



# Educator Story Summaries

## Table of contents

Amy Donofrio .....	2
Matthew Hawn .....	5
Brittany Hogan .....	10
Dr. James Whitfield .....	13

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# Amy Donofrio

**Position:** Teacher (13 years)

**Location:** Jacksonville, Florida

**District:** Duval County Public Schools (DCPS)

## **Complaint Link:**

[UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT OF THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA Case No: AMY DONOFRIO, Plaintiff v. DUVAL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS](#)

## **Demographics of School District:**

- Black/African American 42.8%
- White 32.9%
- Hispanic/Latinx 14.2%
- Two or more races 4.9%
- Asian or Asian Pacific Islander 4.5%
- American Indian or Alaska Native 0.4%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 0.3%

## **Overview:**

(From [Southern Poverty Law Center - SPLC](#))

Students in Jacksonville, Florida, are returning to school next week, but Amy Donofrio – a nationally recognized educator for 13 years, who was banned from her classroom after [declining to remove a Black Lives Matter flag](#) from above her classroom door – will not be there to greet them because the school district did not renew her contract.

Teachers with Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) typically operate on a year-to-year contract, though less than 1% are not renewed each year. While other non-renewed teachers were notified prior to their last working day on June 7, the school district withheld notice from Donofrio until June 30, the last day of her contract.

The school district made this decision despite Donofrio’s current designation by the Florida Department of Education as “highly effective,” based on her exceptional evaluation and student growth scores. The move follows years of alleged retaliation by DCPS and former principal Scott Schneider against Donofrio for her efforts to oppose racism toward Black students at [Riverside High School](#), which until recently was named Robert E. Lee High School in honor of the Confederate States Army leader who was an enslaver and white supremacist.

“Teaching is not just my career, it’s my life, my heart. Being unable to return to my classroom this fall devastates me beyond what I can fully articulate,” Donofrio said. “But what happened to me is symptomatic of a much bigger problem, and that’s the extreme ends Duval County Public Schools has shown it’s willing to go to uphold racism. Administrators and school board members’ cowardly failure to stand beside Black students is exactly why I knew I had to.”

In April, the Southern Poverty Law Center and [Scott Wagner & Associates, P.A.](#) filed a lawsuit on her behalf.

“We decided to work with Ms. Donofrio because of the years of documented retaliation,” said Cathleen Scott, managing attorney for Scott Wagner & Associates, P.A.

Donofrio’s legal claims were further validated by the Florida Office of Inspector General, which granted her official [whistleblower status](#) on the grounds of “reasonable cause” – a designation obtained by very few applicants.

Donofrio’s case is part of a pattern of attacks targeting educators’ efforts to support Black students and oppose racism. In May, Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran gave a [public speech](#) boasting that he “made sure” Donofrio was terminated, and vowed to “police” Florida teachers “on a daily basis.”

In June, the Florida Board of Education [adopted a new rule](#) attempting to ban teachers from addressing race and equity in the classroom. This directive to exclude inclusive and culturally responsive education, strategically mislabeled “Critical Race Theory,” is one of dozens of regressive policies being introduced by aggressive conservative politicians across the nation.

“Unfortunately, Ms. Donofrio is not alone. We are seeing teachers across Florida and the country who are facing persecution from their school districts for teaching the truth in schools and for creating safe learning spaces for all children,” said Evian White De Leon, one of the SPLC attorneys representing Donofrio in her case.

In 2015, Donofrio and her students co-founded the [EVAC Movement](#) to address the significant inequities faced by Jacksonville’s Black youth. They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, presenting at the White House, [Tedx](#) Talks and four times at Harvard University, with many becoming the first in their family to graduate high school. Last year, they became published authors in *Harvard Educational Review*. Donofrio’s [lawsuit](#) highlights how, instead of celebrating their achievements, the school district shut them down.

