

The Denison Community School District has completed an investigation into a derogatory term, the “N” word, being used by a teacher during a Government class at Denison High School. The district was alerted to the incident on Friday, November 15th, a day after the word was used in class during instructional time.

The investigation found that during Government class, while teaching a lesson on the death penalty, students were divided into two groups to analyze a court case for its aggravating and mitigating circumstances. During small group student discussions, about aggravating and mitigating circumstances, the teacher engaged one of the groups who were discussing the case. The teacher explained to the student group that derogatory terms were used by the perpetrator while committing a horrendous act. In doing so, the teacher used the “N” word in its entirety while instructing. Many students reached out to the district for change in the manner in which controversial topics, such as racism, are handled in Government class and across the district. Denison Community School District held a public forum at a recent school board meeting to hear input from the public on the matter.

It is clear that this situation has significantly impacted the educational environment of the District. It is equally clear, that the teacher had no malicious intent. The District will work with the teacher to implement necessary changes, in order to, transition the teacher back into the classroom and address the concerns of all involved. The District is committed to working in partnership with our students, families, staff and community to implement a High School Cultural Advisory Committee, equally comprised of students, teacher leaders, and school administration. The goal of this committee will be to develop an action plan for enhancing our learning environment to ensure it is free from cultural bias. As a district, professional development will be continued and enhanced for all Denison Community School District staff in the areas of diversity and cultural training. Lastly, we will develop a School/Community Advisory Committee of parents, educators, administration and school board members to advance the communication between home and school.

As a District, we understand the significance of this situation, and regret the impact this has had on students, families, faculty, our District and community. We remain committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and staff.