

10 March 2023 Town Hall Questions and Answers (Summarized)

Identified speakers:

U.S. Air Force Col. Leslie Hauck, 52nd Fighter Wing commander

U.S. Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Toby Roach, 52nd Fighter Wing

Dr. Jason Ter Horst, DoDEA Europe West superintendent

Q1: Has anyone thought or considered the culture being allowed to grow within the school or base community that allows things like this to manifest?

A1: Dr. Ter Horst- Part of my trips to schools are to observe. I walk around and sit in the cafeteria; I look to see if we are self-segregating; I look at the inclusiveness of higher-level coursework and that we maintain high expectations for kids. When we talk to the kids, I'm not sure that what we heard from them supported that within the school that is very prevalent. I'm not sure that this is the tip of the iceberg, but if it is, we will certainly tackle that to build an inclusive community. We have plans in place to work with base partners and DEI partners to bring more work into the schools and move this forward. Our kids are smart and watching how we react to this, and what we do is a model for how they will react to this. The fact we are sharing feelings and responsibility is a great model for them to take away.

A1: Col Hauck- I don't want our tracking of these incidents to be stopped at our QR code and this to be the end. There are other incidents that were not tracked, and they need to be tracked. We have events we do on base, such as the ones we did for Black History Month or Women's History Month that we can share with the schools. We look at our DEOCS [Defense Organizational Climate Survey] survey- which is a racial climate survey. While it has gotten better over the past year, it is still not where we want it to be. We have done everything the Air Force has asked us for DEI and gone beyond. We recently had a Diversity Day which was an amazing celebrating of diversity across the board. We will continue to do that and increase our partnership with the schools and increase our representatives within the schools.

Q2: What created the culture -- is this okay? What are the kinds of things that create the culture that cause these types of thinking?

A2: Dr. Ter Horst- I don't have the history. If there is history, I will be looking into that. As these things are ascertained, I will be looking into them. I will see if there is a pattern and respond to it, but I will have to get back to you on that.

A2: Col Hauck- I'll start with this investigation and go on from there. I heard about the bathroom incident the other day, and I don't think the principals were tracking on that, so we will be looking into that also.

Q3: Do you have any activities or training for the administration and teachers?

A3: Dr. Ter Horst- We do we have a DEI department within DoDEA that worked on a DoDEA Europe West DoDEA DEI group. The group works through many trainings and takes that back to our schools and

communities. We also have DEI folks going to departments in the headquarters to ensure DEI has representation. We are also working with the base for additional representation. We are working on the right way forward.

Q4: Is the school going to do anything about talking about racism? Our children need to hear about it every day.

A4: Dr. Ter Horst- I do think this needs to be an ongoing conversation. The school will continue to do trainings and talking groups with kids. We are committed to making this a long-term solution. I will add this needs to be a community piece to that too; it can't just be from the school. There are a lot we do through the schools now we didn't used to do, and we need to do it through the schools and hear from teachers that it is important. We train adults on what to do when things are being said in the room and how to react to that; we also need to do the same thing with our kids who are being faced with these situations. There will be a school response, but there also needs to be a community response as well.

Q5: Why aren't these conversations taking place year-round? Why are these only things that happen as a response to when there is an incident? What is wrong with challenging young people in other ways and learning about other cultures?

A5: Dr. Ter Horst-There is nothing wrong with that. We are looking at college board courses that explore that more; it is something we are working on. In the school system, we do character education at our schools, what you do in these scenarios. There's more to do, and we aren't there yet. I appreciate the comment and I'm going to take that back to see what more we can do planning forward.

Q6: Is there going to be help or support for the staff for when they are in this type of situation?

A6: Dr. Ter Horst- The answer to that question is, we are working on that now. We will continue with those conversations, and we will continue to work with our staff.

Q7: Is this going to follow onto next year, or is this a reaction to the situation that just happened?

A7: Dr. Ter Horst- I agree it needs to be long-term-focused.

A7: Col Hauck- Taking it forward in the following years is the most important thing too.