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**Statement from the Baraboo School District**

BARABOO, Wis. — The Baraboo School District sent the following letter to parents in response to a photo circulating on social media.

*Dear Parents and Community Members:*

*We would like to once again follow up regarding the image taken of students in our community last spring.*

*First, we want to thank our parents and community members for participating in the first Baraboo Gathers Program, held on Monday. More than 200 people were in attendance. It was a time for us to come together as a community to reflect and begin to heal. We are so very grateful for the experience.*

*Our next meeting will be Thursday, November 29 at 6 p.m., at Baraboo's City Hall Administration Building. That event will allow parents and community members to share their thoughts and begin identifying actions with their neighbors. We look forward to that meeting, as well.*

*We would also like to follow up on the district's investigation of the incident. Over the last 10 days, district leaders have worked with local authorities, parents and others in an effort to understand the image, the circumstances that led to the image being taken and what happened after it was taken. At this time, we know that the photo was taken outside the Sauk County Courthouse in downtown Baraboo last May as students and parents gathered for pre-prom photos. The photo was taken by a parent who was not contracted by the school district as a photographer. The students in the photo are current and past Baraboo High School students.*

*Despite our efforts, we are still unclear about some key details. As previously stated, we cannot know the intentions in the hearts of those who were involved. Moreover, because of students' First Amendment rights, the district is not in a position to punish the students for their actions.*

*What we do know is that this image was posted to social media with a comment to create harm. That action has understandably hurt people in this community and around the world. Our focus is shifting to work with the students involved on restorative practices to repair broken relationships with peers, families and the community. We are grateful that the district received numerous offers of support during this time to better educate our students. In response, the district is creating a short-term and long-term plan to engage the full student body and larger Baraboo community around the issues of hate and racism.*

*As this portion of our investigation draws to a close, we, as a district and community, must continue to do what we started this week. We must come together and, in a meaningful way, consider the travesties of the past that were fueled by hatred and embrace the celebration of diversity fueled by love and acceptance.*

*Sincerely,*

*Dr. Lori M. Mueller District Administrator*

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