## News Links:

- [SPLC Case Overview](#)
- [Teacher suspended for refusing to remove a Black Lives Matter flag](#)
- [Teacher Amy Donofrio | Florida This Week](#)
- [DCPS Settles ‘Black Lives Matter’ Flag Case, Terminates Whistleblower Teacher](#)

- [BLM Reprisal: Florida school district terminates teacher who stood up for Black students](#)
- [Petition to reinstate Ms. Donofrio](#)

## Timeline:

### 2014-15:

- Amy Donofrio was asked to lead a co-ed 9th grade leadership class. The class was an elective credit for students. Donofrio was charged with creating/curating the content for the class.
- Donofrio didn't realize the "volume of trauma" that the students would bring into the class.
  - Common themes uplifted by students in class: loss of loved ones to violence, incarcerated family members, and negative interactions with police officers.
- Class Curriculum Shift: Donofrio decided to invite community members into the class to meet with the students. This began the start of [EVAC Movement](#). Rather than class *speakers*, Donofrio invited community members to be *listeners*.

### 2016-17:

- Third year of EVAC program and class. Amy Donofrio initially hung a Black Lives Matter flag at/around her classroom.

### October 2020:

- Larger flag displayed outside of Donofrio's classroom. Students would take selfies near the flag outside of the school.

### November 2020:

- Donofrio was told that the hanging of the flag may violate school policy. She asked for the policy and was not provided with one.

### March 2021:

- School board hearings occurred at Robert E Lee around the proposed school name change. The hearings, according to Amy Donofrio, were filled with "hate speech." Donofrio recorded the school board meeting, posted videos and some of the videos went viral.
- "They start carrying in these blue and gray confederacy pom poms to shake after they each say their hateful rhetoric, like to cheer it on, even though the principal literally at the mic was asked, 'Are they allowed to have those,' he said no, and

allow them to sit and continue to do it while activists were removed for resisting hate speech being said.”

- Donofrio was asked to remove the BLM flag or school staff would remove it. Flag was removed by the school custodian.
- Donofrio was placed on administrative leave.

**April 16, 2021:**

- Amy Donofrio [filed a complaint](#) that the Duval County School Board removed her from her classroom in [retaliation for her protected speech](#), her complaints about discrimination, and, more broadly, her support of Black students’ lives. Later in the month, students started a [petition to reinstate Donofrio](#).

**May 2021:**

- State Commissioner [Corcoran stated that Donofrio was fired](#).

**June 2021:**

- Florida Board of Education adopted a new rule attempting to ban teachers from addressing race and equity in the classroom. Donofrio’s contract was not renewed on the last day of her contract (June 30, 2021).

**August 2021:**

- The Duval County School Board [voted to reach a settlement](#) with Amy Donofrio.

# Matthew Hawn

**Position:** Social studies teacher and baseball coach

**Location:** Blountville, Tennessee

**District:** Sullivan County

## Demographics of School District:

- Total Population: 79,890
- White: 96%
- Black: 1 %
- Hispanic or Latino: 1%
- Asian: 0%
- Two or more races: 1%

## Overview:

(From [\*The Atlantic\*](#))

The first time Matthew Hawn suspected that he might run into trouble for what he was teaching was last August. His contemporary-issues class was discussing the events in Kenosha, Wisconsin, where protesters had taken to the streets after a police officer was filmed shooting 29-year-old Jacob Blake in the back. Hawn showed his students a picture of Kyle Rittenhouse, the 17-year-old accused of killing two people and injuring another during the protests, to demonstrate the concept of white privilege. “What are we going to do about racism in the U.S.?” he asked his students.

The principal of Sullivan Central High School, where Hawn taught, pulled him aside at a football game. Apparently, Hawn had mistakenly posted the images from his contemporary-issues class to another class he taught on personal finance. A parent had seen the materials and complained. Hawn corrected his error and apologized. A couple of weeks later, he heard from a county official, warning him that teachers are expected to provide students with access to varying points of view. “Of course,” Hawn replied. By October, the August lesson was circulating among students and parents on Facebook.

Then, in January, a group of rioters took over the U.S. Capitol. Hawn wasn’t quite sure how to talk to his students about what had happened, so he decided to focus on the 2016 election instead. He assigned an Atlantic article by Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The First White President,” which argues that Donald Trump was elected on the strength of white grievances. A parent complained about the slurs used in the piece and accused Hawn of not presenting multiple points of view. The central office issued an official reprimand. In April, to address the trial of the Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin for the

murder of George Floyd, Hawn showed his students a performance by the poet Kyla Jenée Lacey, titled “White Privilege.” A couple of weeks later, Hawn received notice that the director of schools wanted him fired.

