



CROWN CAMPAIGN

Dear Tatum Independent School District
School Superintendent Matt Crawford

Re: Discrimination in School Grooming Policies at Tatum Independent School District

CROWN Campaign is an interdisciplinary team of advocates working to support and lift up the voices of people experiencing discrimination of all forms and injustices including racial discrimination based on physical and racial/ethnic characteristics including natural hair. We at the CROWN Campaign stand against these injustices and inhumane treatment. It has been brought to our attention that two children are being negatively impacted by the actions of Tatum Independent School District. In one case, a child was found by Child Protective Services isolated in a classroom away from any social contact, his grandmother has received death threats trying to protect her family with very little assistance from law enforcement. These young children, who should be playing with their friends, have instead been isolated, removed from school, and discriminated against for hair that grows naturally out of their scalp.

This is a deep injustice and unacceptable. The families have faced severe primary trauma with this injustice, and, community has suffered from secondary trauma. We are concerned for them and the safety of their families. Michael's grandmother has shared that he is unable to sleep, and is now afraid to return back to school based on how he has been treated. His educational attainment is being interrupted and impacted by racism and discrimination within the school system, along with Kellen's. In the educational setting, isolating a child away from the group and in a separate room can cause emotional trauma similar to a prison sentence. These children are being criminalized for a natural and physical characteristic of their race. The grandma, and mother of these young boys have shed many tears about what they have gone through just trying to protect their son and grandson.

These boys feel they have done something wrong being isolated from a Tatum ISD school education experience and friends. An injustice to one person is an injustice to us all.

Racism is a social injustice

**WWW.CROWNCAMPAIGN.COM FOLLOW
@CROWNCAMPAIGN ON FB & IG**



CROWN CAMPAIGN

Racism impacts educational attainment

Racism impacts communities

Racism impacts employment

Racism has severe health impacts

The school's implementation of practices for grooming policies constitutes racist and discriminatory practices. Of note, we reviewed your current policies. Upon review of your current school grooming policy for students and reported Tatum ISD school actions against two children, who were suspended from grades Pre-K and Kindergarten classes at a Tatum Independent School District school, as well as since both boys are under grade three, we are raising our concerns in writing to the Tatum ISD School Superintendent with the following concern:

According to the Tatum ISD dress code posted online, "student's hair shall be clean and well groomed at all times and shall not obstruct vision. No extreme style or color (neon, etc...) Only natural hair color shall be allowed. No symbols, letters, or extreme designs cut in the hair shall be permitted. No ponytails, ducktails, rat-tails, male bun or puffballs shall be allowed on male students. All male hair of any type shall not extend below the top of a t-shirt collar, as it lays naturally."

Both male students have long hair, which according to current Tatum ISD grooming policy, are not compliant with how they are managing their natural hair and how it grows out of their heads.

According to Texas Compilation of School Discipline Laws and Regulations § 37.005. Suspension. (c) A student who is enrolled in a grade level below grade three may not be placed in out-of-school suspension unless while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off of school property, the student engages in: (1) Conduct that contains the elements of an offense related to weapons under Section 46.02 or 46.05, Penal Code; (2) Conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense under Section 22.01, 22.011, 22.02, or 22.021, Penal Code; or (3) Selling, giving, or delivering to another person or possessing, using, or being under the influence of any amount of: (A) Marijuana or a controlled substance, as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or by 21 U.S.C. Section 801 et seq.; (B) A dangerous drug, as defined by Chapter 483, Health

**WWW.CROWNCAMPAIGN.COM FOLLOW
@CROWNCAMPAIGN ON FB & IG**



CROWN CAMPAIGN

and Safety Code; or (C) An alcoholic beverage, as defined by Section 1.04, Alcoholic Beverage Code. reference page (24)

None of these above violations were provided to the Tatum ISD parents when the school removed these two students under grade 3 from their assigned schools and subsequently interrupting their education and promoting social isolation of these young boys. One student, was isolated upon returning to school, and the school district took it a step further in the harassment and discrimination by having criminal restraining order placed on his grandmother to prevent her from bringing him to school. These students have been criminalized for a physical trait of their race/ethnicity.

Tatum ISD is not in compliance with the Texas state policies that should have protected the educational opportunities of these African American students. Being told that wearing their natural hair is causing them to be non compliant with the current school grooming policy, is a racially motivated discriminatory action against students with natural hair, and, we strongly recommend that the policy is revised to be more inclusive. Also, to encourage a guardian to tell her grandson to “pin, clip, cut his hair, or put him in a dress” is unacceptable.

We strongly condemn the ongoing racist practices against these young children who have been barred from attending school due to expression of their natural hair styles. It is unconscionable, inhumane, immoral, racist and a deep social injustice that is impacting the whole community. We request that these students be allowed to return back to school immediately and are treated with dignity, academic support, psychosocial, and emotional support upon return for any loss of education opportunities missed and emotional trauma incurred while suspended. We offer our team’s expertise to support the school district with co-designing more diverse and equitable revisions to current grooming policy.

Bernice B. Rumala, PhD and Shemekka Ebony Coleman, M.S.

CROWN Campaign

**WWW.CROWNCAMPAIGN.COM FOLLOW
@CROWNCAMPAIGN ON FB & IG**