

Teacher Issues Apology Following Oct. 29 Community Meeting

Continued from front page

this better," he said.

Lanier noted that because the pictures were taken at a private party, he was limited on what he could do.

"The party had nothing to do with school or school business. Under Board Policy and under both state and federal law, I am limited in how I can address the acts of an employee when the acts are not related to school business."

He said he had taken action, but could not discuss it because it was a personnel issue.

"I do not discuss – and it is the procedure of this district and most districts in the state – not to discuss personnel matters."

He added: "I am not trying to be evasive or hide information from you. I am simply acting, as I should as the Superintendent of Rice CISD, in compliance with district procedures and the law."

He added the teacher was remorseful.

"She in no way intended her actions to be hurtful or derogatory. Her concern has been, from the outset of my investigation, not for herself but for the students in her charge. She knows she made a poor decision. I believe her remorse is genuine."

He also said he was reminding all employees of the impact of their actions.

"I am taking this opportunity to try and make all employees and students more sensitive to each other and the differences that make each of us the person that we are."

Lanier's complete statement can be found at the end of this article.

Former Eagle Lake Mayor Rene' Cooper said that she felt teachers should be held to a higher standard and that she felt the teacher's actions were misconduct. "How can she be a good teacher and mold minds with the attitude that was portrayed?" she asked.

Quanell X and other community members also questioned what actions had been taken by the district.

Lanier reiterated that he could not legally disclose what actions were taken because it was a personal matter and therefore not open to the public.

In response to another question about the possibility of future sensitivity training he said that he had some ideas but would also welcome input from the community on what they think should be done.

Chasten Shorter said that

Boenisch had been his teacher, and that he felt the community should be more focused on those that were in blackface, rather than going after someone who was not in costume and appeared in a picture.

Quanell X told the group that black parents must get more involved in their kids education. He said that they need to be at PTO meetings and parent teacher conferences. He said that a school would be more apt to be accountable to active parents.

"It is an injustice to children for us to not get involved," he said.

He asked if the superintendent would accept a list of recommendations from the citizens on how to address their concerns.

"If this situation ignites people to become more involved then it has done something positive," Lanier said.

"Kids are the most important resource for our future and it takes everyone to educate them," he added.

Quanell X said that the group should go above the local district to the Texas Education Agency and the State Board of Education and voice their complaints there.

After an hour and half, Quanell X left the meeting, declaring it a "dog and pony show." Many of those present left at the same time.

Lanier said later that he spoke at length with several individuals one-on-one after the meeting and felt that he had good exchanges with them.

Following is the complete statement of the teacher, Cynthia Boenisch:

"Dear Community Members, I am truly sorry for the harm and offense that was taken from recently circulated pictures.

Let me assure each of you that there was never any intent to hurt anyone, but I realize now that this situation has done just that.

I have taught in this school district for 31 years and have always tried to the best of my ability to treat my students fairly and respectfully and I will continue to do so.

Please pray for peace in our communities and our school district!

Sincerely,
Cynthia Boenisch"

Following is the written statement of Lanier at the meeting.

"Thank you for meeting with us at the District today. I appreciate the interest in the community and in education.

I understand the concerns

of the citizens in this room and other citizens in the community who have brought this matter to my attention. I am here to listen and to try to find a way to make this better. I do need you all to understand several things.

First, this was a private, non-school related party held on private property not belonging to a school employee. The party had nothing to do with school or school business. Under Board Policy and under both state and federal law, I am limited in how I can address the acts of an employee when the acts are not related to school business.

Second, I have addressed the

acts as best I can under Board Policy and in compliance with the law through discussions and recommendations with the RCISD school attorney. I have met with the employee, and I have taken action. I do not discuss – and it is the procedure of this district and most districts in the state – not to discuss personnel matters. Therefore, I cannot tell you what actions I have taken. If you request a document or information regarding any action I have taken, I am required by law to ask the Attorney General for permission to withhold such information (in accordance with The Texas Public Information Act Section 552.101 and Texas Education Code Sec-

tion 21.355). I am not trying to be evasive or hide information from you. I am simply acting, as I should as the Superintendent of Rice CISD, in compliance with district procedures and the law. I am asking that you trust that I have done my job to the best of my abilities. I do believe, that through my past actions, I have earned that trust from you.

Third, I want you to know that this employee has informed me that she is incredibly remorseful. She in no way intended her actions to be hurtful or derogatory. Her concern has been, from the outset of my investigation, not for herself but for the students in

her charge. She knows she made a poor decision. I believe her remorse is genuine.

Fourth. Rumors abound. I have heard mentioned names of some employees that were accused of being at the party and now that they were dressed to imitate, degrade, or make fun of an African American character, stereotype, or celebrity. One I will point out is present tonight, Bill Hefner, Assistant Superintendent, rumor has it he was at the party dressed as Senator Obama. He was not at the Halloween Masquerade Party. Mr. Hefner was out of the State at the time. That rumor is not true and the case is closed on that issue and I hope on the other false rumors.

I am taking this opportunity to remind all employees how important it is to be aware of our diversity and our community and that their actions, no matter how initially innocent, may be perceived by others. I am taking this opportunity to remind all employees how serious the concerns that have been raised are. I am taking this opportunity to try and make all employees and students more sensitive to each other and the differences that make each of us the person that we are. I have but one hope for this situation – that we all become better, more tolerant, and more sensitive people. Just as we tell the students - through adversity comes growth.

