

District may fight state

Directives on racism response, equity position questioned

SCOTT WILLIAMS

scott.williams@journaltimes.com

BURLINGTON — Despite the risks of a long and costly fight, the Burlington Area School District is sounding a suddenly defiant tone toward state orders for combating racism in the schools.

Members of the school board are balking at creating a new position — tentatively called the “director of student equity” — to oversee the district’s efforts at promoting a culture of understanding particularly in regard to racial diversity. The school board also is asking its attorneys whether the district could legally challenge the state Department of Public Instruction for mandating that the district work cooperatively with one of its staunchest critics on the race

issues: the Burlington Coalition for Dismantling Racism (BCDR).

Both actions discussed during Monday’s school board meeting signal that rather than implementing reforms, as originally planned, Burlington school officials have adopted a more combative posture toward state regulators who control policy and funding for Wisconsin’s public schools.

These changes in direction come just days after the school district indicated it did plan to

comply with the state. On Fri-



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day, The Journal Times reported that the school district did plan to include BCDR in the district’s planned Community Equity Team, in accordance with an order from state officials, despite objections from School Board member Taylor Wishau.

State likely has the power

School Board President Peter Turke cautioned his fellow board members that DPI almost certainly has the authority that it is asserting, and that any sort of challenge could cost the school district considerable time and money.

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