

Case Study

Paige, Nick, Logan, John

Jenny Smith is the Assistant Principle at a small high school in Franklin Michigan. Monroe High averages 80 kids per class. This small town's population is roughly 10,000 people who are predominately white middle-class citizens. Recently, at the high school there have been issues with bullying and racism, as more of the Hispanic community is starting to move in.

Incidents of physical violence, racial slurs and verbal fights are occurring more often during lunch periods, in between classes, and during extra-curricular activities. Mrs. Smith has gotten many emails both from the new Hispanic parents expressing their concerns and reporting incidents that are happening to their children, as well as from the white parents who are defending their child's actions. Many teachers and coaches have also expressed their concern, so Mrs. Smith knows this is a pressing issue, but is not sure what the best approach is to handle it.

After discussing with her principle and other colleagues the school decides the best course of action is to host a diversity fair. This would mean each homeroom class is assigned a different culture or race to research on, and then will present about at the diversity fair at the end of the semester. Items such as informational posters, slideshows, homemade videos, and culturally appropriate foods and clothes will all be needed for this event. The administration and staff hope this will help students be more accepting of others as well as have a deeper understanding of who a person is why.

Mrs. Smith sends out an email on Monday morning to the Monroe High staff as well as every parent and student. By the end of the day, she has received well over 20 emails from parents and staff expressing both their concern and their support for the fair. Some of the following included:

Mrs. Smith,

I am writing in concern to the email I received this morning, as I find it very troubling. While I understand students should be made aware of these things, I believe it is something that I should be able to teach my children at home, so I can control what is being taught and learned. I do not want my kids to be wasting their time on nonsense research that will put silly thoughts into their heads. As a parent I should get to choose what and how my children learn about these sensitive topics. Finally, I hold this school and my children to a high standard of education and would not want this extra research project to distract from their learnings in the classroom. I hope you take these thoughts into consideration while planning this event, and always thanks for what you do for the kids. – Mary Kinsley.

Mrs. Smith,

It's Lisa from the English department. I read your email and was pleased to see this idea come through. While I believe in the message you are trying to portray, I think there are some things that could be worked on. If you would like, I would love to help you with this project and make

some changes so that this will be successful and can continue for future classes. Let me know how I can help. -Lisa Johnson

Mrs. Smith

I was so excited to receive and read your email about the diversity fair. My sons have been struggling with the transition since we have moved here, and do not feel welcomed or included by most the students so far. As you know, they have experienced some bullying for not fitting in, but I hope this diversity fair will help change the perceptions of the students on my sons. Please know you will have my families full support, and we are willing to help in whatever way possible. Guest speaking, helping with food or clothes, or even props/décor that may be needed. We have always taught our sons about inclusivity and different cultures, and to be accepting so it saddens me to see this not being reciprocated. I do have a concern that students may not take this seriously and make it worse for my sons to attend. I hope you will be able to pull this off with success and change the inclusivity views of the students. Please let us know how we can help and thank you again for taking the time to address these issues. -Maya Marcos.

Mrs. Smith is then posed with the difficult task of how she should tackle these varying responses by staff and parents. She wants to please everyone but does not know how to make this possible.

Do you think this the diversity fair is the right way to handle the situation? Why/Why not?

If you were in Mrs. Smith's shoes, how would you approach the situation? Would you take the fellow staff members help?

How would you respond to the first parents' email?

What would you say to the last parent email? How would you make sure this was not turned into a joke and instead a meaningful lesson for the students?