



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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December 15, 2010

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT REACHED WITH PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL DISTRICT OVER STUDENT-ON-STUDENT HARASSMENT

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The complaint, made by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), alleged persistent harassment, including an incident in December 2009, in which approximately 30 Asian students were attacked and approximately 13 were sent to the emergency room. Under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, school districts are required to protect students from harassment based on race, color, sex, national origin, or religion.

With the cooperation of the district, AALDEF, numerous community advocacy groups, students, and numerous witnesses, the department conducted an extensive investigation of the school district's policies and practices with regard to student-on-student harassment. The settlement agreement will ensure that the district: (1) retains an expert consultant in the area of harassment and discrimination based on race, color, and/or national origin to review the district's policies and procedures concerning harassment; (2) develops and implements a comprehensive plan for preventing and addressing student-on-student harassment at the high school; (3) conducts training of faculty, staff and students on discrimination and harassment based on race, color, and/or national origin and to increase multi-cultural awareness; (4) maintains records of investigations and responses to allegations of harassment; and (5) provides annual compliance reports to the department and the PHRC as well as makes harassment data publicly available.

“Schools have an obligation to ensure a safe learning environment for everyone. We will continue to use all of the tools in our law enforcement arsenal to ensure that all students can go to school without fearing harassment,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “I applaud the proactive steps taken by the school district to address this

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matter, as well as the courageous actions of students, parents and community leaders who came forward to call attention to the pervasive harassment.”

Zane David Memeger, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, added that “all children in the school district are the big winners today.” Memeger said “we hope that the investigation and our Settlement Agreement represent the start of a corrective action plan that eventually will eliminate student-on-student harassment in all Philadelphia public schools, not just South Philadelphia High School.”

The enforcement of Title IV is a top priority of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. Additional information about the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department is available on its website at www.justice.gov/crt. Additional information about the U.S. Attorney's Office is available on its website at www.justice.gov/usao/pae.

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