“There has been a lot of talk online that accuses me of moving to dismiss Mr. Hawn because he taught anti-racism lessons,” said David Cox, then the Sullivan County director of schools, at Hawn’s dismissal hearing. “Sullivan County Schools and I in no way condone racism of any kind.” (The school district declined to comment further for this story.)

Hawn is now contesting his dismissal. In a hearing yesterday, Ingrid Deloach, the assistant director of Sullivan County Schools, described what she perceived as “a hint of disrespect, and a very strong sense of arrogance” in Hawn’s attitude. Coates’s article “was a very liberal perspective,” she said, and although strong perspectives are appropriate for a contemporary-issues class, “maybe a more conservative stance would have been an appropriate alternative.” Because the hearing is ongoing, Hawn limited what he was willing to tell me: He claimed that he never told school officials, “There is no credible source for a differing point of view” than Coates’s assessment of Trump, but he would not elaborate on why the district’s letter of reprimand states that he did. Tennessee recently passed anti–Critical Race Theory legislation, banning educators from teaching students that any individuals are “inherently privileged, sexist, or oppressive” based on their race or sex. This may have shaped the environment around Hawn’s firing; the bill was approved by the legislature shortly before Hawn received notification of his dismissal. But the teacher was cagey about assigning political motives to school officials out of fear that they could use that against him in future hearings.

## News Links:

- [He Taught a Ta-Nehisi Coates Essay. Then He Was Fired.](#)
- [He Taught About White Privilege and Got Fired. Now He’s Fighting to Get His Job Back](#)
- [Appeal hearing for dismissed Sullivan County teacher concludes, decision to be made in October](#)
- [Hearing officer upholds Sullivan County teacher Matthew Hawn firing vote](#)
- [Fundraiser for Matthew Hawn by Leanne Hawn: Stand With Coach Hawn](#)

## Timeline:

### 2008:

- Matthew Hawn was granted tenure after joining the faculty of Sullivan Central High School, Blountville, Tennessee in 2005. A social studies teacher and coach,

he has taught a course called “Contemporary Issues” since 2010, with no noted problems.

- After a variety of racially motivated incidents in our country, Hawn used these as the basis of instruction. “A white police officer had shot and killed Jacob Blake, an unarmed Black man, during a call about a domestic disturbance. Hawn knew what he would be talking about that day.” Because Hawn offered real world events as classroom discussion topics, controversy was likely inevitable. “Hawn, 43, used the news cycle to show students, almost all of them white, how systemic racism is an indisputable fact of American life.”

**August 2020:**

- Hawn discussed Kyle Rittenhouse shootings in WI in his contemporary issues course, stating that “white privilege is a fact.”

**October 2020:**

- Hawn received a letter from the school’s director of high school curriculum and instruction. Hawn is called into [principal’s office] to discuss his Kyle Rittenhouse class and “white privilege” discussion and was notified that he needs to provide “varying viewpoints.”

**January 2021:**

- Following the Capitol insurrection, Hawn taught a class in his Contemporary Events class to explore how Trump won the 2016 election. Hawn shared Ta-Nehisi Coates’ essay, “Donald Trump is the First White President,” which pairs the history of white supremacy with the rise of President Donald Trump. Hawn also discussed other possible explanations for Trump’s victory, including his use of social media and on how his rhetoric resonated with his voters.

**February 3, 2021:**

- Hawn receives an official reprimand from Sullivan County Schools for violating the Tennessee Teacher Code of Ethics, specifically, that a Tennessee “educator shall...not unreasonably deny the students access to varying points of view.” (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-1003(b)(2)).

**February 2021:**

- Mr. Hawn now “accused of insubordination and repeated unprofessional conduct for lessons and materials he used to teach about racism and white privilege”

**Mid-April 2021:**

- During the spring trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, accused of murdering George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, he had students dissect a provocative spoken word poem titled “White Privilege” by Kyla Jenée Lacey. In light of his reprimand, he also asks his students to discuss the concept of “Black privilege” and to read an op-ed by CNN journalist John Blake.

**May 5, 2021:**

- Sullivan County School terminates Hawn for “insubordination” and “unprofessional conduct.”

**May 10, 2021:**

- Between May 5 and May 10, Hawn was given the opportunity to write a letter to the director of schools and apologize for my actions. He wrote the letter and apologized for the language, but not for denying students access to varying points of view. May 10 is when the official dismissal process began.

