

12/12/12 PTO and Parent Focus Group Call to Action to Board Members:

The purpose of this correspondence is to inform the board of the public outcry from parents, teachers and community members of the numerous actions by employees and administration personnel that are not in conformance with Standards for Ethical Conduct as outlined by the National Education Association (hereafter referred to as "NEA") Code of Ethics.

We have attached a full copy of the Code of Ethics for Educators that govern ethical conduct toward students, parents, community and professional conduct and ask that you read the standards of measure for your industry.

We have now learned that the rumored threats of closure of the ALA program that date back to mid summer 2012 may not have been rumors. Our independent evaluation of the background for the closure is ongoing. We know as we have personally experienced that the closure was executed without regard for the welfare of students, parents and faculty. We lived through the four weeks following the closure with a complete educational disruption with our students who were sent home with no plan to carefully continue their education process.

Over the past months the parents and hundreds of students of the ALA program have been greatly harmed by the disruption to their education process that occurred at the 290 Technology and Lincoln sites. Now we stand before you with notices of pending eviction placed on the Horizon Facilities in Elk Grove and Auburn.

While your CEO has left to travel through Europe in this time of crisis, we now appeal to you to consider and carefully investigate the information we will continue to place before you and reconsider the pending displacement of the hundreds of students at the Auburn and Elk Grove sites. We hope that you will take the appropriate measures to avoid the ongoing violations of the Ethical Standards that govern your organization and now are under full public scrutiny.

We ask that you carefully consider your actions at this critical time while other investigations outside the parent group by appropriate authorities will be a further judge of the conduct you have publically approved in your published support of the current administration.

We are aware that many of you do not know the full extent of what has gone on in the parent's and teacher's interaction with the Horizon administration.

When the Parent Focus Group first communicated our intent to go to the media to expose the ethical violations that were occurring, this intent was met with the threat of closure of the entire ALA program with statements implying that involving the media would obstruct the board ends. We are no longer held back

in fear of these threats and intend to investigate and publically expose the absurd fiscal and unethical administrative actions we have experienced and which we have recently become aware.

As a parent and teacher group, we are now questioning the rumors of the coming changes to the program that were allegedly communicated to teachers prior to the start of the school year back in the summer of 2012.

We are astonished that we have now learned that over \$1,000,000 of our public ADA funds was spent building out a leased facility at 290 Technology that has now been abandoned with the apparent hope of prevailing in a legal battle for recovery of these funds and placing blame for all site acquisition issues on the landlord. We urge you to take responsibility for the past decisions of this administration that have demonstrated a clear lack of fiscal responsibility.

Why is it that no one on the Horizon board has ever discussed these issues with the parent group prior to taking action? As representatives of the parent body, board members have refused to engage in private conversation when they were approached directly by parents.

You have further sat back without intervening at any time during this crisis and have allowed repeated violations of the ethical standards that we will now publically remind you of in the excerpts below from the NEA code of ethics. Each section will be followed by related questions formulated from the factual information we believe violates these standards:

***PRINCIPLE 1*** (in the section described as) ***Ethical Conduct toward Students:***

***“Item 4. The professional educator makes a constructive effort to protect the student from conditions detrimental to learning health and safety.”***

Ask yourself as governing board members, with prior knowledge of the traffic and safety issues, combined with increased enrollment that almost doubled, ***why*** did you allow Julie Haycock, the Principal of the 290 Technology, site to abandon the staggered start schedule that was implemented the prior year that effectively mitigated traffic issues. Ask yourself about the validity of the alleged “safety closure” and why, after an alleged traffic study was performed, instead of implementing qualified traffic control measures Horizon only placed security personnel at corners of the property ignoring hazardous delivery truck traffic problems for other tenants and further ignoring numerous effective parent and teacher proposals, that in working with the known offer for cooperation with Placer County, could have fully mitigated traffic and safety issues at the 290 Technology Site.

**PRINCIPLE 1** (in the section described as) ***Ethical Conduct toward Students states in:***

***“Item 5. The professional educator endeavors to present facts without distortion, bias or personal prejudice.”***

**PRINCIPLE 2 Ethical Conduct toward Practices and Performance States:**

***“Item 6 The professional educator honestly accounts for all funds committed to his or her charge.”***

It has been well documented that the facts surrounding the financial position of the Horizon Charter School have never been presented without distortion. During initial meetings with the parent focus group and other meetings with Scott Leaman, Craig Heimbichner overpromised parents that there were no financial issues and that he would continue to support the program. We now know those statements were patently false. There has never been financial transparency in the Administration’s interaction with the parent focus group. Our requests for budgets for temporary facilities were repeatedly ignored while in fact the CFO knew funds were not available. As board members, you sat back while parents took personal vacation time and extended time away from their families to search for facilities that were never a viable financial option. Five days prior to the closure announcement, Craig Heimbichner relayed in a meeting with the PTO and parent focus group that he was going to meet with Cliff Bautista, the Horizon CFO, and promised to present an answer for funding in a parent meeting scheduled for the next evening and relay funding available for approved facilities at Maidu. This parent meeting scheduled on the following evening was cancelled. The Horizon CEO then cut off all communication with the Parent Focus Group, and then Craig Heimbichner announced just five days later that they did not know the full financial picture at that point in time. The ALA community was astonished with the representation that this critical financial information was just recently discovered. As board members, you must know the truth will be flushed out as the parent’s request for financial documents will illuminate the fiscal information that was available at that point in time.

As board members publically supporting the actions of your CEO, are you in agreement that these actions are conformance with the ethical standard cited above?