I cannot give you more information about this situation or discuss the specifics further. However, I am very willing to work with you today and in the future to better education and educational opportunities in this community for all students. Please know how important it is to me that all members of the community understand, and I hope they would know by my past actions, that I am committed to making Rice CISD a better place at all times for all students. We are in the midst of a huge building project that I hope does much to bring more educational opportunities to our children and provide events that will allow all members of our community to intermingle and learn from and about each other. My wish, and the wish of the teacher involved, is that this unfortunate situation does not distract from the fact that we have made huge progress in bringing our communities together and that we can continue to move forward."



Quanell X, far left, speaks to the crowd at the meeting held in Altair October 29.

Local Election Results Given

Continued from front page

Dippel. In complete, but unofficial returns, Kleinschmidt had 32,208 votes, and Dippel had 25,561.

The district covers Colorado, Fayette, Lee, Bastrop, Burleson and part of Brazos counties.

In Colorado County, Kleinschmidt led Dippel 4,744 to 3,187.

Precinct Results	McCain	Obama
Colum./Glidden	934	501
Rock Island	128	58
Garwood/Nada	368	102
Weimar	1,195	536
Sheridan	265	62
Buescher	480	85
Brushy	519	85
Mentz	245	42
Bernardo	170	22
Alleyton/Colum	596	270
Altair	158	52
Eagle Lake	732	688

State Rep. Precinct Results	Kleinschmidt	Dippel
Colum./Glidden	815	556
Rock Island	117	58
Garwood/Nada	260	180
Weimar	929	734
Sheridan	222	91
Buescher	412	131
Brushy	439	140
Mentz	206	60
Bernardo	148	44
Alleyton/Colum	514	318
Altair	145	57
Eagle Lake	537	818

Subscribe Today
979-234-5521

NEWSBRIEFS

Continued from front page

blue shirts will be sold for \$10 each with 2X and 3X shirts sold @ \$12. Youth small to adult 3X sizes are available. Order forms can be obtained at any school office or you can email your order to Clarice Dumont at cadumont@ricecisid.org.

Booster Club hosting supper

The Rice Booster Club will host a drive-thru hamburger dinner Monday, Nov. 10 from 5:30 – 7 p.m. The \$6 dinner consists of a deliciously grilled hamburger, chips, drink and homemade dessert item. Proceeds will help cover the cost of the run-thru tunnel purchased this year. Presale tickets will be available until Nov. 5 from any high school athlete or at Buc-ee's in Eagle Lake. Plates can be picked up at the EL Community Center Pavilion or will be delivered for presale orders to Garwood and Sheridan Schools. Please support our cause and get yourself a great hamburger!

Membership meeting being held

The Plaza Theatre on the Square in Wharton will hold its annual meeting of the membership at 7 p.m. on Nov. 10. Agenda items include State of the Theatre addresses from members of the executive committee, announcement of the Steering Committee for the fundraising effort for the completion of the theater renovation, and board elections; everyone is invited but only members may vote. Memberships may be purchased at the meeting.

Memorial services set for Nov. 11

The local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8783 will hold memorial services at the City Hall Annex in Eagle Lake on Tuesday, Nov. 11 at 9 a.m. Everyone is invited.

Treasure Island performance set for Nov. 16

On Sunday Nov. 16 the Rice High School (RHS) theatre will be performing its version of "Treasure Island" in the RHS commons. A group of treacherous pirates fight for their claim of Captain Flint's legendary lost treasure. This play is an action-packed adventure, where treasure rules the tides and trust is lost at sea. A fundraiser dinner of hamburgers and sides will be served at 6 p.m. Meal tickets must be purchased in advance for \$7. Contact Drama Club students or Brennan Jobe at bjobe@ricecisid.org for meal ticket reservations. The play will start at 7 p.m. and admission is free for those who do not want to eat. Come support the RHS Drama Club and enjoy our first production of the year!

Plaza to hold open auditions

The Plaza Theatre on the Square will hold open auditions for the Howard Ashman-Alan Menken musical Little Shop of Horrors November 16 and 18 at 6 p.m. at the theater. For more information and character descriptions, please visit www.whartonplazatheatre.org. Performances are February 13-March 1.

Lissie UMC Christmas play auditions

The Lissie United Methodist Church will hold it's annual Christmas Play/Pageant on Sunday, Dec. 14 at 6 p.m. Auditions for speaking parts will be held on Sunday, November 16 at 3 p.m. You must be in the 5th grade or older to audition. You will be able to read your part, no memory is required. Play practice/rehearsals with be as follows: Sunday, Nov. 30 at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 7 at 3 p.m. Dress rehearsal: Saturday, Dec. 13 at 4 p.m. All performers must be at the Lissie UMC on Dec. 14 at 5 p.m. in order to prepare for the presentation at 6 p.m. For more information, please contact: Rev. Janice Kerlee at 234-2112. The church address is: 25527 Franklin St., Lissie.



Winter Mini Term and Spring 2009 Registration

Registration for Winter Mini Term: Nov. 1-Dec. 11
Winter Mini Term classes begin Dec. 15

Registration for Spring Term 2009: Nov. 1-Jan. 14
Spring Term 2009 classes begin Jan. 12

A Program for Everyone

- Core classes in English, Math, History, Science, Speech, Humanities, Visual Performing Arts, Government, Kinesiology, and Social Services
- Associate of Arts degree (transfer programs to four-year universities)
- Associate of Arts in Teaching degree
- Two-year Associate of Applied Science degrees
- One year certification programs
- Distance Learning courses
- Financial Aid
- Dual and concurrent enrollment (college credits in high school)

Visit our website or contact the Admissions and Registration Office for times, locations and requirements.

Wharton • Sugar Land • Richmond • Bay City • El Campo • Palacios



Wharton County Junior College

1-800-561-WCJC
wcjc.edu

WCJC is an EOE Institution.