

## **Rock Ridge Superintendent statement**

### **Ragnarok is not knocking on the schoolhouse door**

Recently there has been national and state news about something called Critical Race Theory. Specifically, and this is happening all across the United States and Minnesota, local school boards are being targeted by individuals who don't want local schools to adopt Critical Race Theory. It's almost as if some feel disaster is lurking around the corner and Ragnarok, the Norse mythological cataclysmic event signaling the end of the world, is knocking just outside the schoolhouse door.

And what is Critical Race Theory? In short, Critical Race Theory states that racism is embedded in our laws and institutions and is not just the biases of individuals and their prejudices. It's a theoretical framework taught in some universities and colleges. Some feel that Critical Race Theory stigmatizes white culture into feeling blame and shame for being white. And that we in K-12 education are teaching this to students. (Spoiler alert: we are not doing this in K-12 education.)

Viewpoints on this topic can be very polarizing. In fact, manuals on how to disrupt school board meetings and take down local school board members and get elected your own single issue candidate focusing on anti-Critical Race Theory practices are freely available on the web. In contrast, the Minnesota Association of School Boards strongly recommends all school board members (and candidates) focus on a broad variety of topics to benefit all students and avoid campaigning and focusing on single topic issues. Choose your school board members wisely.

School districts try to stay out of the political arena as much as possible and I'll do the same here but these are important things for local citizens to know:

- Critical Race Theory was developed over 40 years ago by lawyers, activists, and legal scholars and might be taught in some colleges' master's or Doctoral programs. It is not a K-12 course and never has been.
- Critical Race Theory is not part of the Minnesota Academic Standards nor is it being considered in any drafts of the Minnesota Academic Standards.
- We do not teach Critical Race Theory in Rock Ridge. In addition, I'm not aware of it being taught anywhere on the Range.

A more important topic is what do we believe in Rock Ridge? What type of opportunities do we create for our students? What do we stand for?

Fundamentally we believe in ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity and equal access to classes and activities. We believe that all students are unique and that we must pay attention to the individual student in order to maximize his/her potential. What any student does with that opportunity is up to him/her but our job is to help students grow educationally as much as possible.

A couple of years ago, when our students, staff, parents, and community members sat down with the architects to design our vision and mission statements as to where everyone wanted the new Rock Ridge district to head, the consensus was that citizens here wanted:

1. An educational environment designed to inspire passion and joy for everyone
2. Collaborative educational experiences with immediate real-world applications
3. Meaningful integration of community professionals into the daily education of students

4. Adaptable learning spaces that will continually meet the needs of an ever-changing workforce

Some of the beliefs as to what is important were: flexible/adaptable, variety/freedom/choice, inspiration/mentorship, exploration/discovery/advancement, collaboration/creativity, welcoming/community/relationship. At no point in any conversation did Critical Race Theory even come up.

Because we believe in learning from one another and discussing topics in an environment where everyone can have their voices and viewpoints heard (and not just the loudest), the Rock Ridge School District will host several community meetings around the topic of Critical Race Theory. The purpose of these meetings will be for all of us to learn from one another and discuss and have reasoned conversations. These meetings are Monday, August 16th at 6:00 p.m. at Parkview Learning Center and Tuesday, August 17th at 6:00 p.m. at the Eveleth High School gym. Until then, consider the possibility that Ragnarok, reportedly knocking on the schoolhouse door, might have the wrong address.

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