policies and procedures to ensure better outcomes for all students
- ❑ Provided PD to staff on Implicit Biases
- ❑ Incorporated equity work into the school improvement plan as well as planned professional development opportunities for teachers throughout the 2020-2021 school

We are excited to continue our work throughout the year.

Crooked Creek Elementary's Focus on Equity update Included in its reopening plan

Don't get me wrong. These are only a few actions, and I'm hoping to see more and learn how the professional development will lead to changes in the school, but at least, as a parent, I know what is happening.

I also spoke to a principal who said she didn't have time to review policies. Now, that I see that my sons' school did, I'm starting to think, for this principal, it was not a time issue, it was a 'want to do it' issue.

Black educators are tired of empty words. We see Black children who are having the same experiences in school as we did, and we are sick of it. Some of these school leaders are nothing but liars. They don't believe that Black lives matter. Hell, they can't even say the words without stumbling. Goodness, it has been painful to watch some of these school leaders talk about anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. When they speak, they look scared, and when they are speaking about the issues their faces look like they have eaten something that put a bad taste in their mouths. Body language speaks volumes.

Maintaining the status quo is easy. Pretending to do something is easy. Putting actions behind words is the hard work; it is the work of a true leader. Honestly, a look in the mirror may mean the best action is for that particular leader to get coaching to improve or the leader needs to resign. There are schools where Black employees on all levels, from the custodian to the cafeteria lady to the secretary to the teacher are mistreated. Nothing happens, absolutely nothing, when they speak up. It gets brushed aside, but you put out a statement that says my Black life matter. Oh okay ... miss me with that!

I want concrete deadlines. Administrators give educators deadlines for everything from submitting lesson plans to responding to emails to inputting grades. It is time for administrators and school districts to be held to deadlines, too. If the school won't put out a deadline, we need to get our parents involved and community organizations to put on the pressure.

We also need to pressure these organizations into letting these "Karens" go. Most teachers are white females. Some are quick to snitch and report Black colleagues. Some are quick to call the school resource officer to haul Black students away. Some are quick to actively thwart any work around diversity, equity, and inclusion, but they still have jobs. A Black teacher brings up a concern and then gets labeled as hostile, angry, and gets coached out of the building ... but Black lives matter.

Let's start calling out these schools and organizations by name. If you are working in a school and they have yet to make tangible changes, call them out and keep calling them out until it gets too uncomfortable for them to continue the status quo. Our Black children deserve our outrage and us fighting on their behalf.