**June 8, 2021:**

- The Sullivan County Board of Education voted to continue with the dismissal process, allowing him to begin the appellate process. In the 6-1 vote board member Matthew Spivey voted no on the CCox recommendation to continue with the dismissal process saying he did not see enough evidence to continue.

**Aug. 16-18, 2021:**

- Three-day appeal hearing held in Blountville. “During a hearing on Aug. 17, Hawn and his lawyer.... argued that the district took his lessons out of context. They said district administrators did not give him the proper resources or training to address racially volatile news events, and after taking issue with the way he taught about racism and white privilege, never told him how they expected him to teach those concepts.”

**October 22, 2021:**

- Hearing officer, Dale Conder, upheld the Sullivan County Department of Education dismissal of Hawn from his teaching position.

**Mid-October 2021:**

- Hawn is seeking to appeal in Sullivan County Chancery Court. Board attorney Pat Hull has said that the court could rule on the case or send it back to the hearing officer for further action.

# Brittany Hogan

**Position:** Director of educational equity and diversity for the Rockwood School District

**Location:** St. Louis County, Missouri

**District:** Rockwood School District

## Demographics of School District:

Table B03002 [View table](#)

Column	Rockwood R-VI School District				St. Louis County				Missouri			
White	87.4%	±0.8%	104,005	±1,387	66%	±0.1%	658,354	±463	79.4%	±0%	4,849,901	±1,099
Black	1.2%†	±0.3%	1,411	±382	24.1%	±0.2%	240,128	±1,524	11.4%	±0.1%	696,379	±2,832
Native	0.1%†	±0%	69	±49	0.1%†	±0%	1,284	±277	0.4%	±0%	23,632	±1,152
Asian	5.8%	±0.5%	6,921	±557	4.3%	±0.1%	42,747	±806	2%	±0%	119,481	±1,242
Islander	0%†	±0.1%	50	±56	0%†	±0%	301	±54	0.1%	±0%	7,376	±508
Other	0.2%†	±0.2%	276	±198	0.3%†	±0.1%	2,754	±679	0.2%†	±0%	9,996	±1,096
Two+	2%†	±0.4%	2,331	±434	2.3%	±0.2%	22,517	±1,589	2.4%	±0.1%	143,354	±3,708
Hispanic	3.3%†	±0.6%	3,955	±731	2.9%	±0%	28,834	±0	4.2%	±0%	254,791	±210

## Overview:

Brittany Hogan is a native of Chicago, she holds a Bachelor of Art in Psychology from Hampton University and a Master of Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. Until recently, Hogan served as the Director of Educational Equity & Diversity for the Rockwood School District in the St. Louis region. Hogan specialized in district level and school-based initiatives around educational equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Brittany Hogan originally joined the Rockwood School District to work with the district's busing program. She coordinated the system that brings 1,400 mostly Black and brown kids from St. Louis out to the suburbs every day. It's the largest and longest-running program like this in the country, one that started back in the '80s as a desegregation measure. For most kids, it's a 45-minute bus ride each way.


In her position, Hogan was the only Black woman in a district leadership role, until a group of "concerned parents" went after her and other educators for their efforts to teach a more diverse curriculum. Shortly after last fall's election, Hogan said, she started receiving letters from parents who did not approve of diversity initiatives and a districtwide reading program that included books by Black authors. One woman called her to say her work was "ungodly" and that she would pray for her, Hogan said.

“I got accused of being racist against white people. I got accused of being divisive, of basically not being a good person, not doing good things for children, because we’re talking about race and talking about race is racist essentially. Now, mind you, I did not pick this book. The curriculum department picked it. But I was merely supporting the work and I was getting the blame for the book. And it was getting very uncomfortable, the constant trolling on social media of accusing me of being divisive. I could post anything and they would say, like, this is a racist book. Why are you promoting this? Why do you have a job in Rockwood? If you don’t change, then we’ll get rid of your job.”

At least two Rockwood administrators of color said they have received death threats this year, including Brittany Hogan, the district’s director of educational equity and diversity. The second was Terry Harris, Rockwood’s executive director of student services. Rockwood district's decision to provide personal security for Hogan in light of the threats.

Hogan and Superintendent Miles have both announced their resignations at the end of the school year.

