Mani Sayes on behalf of Cade Sayes

ISD194 – Lakeville School District

Thank you for the opportunity to voice the issues our children are facing. As a parent, I commend the bravery of the young people bravely coming forward to speak out against injustice. You are not alone in this, no longer will have to keep this burden to yourself. Your voice is being heard.

My name is Mani Sayes, I am mom, professional and resident of the City of Lakeville. My son, Cade is in third-grade at Cherryview Elementary. This is his second attending this school and experiencing racially-motivated bullying by one student in particular. This student rallied others to also bully my son. I know this bully is due to race, because my son has been called “Brown-leaf, brown sack of garbage on top of other insults, which are always stereotypical. This been going on for a year. I have had numerous discussions with teachers and administration regarding what is happening. The plan of action always seems that my has behavioral and is being disciplined for reacting to what is happening. The other student lies so my son is then accused of instigating the argument and/or physical altercation. Administration has continuous manipulated, gaslighted myself and child that he needs help. He has been told by administration to not talk about these incidents. In fact, he was told to move and forget about it. Unfortunately incidents with this bully and friends are an almost daily occurrence. My son, at the age of 8 years old is learning that there is a different set of rules and expectations of him compared to non-students of color. While third-graders are learning multiplication, geographical locations and the periodic table, Cade is being indoctrinate that defended himself is wrong, telling an adult rather than reacting gets him in trouble anyway and that if something bad happens, he is suspect automatically. There is no such thing as innocent until proven guilty. Accuse and punish first, then go seek the truth is the example he see from teachers and administrators at Cherryview Elementary. This school has a history of not addressing bullying and racism. My son is not the first but we are here to make sure this stops now.

My son was assaulted at school by his bully on school property on numerous occasions. Example - He was thrown on the ground, punched on his back repeatedly and choked while trying to stand up to get help from the adults. The adult failed to notice until my son was already on the ground. She then grabbed him by the arm and said she saw him throwing punches. The problem here is that my son was on his stomach being punched and choked from behind. How could he have thrown punches. Cade was written up for pushing and punching. Other students had to intervene to get this bully off my son. I received a call from school that afternoon and was told that Cade was pushed and pushed back, nothing about being an aggressor. But, the caller did tell me that the adult didn’t see anything until Cade was on the ground. There was another incident two months prior with this adult where Cade was accused of pushing a student off the slide. Despite his pleas of innocence, he was sent to the office. Layback of the security showed that a different student hurt that child, my son was nowhere near him.

I spoke to the Vice Principle the day after the assault and at no time did she disagree with the facts of this incident. She was surprised to also hear that after the incident, a couple of students said to Cade, “None of this would happen if you didn’t come to Cherryview”. If that is not indictive of the culture in this school and area, I don’t what is. In my email to the Vice Principle, I recapped our discussion and to provide a written incident report. My son was pulled into the office the next day and told that he is lying to me, that he needs to forget about this and move on.

Since I have raised concerns with school administration, my son has been intimidated, harassed, gaslighted and ostracized by the adults at his school. He was also physically assaulted once again by his bully. The Principle refused to contact the child’s parents. As a result, we had to document the incident with Lakeville Police.

Not only is my child unable to access an equitable education but no longer feels safe at school. He is extremely aware that his skin color makes him a target at his school & community. He must live with being called names due to his skin color, bullied by kids and adults alike. His school and district have failed him. Unfortunately, we have endured retaliation for even speaking up against these injustices.

Leaders, please hear the impassioned pleas of these children and parents. We need you to step in as we can only go so far without your help. We ask that these unfortunate and horrific examples of injustices in our schools and community are enough to drive accountability and warrant changes. Schools should no longer be able to hide behind a veil in name of confidentiality and discretionary enforcement against bullying, discrimination, racism, and sexual harassment. Teachers wanting to make a change and take a stand should not fear retribution for doing what is right.