

July 19, 2021

Richard Woods, Georgia Department of Education,
Lisa Kinnemore, Scott Johnson, Georgia State Board of Education
2066 Twin Towers East
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr.
Atlanta, GA 30334
(Via email and US Mail)

Dear Mr. Woods, Ms. Kinnemore and Mr. Johnson,

We write today to address two issues as follows:

First, on June 3, 2021, the Georgia State Board of Education (SBOE) passed a Resolution clarifying its stance on public education in Georgia. As parents, taxpayers, and citizens, we applaud and welcome this resolution! However, we understand that because Georgia schools operate under “local control,” this Resolution is not binding on school districts. In other words, Superintendents and School Boards may be in conflict with the SBOE Resolution without consequence. We are aware of numerous instances where classroom lessons have been in conflict with the SBOE resolution, and when a large school district’s Superintendent was asked if, going forward, he planned to issue a statement to the district’s educators supporting the new SBOE Resolution, he replied “No, why would I?” Therefore, it is *imperative* that the Board adopt an official policy mirroring the Resolution so that state agencies, school districts and charter districts/schools have a clear message, clear guidelines, and clear accountability.

Second, in looking into Georgia’s 16 Regional Education Service Agencies, or RESAs, we noted that several RESAs have offered and/or currently offer certain professional development/trainings that may be in conflict with the Board Resolution. As an example, a past RESA course hired and paid a vendor to conduct training addressing “*power, prejudice, privilege and oppression*” and “*embracing anti-racist ideologies*” in the classroom. (See Attachment A) This vendor’s consulting practice promotes race-based education initiatives and has been hired by many Georgia public and charter schools and Georgia school associations. It is probable to consider this vendor would be hired again by Georgia RESAs and Georgia schools for similar race-based programs. Also, the vendor/owner is currently employed by Fayette County Schools in a leadership position. Additionally, there were 34 attendees among 15 different Georgia schools at the above-mentioned training. (See Attachment B) Of note is that in at least two instances, as of this writing, information provided shows that, upon the attendees return to their districts, there may be intent to embed the information learned through the training into the district’s pedagogy and curriculum. (See Attachments C & D) If this information is in conflict with the SBOE Resolution, there is concern.

Another example is a current RESA training course titled “*Taking Informed Action-Engaging Students in Social Studies and Civic Life*,” which strives to “*inspire teachers to build civic engagement into each and every lesson*.” (See attachment E) This session appears to offer teachers training on creating action-oriented civics classes.

A list of questionable training by Georgia RESAs is shown on Attachment F. Details for the training courses can be located on the specific RESA's online training catalog. These training courses may violate the SBOE Resolution, specifically bullets 4., 5., 6., 9., and 10., and several courses' subject matter and instruction may possibly violate the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 14th Amendment Equal Protection clause.

As the RESAs are under the authority of the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) and are granted public funding (i.e., taxpayer funds) by the GDOE, and as certain Georgia RESAs may be in non-compliance with the SBOE 6/3/21 Resolution, we request that the State Superintendent, Mr. Woods, and the SBOE take immediate actions to *review and cease immediately* questionable and non-compliant training provided by Georgia RESAs now and in the future, with appropriate notice to all 16 RESAs regarding the use of public funds, appropriate courses, and courses that may be in violation of the SBOE Resolution, and potentially state and federal civil rights laws. Additionally, it is *essential* that the SBOE adopt a formal policy mirroring its 6/3/21 Resolution, and it is urgently needed for the 2021-2022 school year to eliminate potential future instances of Georgia education agencies, schools and districts being in direct non-compliance with state guidelines.

We urge you to take up these matters with your fellow Board members without delay, making it an agenda item for the upcoming July 22 Board meeting, as our state – and Georgia's students and teachers – need strong guidance and clear boundaries in ensuring our schools focus on academic achievement and excellence using the Georgia Standards of Excellence in core subjects of reading, writing, math and science. Georgia's public education system must focus on essential academic knowledge within an appropriate pedagogy in order to prepare our children to positively contribute and adequately compete in a global society. Our children's and our country's future depends on it.

We appreciate your support and service to the state of Georgia and its citizens. We ask for a written response and would appreciate an opportunity to speak with you directly on this subject and hope that a meeting can be scheduled soon. Please feel free to contact us at the emails listed below.

Respectfully,



Melissa Jackson
No Left Turn in Education, Georgia Chapter President
noleftturnga@protonmail.com



Wendy Haye
No Left Turn in Education, Georgia Chapter Lead, State Board of Education
Legis.noleftturnga@protonmail.com

Attachments