



Bernie Custis Secondary School

PROUD SCHOOL OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers,

As you may now know, today, some students participated in a walk-out demonstration to protest a pause on the Black Youth Mentorship program at Bernie Custis Secondary School.

This is an important program run in partnership with the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI) out of Bernie Custis and was about to start at Sir Allan MacNab.

Our understanding is that in light of a report by the HCCI on racism, Islamophobia, and discrimination in HWDSB schools, students felt that the Black Youth Mentorship program was being cancelled as a punitive means. This is not the case.

HWDSB has a partnership agreement with HCCI and the report released last week has raised some concerns about a potential breach in the contract, how the research was obtained, and the privacy of students and staff. As standard practice when there are concerns to put a program on pause, we reconnect with the partner to review our agreement to ensure an understanding and adherence to legislation – the Education Act and the Privacy legislation. Our hope is that the program will continue in time for its next scheduled meeting on February 27.

We take all matters related to racism and Islamophobia very seriously and we look forward to engaging in conversation about equity and inclusiveness in schools, as we are committed to removing barriers for racialized students.

Student voice is essential for this improvement and Bernie Custis, along with HWDSB, is committed to working with our partners and listening to our community about the best ways to combat discrimination. We want all students to be successful.

If you have any questions about today's protest, please contact the school at 905.296.2504 or Superintendent Sue Dunlop at 905.527.5092 ext. 2673.

Sincerely,

Angela Ferguson
Principal

Sue Dunlop
Superintendent of Student Achievement