



STATEMENT OF MARIST HIGH SCHOOL - 10.12.21

As communicated to our school community yesterday, Marist High School conducted an investigation related to a reported incident at the October 9 Homecoming dance. We did so to ensure the investigation was based on facts and not a rush to judgment. We share our preliminary findings of the facts below.

At the outset, we acknowledge and apologize for the hurt this incident has caused our students, staff, alumni, and the many others who have expressed their feelings related to the video posted on social media.

Based on the facts presented to us, we realize we are dealing with two situations: the incident at the dance and the experience a number of our students have reported at our school. We will speak to both, but first address the incident at the dance.

We take very seriously the reports made by our students, some of which have been reported in social media and in the media. In order to address these reports, we immediately reviewed the video and met with staff, some of whom were chaperones, parents, and students involved in taking and posting the video, as well as students in the video.

- During the evening at the homecoming dance, students showed displeasure of the songs by kneeling, crouching down, or sitting at multiple times throughout the dance.
- Kneeling was not isolated to the song, Payaso de Rodeo, as shown in the video.
- Marist High School contacted the DJ company MG Sound to obtain a full playlist from the dance.
- MG Sound has informed us that it is common for students to gesture in the manner that was displayed on Saturday night as a way of requesting that the DJs change the song being played. The playlist shows there were 3-4 Spanish-language songs.
- The DJ, staff, and students have reported that students seen in the video kneeling to one song also were seen dancing during other Spanish-language songs.
- The chaperones indicated they saw students kneel down on several occasions throughout the evening and the DJ would respond by cutting off one song and playing another song.

Although these are the facts, we recognize there are still students at Marist who viewed this video or who were at the Homecoming dance that were hurt by these actions. Marist is a family, and when one of us hurts, we all hurt. The fact that there were students who left the homecoming dance hurt by what they witnessed shows us that there is work to do.

Here are steps we have taken to address the culture of inclusion at our school:

- In July of 2021, Marist High School hired a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).
- One of the many purposes of this role is to create opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to engage in meaningful cultural dialogue.
- In September, we started the program “We Are One” which gives faculty and staff the opportunity to gather and discuss cultural topics. We are starting our third session this



week. Topics include: Building a Cultural Community, Implicit and Unconscious Bias, and Unpacking Your Own Biases.

- Weekly, our teacher teams have been meeting to discuss professional development articles provided by our Director of DEI regarding building a cultural community in the classroom.
- Student dialogue on similar cultural topics is set to begin in early November.

As the academic year and our work with DEI progresses, we will share on our website the full details of our programming.

It is our responsibility to keep our students safe and foster an environment where all our students are respected – and feel respected. We will continue to make decisions with this in the forefront of our minds.

- Our student handbook includes a social media policy and contract which is reviewed and signed by students and parents following the social media curriculum which is delivered through students' Hawk Halls.
- In response to any external threats, Marist High School is taking steps to keep our children safe by increasing our current internal security staff and maintaining close contact with District 22 of the Chicago Police Department.