

Dear Leadership Team,

As seniors at Perry High School we are extremely appreciative for the talented teaching and administrative staff who provided us with many opportunities to learn and grow. The administration deserves credit for building a staff that is caring, compassionate, and experts in their respective fields. Furthermore, Perry has made significant improvement in the number of women in leadership positions. In 1998, all of the leadership positions in Perry were filled by men. Today, the assistant superintendent, director of student services, PES principal and assistant principal, as well as many teacher leaders in all three buildings are women. This is an incredible feat considering just 20 years ago all of these positions were held by men. However, we are firm believers that there is also room for improvement.

As we reflected on our time at Perry Local Schools we realized a glaring problem, we have only encountered a total of two-three multicultural teachers (and one has since pursued a career elsewhere) over the course of the past twelve years. We come from a relatively single-minded community and we find it very flawed that the seemingly uniform environment in our community continues in our classroom. It is imperative that our students are exposed to diversity because "For a low-income Black male student in grades 3 through 5, being taught by at least one Black teacher reduces the probability of dropping out by 39%." (kappanonline.org). We need a more diverse workforce, reflective of the student body at Perry Local Schools.

We think that the best place to start is to encourage a more diverse learning environment at our school. Having more diverse staff for minority students to be surrounded by would encourage them to feel safe and accepted in our community. Furthermore, all students would benefit from becoming more empathetic, well-rounded individuals, prepared to embrace the diversity of the real world. This would not only benefit our students during their time at Perry, but it would follow them into adulthood as "Ninety-six percent of major employers... say it is 'important' that employees be 'comfortable working with colleagues, customers, and/or clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.'" (thecenturyfoundation.org)

Some might counter our argument by saying that the culprit behind this inequality is simple because of the demographics of our community and the surrounding area. This might explain some of the lack of diversity at our school, but if we look at some simple statistical data it is easy to see that our school still needs to do better. If we look at our community statistics, 4.7% of the population are minority groups. According to the Ohio Department of Education, 13.52% of students enrolled in the Perry Local Schools represented ethnic minorities. In other words, of the 1,608 students enrolled, roughly 210 were from minority groups. Now if we look at this situation as a ratio, one would assume that since our minority students are about three times as prevalent in our schools compared to the community percentage, we should have at least 4.7% of teachers identifying as a minority. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Between our three buildings we currently have 104 teachers. Although we don't have access to this exact data, we personally have had only one teacher that was multicultural in our Spanish class over the past 12 years. Let's say we have a total of 5 teachers belonging to a minority group throughout our three buildings, that still only means that 0.05% of our staff in comparison to 13.52% of our

students belong to minority groups. With that being said, we challenge the Leadership Team at Perry Local Schools to put more emphasis on seeking out a more diverse staff when hiring administrators, teachers, coaches, and extracurricular advisors. The staff should reflect the ethnicities in our community, as well as our school.

The best way to combat intolerance towards others and inequality in the world begins with how we address diversity in our community. And the best way to combat intolerance towards others and inequality in our community begins with how we teach our youth (the students at Perry Local Schools) to treat others. We think that creating a more diverse learning environment would begin to solve this problem and produce students, from all backgrounds, who are ready to appreciate and thrive off of all the varied experiences, people, cultures and ideas our ever-changing world has to offer. Thank you for taking the time to address our concerns.

#### Works Cited

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