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Group considering all options to stop white oppressors school curriculum

By JOSH GREGA, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER
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An anonymous parent-teacher group opposed to the Santa Barbara Unified School District Board of Education contracting a nonprofit to conduct professional development programs is still considering suing the board over the nonprofit's curriculum, which the group has criticized for unfairly deeming white people as "oppressors."

On Tuesday's meeting, the Santa Barbara Unified Board of Education approved a \$294,430 contract for services with nonprofit Just Communities Central Coast. The board approved the contract by a 4-0 vote, with board president Jacqueline Reid absent from the meeting.

The contract describes its aims, "Whereas the development of culturally proficient and equitable school communities is a priority for SBUSD, JCCC will provide programming and support for the execution of this priority for SBUSD for many reasons, including closing the educational achievement gap."

As the News-Press previously reported, JCCC's services seek to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools. These include professional development and training programs including implicit bias training and its Institute for Equity and Education, the latter of which will receive \$154, 800, over half of the money exchanged for the nonprofit's services.

A JCCC document detailing information on the IEE describes it as "designed to help district and school administrators, board members, teachers, counselors, security personnel, all support staff, educational policy makers, and others who play a role in educating young people to effectively deal with the racial and ethnic disparities in schools."

Last month, the board was threatened with a lawsuit over certain contents in JCCC's curriculum. During public comment at the board's September 11 meeting, attorney Eric Early threatened to sue the Board of Education on behalf of a group of anonymous parents and teachers opposed to JCCC, collectively called Fair Communities Education Inc. Mr. Early denounced the curriculum as "radical, discriminatory, and illegal," and his comments particularly focused on the program's definitions of "racism" and "oppression."

The former was defined, "A system of oppression based on race that privileges white

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people and targets people of color."

Oppression was defined, "A system that benefits some groups (often called 'privileged' white groups) and disadvantages other groups (often called 'target groups' people of color)."

Mr. Early criticized these definitions and said that they wouldn't be found in a dictionary. He then handed the board members three anonymous notes from members Fair Communities who objected to the insinuation that white people are inherently oppressive.

When asked what's next for Fair Communities now that the Board of Education has entered a contract with JCCC, Mr. Early told the News-Press that he and his clients are "exploring all our options." However, he did express confidence in the possibility of preventing the board from going forth with JCCC, should Fair Communities decide to sue.

"I strongly believe that we have a very strong possibility of obtaining an injunction against the district to prevent it from proceeding with Just Communities," he said.

The Board of Education's contract with JCCC will remain in effect through June 30, 2019.

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