



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Regarding the conclusion of Enosburg's investigation involving allegations at the Boys' Varsity Soccer game between Winooski High School and Enosburg Falls High School on Saturday, September 18, 2021.

Enosburg Falls High School Principal Joseph Donarum has issued to me his investigation report regarding the boys' varsity soccer game between Enosburg and Winooski on September 18, 2021. The investigators interviewed all of the Enosburg High School soccer players, parents, coaches and the assigned referees who officiated at the game. None of the witnesses, including the referees, were able to corroborate racist remarks or other racist behavior by Enosburg students. All of the witnesses denied having heard or otherwise observed such behavior.

The investigators were not able to interview the student athletes from Winooski who reported the racist misconduct. A request was made for access so that the investigators could discuss the incidents with the involved Winooski student athletes. Understandably, the Winooski student athletes declined to meet either in person or by Zoom with the Enosburg High School investigators. We support their right to decide not to participate in an investigation conducted by another school district, and understand how it could feel uncomfortable for students. The investigators also requested any additional video footage and investigatory notes and were not granted access.

The Enosburg High School investigators concluded that the evidence did not substantiate the charges. There were no witnesses interviewed who had heard or observed the statements and action under

investigation. Every witness with direct knowledge of the events at issue told the investigators that they were not aware of any such misconduct.

It is basic due process that when we conduct any investigation there is always the presumption of innocence. The preponderance of the evidence must support a finding of wrongdoing. Here, we were not able to gather any direct evidence that would rebut the presumption of innocence.

I consider the investigation to be incomplete because our investigators did not have access to the Winooski students. This result underscores the difficulty that exists when students from two districts are involved in an incident. There is no mechanism for a single district to conduct a complete investigation, with interviews of both sides. We request that the Vermont Principals' Association, the entity responsible for Vermont interscholastic athletics, immediately complete the investigation by assigning a neutral third party expert. We will cooperate in any way that we can, including providing access to our investigation file, students, employees and other evidence.

Enosburg Falls High School and the Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union are committed to developing and sustaining a learning environment that is supportive of all students. We condemn racism in all of its forms. We have begun the work of focusing on equity, and have been engaging in anti-racism and anti-bias education as a district. We are proud of our efforts thus far, and realize that our work is just beginning.

It will be an intensive and ongoing process to raise awareness and make change so that all students feel a sense of belonging, dignity and justice. We also welcome the opportunity to come together with Winooski and repair harms that exist between the two school communities.

Link to FNESU equity work to date:

<https://sites.google.com/fnesu.org/fnesu-curriculum-site-public/home/educational-equity>