



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

400 MARYLAND AVENUE, SW
WASHINGTON, DC 20202-1475

REGION XI
NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA
WASHINGTON, DC

September 30, 2024

By email only to [REDACTED]

Caroline Moore
Vice President
Parents Defending Education
4532 Cherry Hill Road #119
Arlington, VA 22207

Re: Case No. 11-23-1481
North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

Dear Ms. Moore:

On June 23, 2023, the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) notified you that pursuant to OCR's jurisdiction under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d *et seq.*, and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 100, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from the Department, we opened an investigation into your complaint against the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. You alleged that the School's Step Up to STEM summer program discriminates on the basis of race by excluding applicants who are not African American, Hispanic American, or Native American.

You cited the School's website, specifically the home page for the Step Up to STEM program and the program's Frequently Asked Questions page, as evidence that the program excludes applicants on the basis of race. At the time the complaint was filed, these web pages indicated that the Step Up to STEM program was open to "African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students." You did not identify any individual students who were denied the opportunity to participate in the program on the basis of race. The School asserted that "race is not, and never has been, used as a factor when admitting students into the program" and that it had no record of receiving any complaints from students denied participation in the program based on race.

After OCR opened this investigation, the School reported to OCR that it made changes to its website "to clarify that although the goal of [Step Up to STEM] is to provide pathways and support to minoritized groups and groups that are historically underrepresented in STEM fields and higher education," any otherwise eligible student is invited to participate regardless of race. OCR reviewed the School's current Step Up to STEM website and confirmed that the School removed any language that might have suggested that the program was open only to "African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students." The current website explains that the program is designed for students "historically underrepresented in STEM fields and

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college attendance,” and includes a non-exhaustive list of examples including Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and “students from low-income households” and students from areas of the state with the lowest rates of college attendance. Moreover, the admission criteria, as stated in multiple places on the website, requires only that a student be in eighth grade and live within over 30 North Carolina counties listed on the site. On the “Admission” webpage for the Program, under the heading “who can apply” the webpage states that the program is “open to current eighth grade students” who live in one of the counties listed on the site. There is nothing on the program website to suggest that admission is limited to any classification of students based on race or national origin. See <https://www.ncssm.edu/summer/step-up-to-stem/stem-admissions>.

OCR has determined that the revised website is sufficient to resolve the complaint allegation and require no monitoring. Thus, OCR is closing this complaint pursuant to Section 110(d) of OCR’s *Case Processing Manual*, which states that OCR will close or dismiss a complaint if OCR obtains credible information indicating that the complaint has been resolved.

This letter sets forth OCR’s determination in an individual OCR case. This letter is not a formal statement of OCR policy and should not be relied upon, cited, or construed as such. OCR’s formal policy statements are approved by a duly authorized OCR official and made available to the public. OCR also would like to make you aware that individuals who file complaints with OCR may have the right to file a private suit in federal court whether or not OCR finds a violation.

Please be advised that the School must not harass, coerce, intimidate, discriminate, or otherwise retaliate against an individual because that individual asserts a right or privilege under a law enforced by OCR or files a complaint, testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding under a law enforced by OCR. If this happens, the individual may file a retaliation complaint against the School with OCR.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release this document and related correspondence and records upon request. If OCR receives such a request, OCR will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personally identifiable information that, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

If you have any questions, please contact Sarah Morgan at (202) 987-1459 or Sarah.Morgan@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

LORI WELKER
Digitally signed by LORI WELKER
Date: 2024.09.30 13:04:18 -06'00'

Lori Welker
Team Leader, Team IV
District of Columbia Office
Office for Civil Rights