

LEONARDO DA VINCI HEALTH SCIENCES
CHARTER SCHOOL

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Board of Trustees

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Mission

As a nurturing learning community, Leonardo da Vinci Health Sciences Charter School cultivates health-literate students who have the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and attitudes, which empower them to become influential contributors in an ever-changing global society.

Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees

AGENDA

May 4, 2011

6pm Room 12

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of May 4, 2011 Agenda
- III. 2010-2011 Staffing (Information/Action)
- IV. WASC Update (Information/Action)
- V. Public/Oral Communications
- VI. Announcements
- VII. Adjournment

April 29, 2011

Dear Leonardo da Vinci Board Members,

I am writing this letter out of serious concern for Leonardo da Vinci Charter School and our teachers. Due to recent events at our school, I and many other parents are becoming increasingly worried about Ms. Kang's ability to make sole decisions regarding who is hired, fired, and the evaluation of whether an employee is re-hireable. Because a charter school puts much emphasis on community involvement, it is upsetting that a Director alone can make such important decisions without approval from the Board or anyone else.

The information that was presented to the Board did not seem to merit termination of employment. Ms. Kang's decision regarding Ms. Mojica appeared rash and not at all justified. There was a two week break following the incident during which time the board could have met and made a joint decision on the matter, also allowing Ms. Mojica to defend herself. The way the system is set up now does not allow for the importance of establishing conflict resolution procedures.

This decision not only affected the 6th grade class, but also the entire school. Not only was a decision made regarding the termination of an employee, but also to terminate the Spanish program for the remainder of the school year.

In addition to what has already been said, does the director have the ability to eliminate a program that is listed in the charter petition? Please see the following, which has been taken directly from the petition posted on LDV's website:

An Elementary School Foreign Language Program

Research indicates that the early study of a second language results in cognitive benefits, gains in academic achievement, and positive attitudes toward diversity (Rosenbusch, 1995). Leonardo da Vinci Health Sciences Charter School will explore the implementation of an elementary school foreign language program in Spanish for 30 minutes a day, four days a week beginning with students in Grades K-3.

Leonardo da Vinci Health Sciences Charter School will develop the components of the structure of its foreign language program with special care. Components include: scheduling, curriculum design, instructional materials, staffing, multiple entry points, student accessibility, and program articulation, coordination, and evaluation.

The central goal of the foreign language program at Leonardo da Vinci Health Sciences Charter School will be to develop oral language fluency in Spanish. For the 2009-10 academic school year, Leonardo da Vinci Health Sciences Charter School will hire a highly qualified foreign language teacher. This teacher will possess excellent language skills, will be well informed about current teaching

strategies, and will demonstrate a commitment to working together as a team to provide a carefully developed, articulated foreign language program for students in Grades K-3. In planning for the 2010-11 academic school year, students in grade four will be included in the foreign language program, with the addition of grades five and six students into the foreign language program in subsequent years.

Furthermore, it is my understanding that evaluations will be taking place soon to decide if teachers are “re-hireable” with our school. I am deeply concerned that this is also something that the director decides. It is my hope that the board can find a solution to ensure that our teachers are protected and receive fair evaluations. As a parent, I would be delighted to share my own input regarding my child's teacher and the positive difference I have seen.

Thank you,

Jonah and Michelle Knife

Todd and Wryn Anderson

Pedro T. Velasquez

Cristin Bigalk

Aureny Aranda-Zaidan

Gloria Alicia Liceaga

Jessica Reninger

Good Evening Everyone,

Tonight I attended the board meeting and I must say it was appalling. We started off with the Director search results which was good then we went too the Prop 39 issue. I was pleased to know that we came to an agreement and a vote that will keep us at Mater Dei for at least one more year so that we can collectively as a family take the time to properly address School's situation. The next topic on the agenda was very disturbing and in my opinion should have been addressed in a far different fashion. First off the disrespect to Sharyn and the rest of the Board by the Fleutes Family was absolutely unacceptable and has no place at the board meeting or anywhere else for that matter. They should have been asked to leave the premises. I am sure Mr. Erv would have kindly showed them to the parking lot. Now on to the more disturbing matter "the children". The parents of those children should be ashamed of them selves for exploiting them. I feel that the event tonight was probably more traumatic to the children then the actual issue that brought them there to discuss. When Mr. Fleutes began his rant on you all having to provide counseling for their children I had to call it a night before I interjected my personal opinion. If there was any counseling to be given, it would be needed for putting those kids through what endured tonight. God forbid they have a death in there family I don't know how on Earth they would handle that. I understand the meetings can get frustrating trust me the Prop 39 discussion had me a little heated up but we have to handle these thing like adults and when we start disrespecting others and attacking ones characters in front of a group of people there must be some course of action that must be taken. As far as the children I feel that they were used as political pawns to make a point and we are better than that here at LDV. Thanks for you time and Good Night.

