



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

MAR 21 2023

The Honorable Elise M. Stefanik
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stefanik:

Thank you for your November 4, 2022 letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).

DoDEA is an institution whose mission is to educate, engage, and empower military-connected students to succeed in a dynamic world. DoDEA, as one of only two Federally operated school systems, is responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and managing pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educational programs on behalf of the Department of Defense at designated installations. DoDEA is globally positioned, operating 160 accredited schools in 8 districts located in 11 foreign countries, 7 States, Guam, and Puerto Rico, with more than 66,000 students across the globe. DoDEA also arranges and financially supports educational requirements for eligible dependents who are not able to attend a DoDEA school.

DoDEA is committed to ensuring all eligible school-aged children of military families are provided a world-class education that prepares them for postsecondary education and career success. In 2015, DoDEA initiated the implementation of a new College and Career Ready Standards-based curriculum with an aligned assessment system across all its schools. Our focus is on ensuring all students have access to challenging coursework and all classes offered across DoDEA use the same curriculum and materials. These standards set grade-by-grade learning expectations for students in grades Pre-K-12; establish clear, consistent, and high learning goals; and are designed to prepare students for college and careers.

The results of this sustained commitment to excellence in education are clear. In the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results — also known as the Nation's Report Card — DoDEA student scores were the highest in the nation across all demographic cohorts, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Specifically, fourth and eighth-grade students attending DoDEA schools led the Nation on the 2022 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments, significantly outperforming the national average. Importantly, pandemic learning loss did not significantly impact DoDEA as students' average scores increased, while national average scores significantly decreased. Additionally, DoDEA continues to increase participation and performance in Advanced Placement courses: between 2017 and 2022, participation rose by 29 percent while scores rose by 34 percent. Similarly, DoDEA students' performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test consistently outperformed the national average in 2022.

DoDEA serves a highly diverse community of military families, and its educational materials reflect that diversity. Across DoDEA schools, educators create inclusive classroom communities where students learn about the world through many perspectives and make connections to their own lives. DoDEA educators use primary resources from multiple perspectives and multiple cultures. Procurement solicitations for DoDEA's curriculum materials and learning resources include standard language requiring materials to be free of any perceived bias and present balanced coverage of multi-cultural contributions and representations.

At the local level, the selection of materials in DoDEA's information centers is a continuous process conducted by each school under the supervision of the school principal. A rigorous selection process ensures materials have positive reviews from professional school library journals and are developmentally appropriate. In addition, students, teachers, and parents may recommend titles and subjects for future purchases. The materials lists are curated for purchase consideration and reviews them with the local school administration prior to purchase.

DoDEA actively engages parents and guardians to ensure they are well-informed of their children's education and can provide feedback or raise concerns in several different ways. Parents are full participants in their child's education, and DoDEA schools encourage parents to meet with their child's teacher, including through parent-teacher conferences and other touchpoints.

Parents and guardians are also encouraged to visit DoDEA classrooms and information centers. DoDEA teachers will supply alternative materials to students when requested by parents or guardians. In addition, parents or guardians may also formally challenge their student's use of materials by following the procedures prescribed in DoDEA Administrative Instruction (AI) 2992.01, "Information Center and Classroom Supplemental Materials Selection Policy and Challenge Procedures" (enclosed). Under DoDEA AI 2992.01, when a parent or guardian expresses concern about a book, school staff work to resolve the issue informally. Informal resolutions can include reading an alternative text or ensuring that a student does not check out the school information center book in question.

Parents can also raise concerns via their local School Advisory Committees overseas or School Boards domestically. The Committees and Boards promote communication and problem-solving among sponsors, parents, legal guardians, family members, students, and military community leaders at the local level. They can advise on school initiatives, procedures, policies, curriculum, and budget matters. Membership in each Committee and Board is elected from among sponsors, parents, and legal guardians of students, DoDEA professional school employees, and, in some cases, DoDEA high school students.

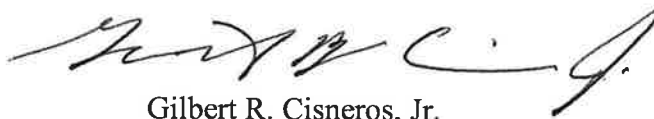
In September 2022, the Official Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs examined alleged statements made by a DoDEA employee on the employee's social media account as published in a September 14, 2022 online media publication. The Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs determined the employee was speaking in a personal capacity; that the comments were posted on the employee's personal social media account; and that workplace colleagues who

were interviewed had not witnessed the employee make the same comments within the workplace.

As a result, the Director, DoDEA took no disciplinary action. Federal ethics rules permit employees to express personal views when doing so does not create the appearance that the views expressed are those of the employee's agency or are prohibited by the Hatch Act or other laws. The Director, DoDEA concluded that it was appropriate for the employee to continue working for DoDEA. Separately, as part of a headquarters restructuring, the employee was reassigned to another position that does not include diversity, equity, and inclusion-specific responsibilities.

Thank you for your continued strong support for our Service members, civilian workforce, and their families. I am sending a similar letter to Representative Franklin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.