

## **Boston Latin School Could Face Federal Investigation**

Community leaders are seeking a federal probe of Boston Latin School, the oldest public school in the nation, and its headmaster as they demand a more thorough investigation into the alleged mishandling of allegations of racism at the prestigious school.

The local NAACP chapter is calling on the Department of Justice to investigate how the school responded when students brought to administrators' attention racially charged social media posts made by other students.

"Ultimately, what they'll be looking for is a racially hostile learning environment," said NAACP Boston President Michael Curry. "We believe that there is valid evidence of that, and we're hoping that they will end up taking a look at it."

The school was the subject of an internal investigation stemming from seven alleged incidents of racism between November 2014 and January 2016, according to the Boston Public Schools website.

The district's Office of Equity found the school violated its policy in responding to one of the incidents, when a student used a racial slur to threaten toward a peer, the school system said. A male student allegedly made a comment about lynching to a black female student.

"The review found BLS did not adequately investigate the incident, did not adequately discipline the student, nor take appropriate steps to ensure the support and safety of the targeted student," the district wrote on its website.

In another incident, two black students presented the headmaster with a binder full of racially charged social media posts. Four students accused of making the posts met privately with school administrators and "there were no further issues," the school said.

The office issued a set of recommendations to district Supt. Tommy Chang in order to "improve the culture and climate" at the Boston Latin School, which Chang pledged to implement.

"I believe the Office of Equity's investigation into Boston Latin School was handled with integrity. The NAACP is and will continue to be an important partner of the Boston Public Schools as we move forward to enhance and ensure a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. The district looks forward to working with the NAACP and other community groups," Chang said in a statement Wednesday.

Curry said civil rights leaders and organizations planned to submit the request to the U.S. Attorney's Office of Civil Rights Wednesday afternoon. They are pushing for the ousting of headmaster Lynne Mooney Teta.

"We want her gone," Curry said.

Under pressure to resign, Teta sent an open letter to the school community Tuesday night.

"After weeks of self-reflection and frank conversations, I realize that in important ways I have not succeeded," she wrote. "I am truly sorry."

"Her apology is appreciated, but it's a little too late," Curry said.

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang stood by the original investigation that found only one of seven race-based incidents was mishandled by Latin School administration, saying in a statement, "I believe the Office of Equity's investigation into Boston Latin School was handled with integrity. The NAACP is and will continue to be an important partner of the Boston Public Schools."

"I don't think a federal probe is necessary," said Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. Walsh said he thinks there are other avenues that can be explored that will be less of a distraction for students at BLS.

"We're going to have an internal review in the mayor's office separate and independent from the school department," said Walsh. "We're going to have that conversation today and see what the next step will be."

The public school is the oldest in the country, founded in 1635. Some of its famous alumni include John Hancock, Samuel Adams and Benjamin Franklin.

By Alysha Palumbo, Allison Freedman and Ari Mason