***NEA PRINCIPLE 2 (in the section described as) Ethical Conduct toward Practices and Performance:***

***“Item 1. The professional educator applies for accepts or assigns a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications and adheres to the terms of a contract or appointment.”***

As a parent group, we question whether the background published books and failed educational track records of recently hired Administrative personnel were ever carefully scrutinized.

***PRINCIPLE 4 Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues:***

***“The professional educator in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues accords just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession.***

While it is not our battle, the fact that when the 290 Technology site was closed and teachers were locked out of the facility for no apparent reason, the parents were directly impacted by a total lack of direction of the teacher group by the Principal Julie Haycock. The parent group was informed, and we are now aware that the administration was questioned about why the departure for an approved number of students and teachers was not allowed. Why was it that the Administration failed to use this facility to carefully coordinate a transition plan and provide coherent direction to the teachers and students? We understand that Mrs. Haycock was in a situation of incredible stress, however over the subsequent four weeks, there was no coordination of temporary facilities other than those efforts undertaken by the teachers themselves paying out of pocket to use library faculties and personal residences. Teachers were given conflicting instructions in the weeks that followed the Horizon closure of 290 Technology. No contingency plan was in place, despite the fact that the crisis situation and legal battle had been building for months.

Insurance questions were posed to the administration were never clearly answered, parents who were meeting in libraries were told to stop, then parents were instructed it was ok to continue meeting. What transpired after the closure can only be described as total chaos.

**Teacher's materials, after they regained access to 290 Technology were discarded and recovered from dumpsters.** Eventually teachers were instructed to abandon the class-based program that was the preferred instruction method and were told to move to an independent study model. Other parents were told that the program would continue as new facilities were located. Many parents disenrolled from the program after hearing these confusing announcements and observing the complete disorganization of the Administration. During the independent study instruction sessions that followed, when single working mothers and non tech-oriented parents asked Michael Wood questions during his presentation, they were threatened by him that if they did not stop disrupting his presentation, he would have the police escort them out of the facility. Parents left in tears.

As governing board members publically supporting the actions of your CEO and his direction, are these the behaviors and standards of ethical conduct you approve of and that you will continue to accept and desire to establish as a precedent for future facility transitions that sit before you at the Auburn and Elk Grove site locations.

***NEA PRINCIPLE 4 (in the section described as) Ethical Conduct toward Parents and Community:***

***"Item 3. The professional educator manifests a positive and active role in school and community relations"***

The most egregious and absurd conduct of this administration was the willful disregard for the kindergarten, first and second grade students in place at the Lincoln site. As you were made aware at the last board meeting, the administration refused to communicate in order to resolve the known permitting issues at the Lincoln Life Center. The thoroughly confusing and consistently contradictory information provided by the administration completely broke the trust of the community and parents related to the ALA closure process.

We want you to be further aware that instead of maintaining a positive relationship with the community and governing agencies involved in the Lincoln Site, Horizon recently made a private verbal offer with a 24 hour deadline to the Pastor at Lincoln to accept a \$5000 buyout of the remaining lease contract payment (of approximately \$20,000). This offer was allegedly justified due to a threat by the City of Lincoln to shut down operation. When Pastor Rowley asked for the closure notification from Lincoln, the Horizon administration consulted their attorney and stated that they could not release this notice to verify the information. All this occurred after Craig Heimbichner contacted the Pastor a month ago and promised continuation and support of the Lincoln K-2 program and instructed Pastor Rowley to ignore this mandate by the City of Lincoln.

Heimbichner instructed Pastor Rowley to “look the other way” and ignore the stated permitting requirements outlined in the letter that Horizon had received from the City of Lincoln, that explained the requirements for the permitting process. Throughout this process, Craig Heimbichner refused to answer the offer by the parent focus group to fund and facilitate completion of the permitting process with the City of Lincoln that is underway. During this time, Craig Heimbichner repeatedly refused to make a public statement that he would continue the Lincoln program that resulted in additional parents disenrolling students and the memorandum you received at the last board meeting.

The Lincoln closure memorandum issued by the Horizon Administration states:

*“after recent ALA community messages were delivered to the Administration and/or publicly posted, it became clear that the program in its current form is largely unwelcome to the community upon whose support the program itself depends.”*

As a parent group, we can not understand the basis of this statement, we have always stood in support of the ALA program and we further do not understand how the closure of Lincoln was further justified as a necessary measure to end the “comprehensive” ALA program”. This memorandum is patently misleading. We can only conclude that the community message referenced was the notification the Parent Focus Group read to the board that exposed the unwillingness of the Administration to commit to maintaining appropriate staff levels and support the kindergarten, first and second grade classes at Lincoln. The memorandum never accepted responsibility for the obvious financial decision to abandon the students and teachers at the Lincoln site.

Fortunately, the parents knew by this time that we could not trust Horizon’s verbal promises and through the incredible efforts of a reformed parent focus group a contingency plan was in place. We have always welcomed continuation of the program in its present form at Lincoln and we have now secured support from the Charter in Newcastle to pickup and continue operation of the program at Lincoln accordingly.

So now, with all these incredible events behind us, trust broken throughout the parent and teacher community, we now are faced with another crisis situation and a CEO on European vacation. Hundreds of students and teachers are now at risk of further educational harm in Auburn and Elk Grove with no plan other than to hope not to be evicted before the end of the school year. The only administration plan we are aware of was the instruction to remove the eviction signs posted and dial 911 if Group Access shows up.

To say we are outraged by these events and the inaction of the board is an understatement. The parent group will not stop until full accountability is achieved and an appropriate response is received to address these clear violations of NEA ethical standards. We will further bring on the full attention of the media and other responsible governing authorities to fully investigate all parties involved in this situation including the board. Please carefully consider whether you will continue on your present course.

What are you going to do?