## News Links:

- [Rockwood School District: Diversity educator Brittany Hogan was forced to resign.](#)
- [Critical race theory battles are driving frustrated, exhausted educators out of their jobs](#)
- [Death Threats and Fights Over Critical Race Theory Have Driven at Least Six Educators to Resign](#)
- [Director of Educational Equity, Diversity Brittany Hogan Resigns](#)
-  [Educators Under Pressure From Parents Amid Critical Race Theory Debate](#)

## Timeline:

### Summer 2020:

- Concerned Parents of the Rockwood School District emerged in Summer 2020 on Facebook. Mainly formed for lots of parents' interests in how schools’ opening plans. Parents wanted school to start in person. That was a huge issue, and then when it was announced that schools weren’t, that was also an issue.
- Brittany Hogan was the director of educational equity and diversity for the Rockwood School District in St. Louis County, Missouri for about a year at this point having served in RSD since 2013 when she transitioned from social work in the non-profit sector to facilitating, coordinating and directing educational diversity and inclusion.

**September 2020:**

- After the death of George Floyd, Hogan has curated classroom discourse surrounding racial equity and social justice than in her entire eight years in RSD. First run-ins with this concerned parents group this past fall, when teachers were doing read-alouds of books featuring Black and brown kids.

**End of January 2021:**

- Brittany Hogan first noticed the tension between parents and administrators. The curriculum department asked if they could partner with her on a districtwide book club. Everyone in the community was invited to read the same book and talk about it on Zoom. The book they chose was *Stamped* by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds, which bluntly walks kids through the history of racist ideas.
- Hogan faced backlash over parents' beliefs about critical race theory. She began to be constantly trolled on social media, accused of being divisive.
- Parents also claimed she was behind a district ban on "thin blue line" flags touting support for law enforcement agents.

**February 2021:**

- Brittany Hogan started to receive indirect death threats. In light of the threats, Rockwood district decided to provide personal security for Hogan.
- Hogan started feeling like her physical safety could be in jeopardy. Intuitively, she felt the escalation getting to a really bad and negative place. Physically it began to make her sick, like headaches and stomach hurting. And then mentally drained.

**March 2021:**

- Hogan at this point felt very unsafe and concerned. Parents continued to say things to her, follow her, and call her office, to the point where her secretary was unwilling to answer the phone if it was an unknown number.

**April 2021:**

- Escalated even further and Hogan decided to resign mid-April.

# Dr. James Whitfield

**Position:** Principal

**Location:** Colleyville Heritage High School, Colleyville, TX

**District:** Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District (GCISD)

## Demographics of School District:

- 54% White
- 5.7% Black
- 10.1% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander
- 24.3% Hispanic/Latino
- 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 0.2% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.
- (Source: [Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District - US News Education](#))

## Overview:

(from [The Daily Beast](#))

Parents, teachers, and students were furious when a beloved high school principal in Texas was suspended from his post at Colleyville High School last month. Dr. James Whitfield, the school's first Black principal, was put on administrative leave after being accused of pushing critical race theory in the school's curriculum. Now, it seems as if their attempts to save him were all in vain. On Monday night, the Grapevine Colleyville Independent School District [voted unanimously](#) not to renew Whitfield's contract.

After a lengthy discussion about budgeting and tax rates, board members opened the floor to community members who had prepared speeches to share in support of Whitfield. After being warned by the board that there would be no "noise or clapping" during the segment, nearly [three dozen attendees](#) took to the podium on Whitfield's behalf.

"I grew up in the Jim Crow South, and what's going on here is not particularly new. It's an old playbook," one resident of Grapevine, who said she lived in the area for 10 years, said. "But to beat it, we need to start being very clear about what's OK and what's not OK—or we're going to continue being bullied by a reactionary minority.

"It is not OK to make baseless accusations about what our schools are teaching, particularly when all you know about the topic is what's been told by professional propagandists. It is not OK to demonstrate contempt for another human being by making salacious comments about his family... To the board: It is not OK to punish a respected educator for defending himself when you could not find the intestinal fortitude to defend him as you, yourself, should've done."

During the summer of 2020 as a racial awakening swept the country after the George Floyd protests, Whitfield [wrote a letter](#) to the academic community. In it, he said, "Education is the key to stomping out ignorance, hate, and systemic racism."

That letter appeared to prompt accusations that he was pushing critical race theory in school.

