

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Office of Civil Rights Finds Newton Public Schools to be in Compliance with Title VI Finding No Evidence of Discrimination

*Department of Education Closes Complaint and Indicates No Further Action*

**[Newton, MA]** - The Newton Public Schools has received notification from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Education that they have closed the investigation into allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.) In a letter dated March 29, 2023, OCR indicated they found no evidence of violation of the law with regard to the staging and production of “Lost and Found” at Newton North High School in January 2023.

“We are pleased that this complaint has been closed and that we may move forward in continuing to provide opportunities for students to perform and express themselves in a variety of ways,” said Kathleen Smith, Interim Superintendent of the Newton Public Schools. “While centered in the stories of the lives of our students of color, no one was turned away or excluded from participating or having a role in the “Lost and Found” production. In fact, we were pleased to have a wonderfully diverse cast and crew who brought the entire show to life.”

The philosophy of Theatre Ink, a “teaching and working theatre,” has led to the participation of hundreds of students and around 12 performances each year that welcome all students, whether they have aspirations for acting or simply need a place to connect with others. The performances are consistently exceptional, but more importantly, all students who participate feel connected to a shared and inclusive community.

“Our award winning Fine and Performing Arts (FPA) department at Newton North, which includes Theatre Ink, is one of the crown jewels of our school,” said Henry Turner, Principal of Newton North High School. “We are proud that FPA has consistently been a place for students to use art to push boundaries and challenge themselves and our community with difficult conversations and topics.”

Theatre Ink provides opportunities for students to tell and celebrate the narratives and stories of those who have been historically underrepresented. Amplifying the stories,

experiences, and history of students of color is just one component of its diverse fine and performing arts programs. The Newton Public Schools remain committed to actively encouraging all students to participate in Fine and Performing Arts programs, particularly students of color, who have been vastly underrepresented in theater programs to date.

In compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other federal and state laws the Newton Public Schools, does not discriminate or exclude students on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

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