



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
*Civil Rights Division*

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**U.S. Department of Education**  
*Office for Civil Rights*

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November 13, 2012

**Via U.S. Mail and Electronic Mail**

Ms. Jennifer Coco, Esq.  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Katie Schwartzmann, Director Louisiana Office  
4431 Canal Street  
New Orleans, LA 70119

Dear Ms. Coco:

On September 26, 2012, we notified you that the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (“DOJ”) and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (“OCR”) (jointly, the “Departments”) initiated a joint investigation into the Jefferson Parish Public School System’s (“JPPSS” or the “District”) policies and practices regarding the documentation needed for student registration, enrollment, and graduation. We also advised you that the Departments were reviewing Southern Poverty Law Center’s additional claims of alleged discrimination by the District based on race, color, or national origin against students and parents with limited proficiency in English. We write to inform you that the Departments are expanding our investigation to examine: (1) whether the District provides national origin-minority parents who have limited proficiency in English with information provided to other parents in a language they understand; and, (2) whether the District failed to take prompt and effective action to respond to harassing conduct creating a hostile environment for Latino students based on national origin, of which JPPSS knew or should have known.

DOJ enforces Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000c-6 (“Title IV”), which prohibits discrimination in public schools against students based on race, color, sex, religion, and national origin, and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1703(f), (“EEOA”), which requires state and local educational agencies to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by all students in instructional programs. OCR enforces Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.* (“Title VI”), which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin by programs

or activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education.

We have made no conclusion as to whether there has been any violation of the District's EEOA, Title IV, or Title VI obligations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Shaheena Simons, Deputy Chief of the Educational Opportunities Section at the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, by telephone at 202-305-3364 or [shaheena.simons@usdoj.gov](mailto:shaheena.simons@usdoj.gov); or Paul D. Castillo, Attorney at the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights by telephone at 214-661-9688 or [paul.castillo@ed.gov](mailto:paul.castillo@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. D. Castillo", followed by a horizontal line.

Paul D. Castillo  
Attorney  
Office for Civil Rights Dallas  
U.S. Department of Education