

BASSE Community Members—Students, Families, Staff, and Supporters,

We are disheartened that the Delaware Department of Education, under the leadership of Secretary Cindy Marten and the State Board of Education, has decided to close the Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence (BASSE). This decision is even more troubling, given that the Secretary has never visited the school or spoken directly with its leadership.

Furthermore, the decision was made with little to no input from the school community, which comes from all over the county and is often not familiar or comfortable with formal proceedings. The formal review process prioritized the state office and its officeholders over the public they serve. The community wants this school, and when BASSE created culturally responsive opportunities for parents and families to engage here on our campus, we saw higher engagement from parents and students alike because they were more comfortable finding their voice on home turf rather than in the cold, formal settings of the formal review process.

BASSE was founded by a committed group of community members with roots in Sussex County and Delaware, and a shared mission to support Delaware's students in becoming agents of change who promote the core values of hope, voice, community, equity, and excellence.

It is unfortunate that while our mission is to serve a diverse group of students from 44 schools, the education system's decision works against the very harm BASSE was founded to address—inequitable learning opportunities in Delaware public schools. Our students represent a wide range of identities, including gifted students, students with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and multilingual learners. Instead of supporting BASSE's work to close educational gaps, this system's actions risk widening them.

Service learning, social justice, and educational equity have been central to BASSE's work during its time as a school. Although our official capacity to serve students is ending, our commitment to supporting students and families remains strong. The environment where we have tirelessly worked to foster educational equity is being taken away.

We have already provided our students and families with the tools they will need to navigate this difficult transition.

Bryan once said, "You don't change the world with the ideas in your mind, but with the conviction in your heart."

Our hearts will never waver. We will continue to be motivated by our mission.

We will continue standing up for our community. Every child deserves access to equitable, high-quality education in a welcoming environment. Every child deserves to attend a school where they feel a sense of belonging, are valued, and are respected. BASSE provided that, and we hope the 125 students and families we served this year can find that elsewhere.

To the BASSE community: we will always be grateful for your trust in us.

To our educators: you are incredible and hardworking advocates who are fostering the next generation of change agents.

To our students: this moment may be hard to understand. While you may not walk through the physical doors of our school next school year, know that our community created a support system for you inside and outside that building. We will never forget or stop cheering for you.

Thank you to everyone who had a hand in creating this institution.

Together, we will continue to strive for a more just and inclusive world.