In July, Whitfield was accused by a failed [school board candidate](#) of supporting critical race theory being taught in schools. Soon after, Whitfield was put on paid leave. The superintendent of Grapevine-Colleyville schools then submitted a request that Whitfield's stint as principal of Colleyville Heritage High School should end.

There's [no evidence](#) that critical race theory is part of the school curriculum, and Whitfield has been adamant that he has not shown any public support for it.

After receiving the news, Whitfield said in a [Facebook post](#), "I was not given any clear reasoning behind the decision and was not given a timetable regarding further steps. I was simply told that it was in the best interest of the district."

Monday's meeting was not the first time the community spoke out about what they said was unjust treatment of Whitfield. Students planned [school walkouts](#), and parents have been [vocal on social media](#) about their support of Whitfield.

At the meeting, a graduate of Colleyville High School who said she also served for 15 years as the assistant coach for a couple of the district's school's debate teams, said, "Maya Angelou said, 'When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.' ... Dr. Whitfield has also shown us who he is: He is warm and welcoming to his students... he is also a man of principle. He has also shown us that he is willing to hold us accountable as a diverse community where white voices have long drown out diversity... We should all talk less and listen more to Dr. Whitfield."

As applause broke out and the board had to remind attendees that there would be no noise of any kind, a district parent stood up to make a speech.

"I started a petition in support of this gentleman over here," the woman said while pointing in the direction of Whitfield. "That petition now has 2,200-plus signatures."

Another parent—and an alumna of Grapevine High School—said that she loved growing up in the area "but what I've seen happening, it really makes me sad." She continued, "[Whitfield] is known by his supporters as an enthusiastic educator—and not the CRT boogeyman. And speaking for him, he is being impugned even though we have a diversity advisory council for doing what the rest of the district and he should be doing."

Nevertheless, the board approved Monday night that Whitfield's contract would be terminated at the end of the current school year. He still has the opportunity to [appeal the decision](#) and lead Colleyville High School into the 2022-23 academic year. He will have to [present evidence and testimony](#) to argue his case if he wants to start a new contract.

In response to the wave of support, Whitfield released a statement Wednesday saying he was disappointed that the students' wellbeing was not the primary focus of the school board. However, he said he was "humbled by the dozens of community members who spoke so passionately on my behalf. This painful journey would be much harder without the support of those willing to fight for what is right."

"I've been caught up in other people's agendas," he said. "My only agenda is

serving kids and making sure that every student walking those halls has access to a great education. They feel celebrated, they feel welcomed each day, they feel nurtured. They have an opportunity to grow. That's what I hope we can get back to doing because I think that's what we're missing in this whole thing."

## News Links:

- [Dr. Whitfield's Facebook post](#) (7/31)
- [Former school board candidate calls for firing of Colleyville Heritage HS principal](#) (Article published 8/3, the meeting described took place on 7/26)
- [Texas parents accused a Black principal of promoting critical race theory. The district has now suspended him.](#) (9/1)
- [Opinion | A win for white power at a school board meeting in Grapevine, Tex.](#) (9/22)
- [Grapevine-Colleyville, Texas School Board Ousts Black Principal James Whitfield Over Critical Race Theory](#) (9/22)
- [A Texas School Board Voted Not To Renew A Black Principal's Contract After A Controversy Over Critical Race Theory](#) (9/25)

## Timeline:

### Spring 2019:

- Dr. Whitfield was named Principal at Heritage Middle School (HMS) after serving one year as Assistant Principal at Colleyville Heritage High School (CHHS).

### June 27, 2019:

- Dr. Whitfield answers a phone call from a GCISD administrator asking him to check his email for a message that has just been forwarded. The email reads, "Is this the Dr. Whitfield we want as an example for our students?" The image attached is a picture of Whitfield and his wife, who is white, kissing on the beach in Mexico during a trip they took for their 5-year anniversary. Whitfield recalls his subsequent phone call with the administrator:

*Me: Hello, what on earth is this about?*

*Person: Well, if you could just take the photo down we'd appreciate it.*

*Me: A photo of my wife and I kissing on the beach? Take it down? For what?*

*Person: Well, we just don't want people to stir up stuff.*

*Me: This is unbelievable. OK, I'll take it down.*

### May 18, 2020:

- After major successes in his first year as HMS Principal, including the esteemed recognition of HMS as an AVID National Demonstration School, Dr. Whitfield is promoted once again, this time as Principal of CHHS. This makes him the first African American principal in CHHS's 25-year history.

