VUSD

For the future of every student

November 19, 2018

Dear VUSD Staff:

A few days ago the VUSD school board was made aware of a recorded sermon that I gave to a church in Riverside almost 3 years ago. In about the midpoint of the sermon I used an example that was at the expense of people in the LGBTQI+ community.

I deeply regret using that example and I want to publicly apologize for it. I am sorry for the words, the insensitivity, and for the pain and hurt that it is causing. I have asked the church in Riverside to remove the recording from their website.

I have been wrestling and reflecting with what there is in me that allowed me to say those words or to think that it was ok at the time. I am not a hater, a homophobe, or a person with a hidden agenda. In 30 plus years of school service, and more specifically the last year and a half of service here in Ventura, no one will find any other words or actions that reflect a homophobic position because there are none to find. I have been, and will remain, committed to the value of every human being, and to a safe and healthy place for every student and staff member in the school district. And yet, in that two-minute clip, I was not.

The sermon came to light last Thursday. The Board met for several hours on Friday. This week-end I opened myself up to anyone from the LGBTQI+ community who wanted to meet with me and vent, share, ask questions, and talk about the future. I met with people in my office, at a coffee shop, and in my home. I am so thankful for their willingness to talk and for the education I received. One of the most powerful of these meetings was with two amazing same sex people that are married and work for the district. They chose to meet with my wife and me in our home. I spent an hour hearing their stories, challenges, joys, and the incredibly hurtful treatment and comments that they endure from others outside and inside of our school district. That conversation brought into sharp focus the need for me to lead in a manner that systematically addresses' the ways we support everyone in this district. This had gone from an intellectual or academic commitment to these two educators, to one that was deeply personal. You can't have conversations like this and not walk away without a personal commitment to never do or say anything that would add to that pain and suffering. You become motivated in a much stronger way to do everything that you can to make sure everyone feels welcomed, valued, safe, and connected.

What's next? This was a question I was asked a lot this week-end. This is what I have so far:

- Continue to take ownership and apologize for the example I used in the sermon.
- Continue to meet with anyone who wants to talk with me personally about this.
- Create a task force to specifically address the needs of our LGBTQI+ students and staff. Utilize people from the LGBTQI+ community who are experts in this area.
- Provide training for all staff, specifically for our leadership team.
- Work to build trust and a positive reputation.
- Continue with scheduled unconscious bias training and restorative practices.

I am committed to being a positive supporter of all students and staff, especially for those of the LGBTQI+ community. I believe that in the end, positive change will come from all of this.

Sincerely,

D. Creswell

David Creswell
Superintendent