

Coalition for Racial Justice

500 North Clinton St, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240



January 9, 2014

Iowa City Community School District Board of Education
1725 North Dodge Street
Iowa City, IA 52245

Dear members of the Iowa City Community School District Board of Education:

We are writing to acknowledge the actions taken by the Board related to our request that you honor the Martin Luther King, Jr., federal holiday in 2014. There are several issues remaining related to your decision.

While we appreciate the resolution you passed to honor the MLK Holiday in 2015 and beyond, we are deeply disappointed that you chose to hold classes on MLK Day in 2014. Many families and community members have a long tradition of honoring the holiday in both public and private ways. Because of the sacred nature of this holiday, we understand that many families have chosen to keep their children out of school this January 20. We also understand that, as a matter of principle and respect, many of them do not believe they should have to call the schools ahead of time for permission.

It is important you also understand that the decision to hold school is disrupting community activities that had been planned and to which many students and families look forward, contribute, and participate in each year.

In both of your December 2013 meetings, you voiced an understanding that some families will chose to keep their children home from school on MLK Day 2014. However, students and their families will be required to follow standard procedures if they choose to honor the holiday in 2014 and call into the schools to announce their children's absence. Further, we understand that even excused absences can contribute to consequences for students who may be struggling with attendance and other school-related issues.

It is the moral duty of school officials to count ALL absences on January 20 as excused absences, whether or not families call in. We urge you to direct school administrators to do so.

We further urge you to direct the schools to NOT count absences on January 20 against students in any way.

We are pleased that you have taken the steps you have to resolve these challenging issues and hope that you will do the same with regard to student absences on our Martin Luther King, Jr., federal holiday. We further invite each of you individually to join us at any/all of the activities listed on the attached flyer as a way to honor Dr. King and to make further connections within our community.

Sincerely,

Alecia Brooks, Royceann Porter, and Circe Stumbo on behalf of the Coalition for Racial Justice

cc: Superintendent Murley
Equity Director Wilburn
ICCSA school principals