

[http://www.heraldsun.com/news/equity-coalition-upset-by-lack-of-chccs-response/article\\_5282cd7a-a146-11e5-8ff7-17bbd650b5ad.html](http://www.heraldsun.com/news/equity-coalition-upset-by-lack-of-chccs-response/article_5282cd7a-a146-11e5-8ff7-17bbd650b5ad.html)

EDITOR'S PICK

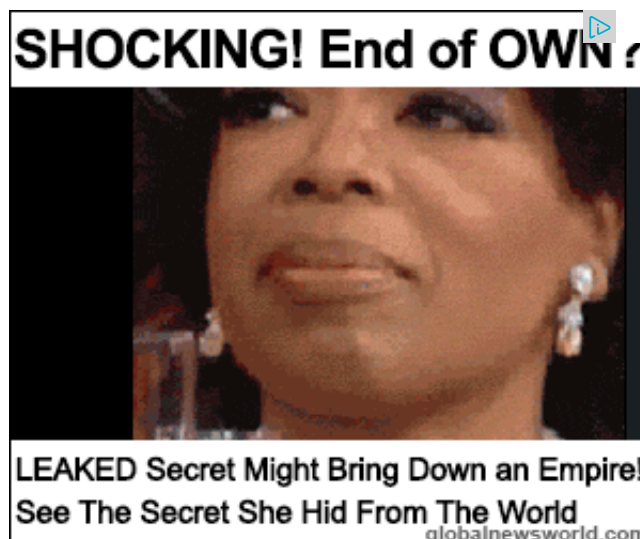
## Equity coalition upset by lack of CHCCS response

Katie Jansen Updated 10 min ago

CHAPEL HILL — It's been nearly two months since the release of a report citing racial inequities in schools — but the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education has yet to officially hear the report.

Stephanie Perry, co-chair of The Campaign for Racial Equity in Our Schools, said she is upset about the district's response to community members' concerns.

"We have a problem with an achievement gap and inequity within our schools," Perry said. "We have to be willing to take 100 percent responsibility for that problem."



Each member of the Board of Education has received a copy of the report. But so far, the Board of Education has not given the coalition time to present its findings, Perry said.

Meanwhile, the coalition has received an invitation from Guilford County Schools to present on its process and its findings at the N.C. Public School Forum, Perry said.

The meeting, to be held in Greensboro Wednesday, will allow the coalition 45 minutes for its presentation and will be attended by the Guilford County superintendent, the Board of Education and members of the local NAACP.

Perry said the fact that another board has been more responsive than the local school board is “shameful.”

Immediately following the report’s release in October, Superintendent Tom Forcella said it would be up to the school board to decide whether to allow the coalition time to present its report.

Before embarking on the report this summer, the coalition invited the district to work with them on the report and asked for a special session with the board once the report was complete, said co-chair Wanda Hunter.

The board voted to deny that request, she said.

Hunter said Forcella initially seemed sympathetic and told the coalition they might be able to present at the board’s October meeting.

That invitation fell through, but the agenda did include a presentation on equity by Sheldon Lanier, director of equity leadership for the district.

Hunter said that although they weren’t able to formally present, coalition members used their allotted three minutes for public comment to ask the board to reconsider.

Conversation among board members was tentative; several said it was “unprecedented” to allow an outside group to present a report.

But Forcella said a conversation would be useful, and the board asked him to draft a recommendation about the best way to hear the report. Hunter said she left that meeting hoping that the coalition would be granted an open session that the public would be able to attend.

Newly appointed board chairman James Barrett said the board will hear Forcella’s recommendation at Thursday’s meeting.

Thursday's agenda includes 20 minutes for Forcella to make his suggestion: an upcoming focused dialogue on the district's long-range plan for equity. Although the agenda item acknowledges the existence of the report, it also rejects the coalition's request to present it by saying: "An exclusive meeting between a single group and the board is not sufficiently collaborative to garner the support and buy-in necessary for meaningful change."

Instead, the district plans to hold a focused dialogue to develop a plan "a collaborative way with teachers, parents, students, community members, and our administrators," according to the abstract included in the agenda.



The district envisions 50 to 75 stakeholders participating in the dialogue, to be held some time in January or February.

Forcella said the district has looked at the report and will combine it with information the district already has.

He called the report "great input for our five-year equity plan" and said it will be made available to participants in the focused dialogue.

But Perry said a dialogue isn't enough.

"We want to be able to present what we put together," she said. "It's really very simple."

Perry said she is concerned with the way the district has treated the coalition and the report so far and said that the way Forcella has responded has been “disrespectful” and “insulting.”

But Perry also expressed hope that newly elected board members will spur change and will be open to hearing the report.

Hunter said she hadn’t yet heard about plans for a focused dialogue but said it’s disappointing to feel like the district is minimizing the work that went into the report.

“It’s a community collaboration, and it’s just downright shameful that Chapel Hill isn’t willing to dialogue around this issue that they say they want to change,” Perry said.



Contact Katie Jansen: [kjansen@heraldsun.com](mailto:kjansen@heraldsun.com), 919-419-6675





Tom Forcella  
Herald-Sun

---

## Katie Jansen

Katie Jansen covers Orange County for The Herald-Sun. She graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 2014, where she studied journalism, English and creative writing.