#### **May 25, 2020:**

- George Floyd is brutally murdered by Derek Chauvin, and the footage capturing this heinous act of police brutality is permanently ingrained in American collective consciousness.

#### **June 3, 2020:**

- Inspired by the public response to Floyd's murder, Dr. Whitfield composed an inspiring and uplifting message he sent to the entire district via email. Excerpts:

*I will be 42 years old next month and, never in my life, have I experienced this level of support when it comes to issues of race. I cannot begin to tell you how encouraging it has been to have so many of my white brothers and sisters buck the status quo by calling, texting, unashamedly saying that black lives do, indeed, matter, peacefully marching with me, and making a commitment to learn and take meaningful action...*

*Let's not allow this moment to be a flash-in-the-pan. Let's commit to the work and the hard, vulnerable, and uncomfortable conversations that we must have to ensure we grow personally and professionally. Our youth are always watching us but now, more than ever, our young people of color, specifically, are watching to see how we will respond. Will we retreat back into comfort or will we advance with great vigor into the often turbulent waters that come with tearing down systems of oppression? I'm geared up and ready for demolition for our kids and our nation. Please join me and let's do this!*

*I love you all dearly and very much look forward to the journey ahead! I may be out of the building but I will continue to work with you to move heaven and earth for all of our kids!*

#### **July 26, 2021:**

- Stetson Clark, who ran a failed campaign for a seat on GCISD's board of trustees, speaks at a school board meeting. During his allotted two minutes, Clark goes on a vicious tirade smearing Whitfield; he accuses Whitfield of promoting "the conspiracy theory of systemic racism," which he spins as the belief that "we should all be working to destroy our businesses, our school districts, our city, even our state." After Clark is reminded of the policy that speakers may not criticize particular district employees by name, a man in attendance shouted out, "How 'bout you fire that guy [Dr. Whitfield]?" Clark continued to ignore the policy, concluding his tirade by demanding [Whitfield's] contract be "terminated effective immediately," which was met with impassioned jeers and applause from some in attendance.

#### **July 31, 2021:**

- Dr. Whitfield used Facebook to make a statement denouncing those who have sought to vilify him as a radical seeking to incite violence and indoctrinate the children of CHHS. He clarified the truth about his core commitments as an educator and unapologetically denounces racism and hatred in all forms. The [Facebook post](#) goes viral.

#### **August 23, 2021:**

- CHHS students [showed up at a GCISD meeting](#) to support Dr. Whitfield and voice their opposition to the slanderous remarks about him.

#### **August 30, 2021:**

- GCISD Superintendent Robin Ryan informed parents in an email that Dr. Whitfield has been suspended indefinitely, and that GCISD won't go into specifics "because it is a personnel issue."

#### **September 1, 2021:**

- GCISD released a follow-up statement in response to media coverage of Dr. Whitfield's suspension: "The decision to place Dr. Whitfield on administrative leave was not a result of statements made by members of the public, including those who spoke at recent meetings of the GCISD Board of Trustees," the statement said. "Nor was the decision made in response to allegations Dr. Whitfield was teaching Critical Race Theory, or because of the photos on his social media account that were brought to the attention of the District in 2019." Still, no substantive details or reasons for the suspension were included in the statement.

#### **September 10, 2021:**

- CHHS students organized a walk-out of their Friday morning classes in protest of Whitfield's suspension, demanding answers for this decision.

#### **September 13, 2021:**

- GCISD officials [told](#) Dr. Whitfield that Superintendent Ryan will recommend nonrenewal, refusing to explain why.

#### **September 20, 2021:**

- Board voted 7-0 for nonrenewal. In explanation, Dr. Whitfield was accused of being "disrespectful, unreasonable and insubordinate," of sowing division in the community, of failing to communicate with colleagues and of unprofessional conduct. Gema Padgett, executive director of HR for GCISD, said many of these concerns dated to early 2020, long before the allegations surfaced around critical race theory.

#### **October 4, 2021:**

- Dr. Whitfield's letter to the board requested an "open hearing" and a chance to prove he deserves his job. The hearing has been scheduled for Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 9 AM.