Brian Fritzel

Email Message:

Dear Ms. Kang and Ms. Rieta,

Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!

My husband and I have frequently sent emails or attended meetings to let you know when we have concerns or questions regarding our school. We feel that in the spirit of Teacher Appreciation Week , the least we can do is to submit a letter to Ms. Kang and to the Board voicing our appreciation and support of our 2nd grade teacher, Ms. Dhaliwal. This year has a been a pleasure for our entire family in dealing with her and we have seen the difference that a great teacher and positive influence can make. Thank you so much for bringing her into our school.

Since we do not have email addresses for all board members, I am hoping that the attached letter will make its way to the other members so that they might also see our appreciation for all that has been done for our child this year.

Sincerely,

Jonah and Michelle Knife

May 1, 2011

Leonardo da Vinci Charter School
Board of Trustees
1615 Mater Dei Drive
Chula Vista, CA 91913

Re: Ms. Dhaliwal

Dear Ms Kang and fellow board members.

The 2010-2011 school year is nearing its end which seems like an appropriate time to write the director and board regarding our experiences this year as parents of a child in Ms. Dhaliwal's 2nd grade class.

To give some background, and as most of you are probably already aware, last year was not ideal for many, if not all of the 1st grade parents and students. While we felt that Mrs. Weller seemed personable enough, we had many concerns regarding our class and their development. As an observer, I would often see the class getting out of hand and nothing would be said or done until their teacher would appear to snap, and then start yelling, often not even at the child who began causing the commotion, but at the last child who crossed her path before losing her temper.

It concerned us that she seemed to have very little control over the children and also didn't appear to be making good choices regarding a class that she struggled to remain in control of. To give an example, she made a habit of sending groups of children to the restroom or to the water fountain, and then complained that the children were playing and disrupting other classrooms. Maybe these children deserve more credit, but it does not seem like any group of children in the 1st grade should be sent to do something on their own unless the likelihood of horseplay is not an issue.

Throughout the year we questioned if our daughter was where she needed to be in all of her subjects. We were always told she was academically "fine" with no further explanation. It wasn't until Mrs. Weller took a leave of absence that we were made aware by a substitute that she and much of the class was well behind where they should have been.

The long-term substitute did her best to bring every child to where they needed to be by the end of the school year, however she had a very short amount of time to work with the class, so we also spent a great deal of money over the summer having our daughter tutored in math.

At the beginning of this school year, we discovered that our daughter would be receiving a brand new teacher, fresh out of school and also quite young. We were concerned about whether this teacher would be able to bring our child and the other students in her class what they would need to get going in the right direction.

Upon speaking with Ms. Dhaliwal, we discovered a sweet, mature and intelligent young woman who was looking forward to getting to know her new students. Something about this teacher gave us a new found hope for our child's education at Leonardo da Vinci Charter School.

From day one, we have seen significant growth in our child as an individual and have watched the class grow in leaps and bounds. As a parent volunteer, I have personally seen the difference in this class and it is amazing. I was volunteering to help with math one day, this was still pretty early in the school year, and walked away feeling so impressed with Ms. Dhaliwal's ability to make their

learning fun and so easy to understand. I can easily recall her lesson and the things she said to the class as I write this letter, and it brings me joy to know that this is the kind of impact that is being made on our children. She is a kind teacher but is also capable of keeping order in her classroom. The students behavior has improved drastically as well as the respect they show for their teacher. This is something seen every time I enter their classroom.

We know that she is making a positive difference because of the changes we have seen in our own child. Our daughter is more thoughtful and less impulsive in her decision-making, she loves school, her teacher and now even math! Last year seemed a struggle for her to find enjoyment in any aspect of math, where she now finds it easier to understand, loves practicing skills and learning new things. The differences we see don't stop with one subject. Isabelle has always been a strong reader, so she has had a tendency to glide through language arts without much notice. Ms. Dhaliwal is not the type of teacher who will let any student just glide through a subject. She doesn't place pressure on her students to do anything more than what they are able, but she does encourage them to go above and beyond if she feels like they are not meeting their true potential. I am so grateful for a teacher who recognizes when a student is doing only what is expected and not necessarily what they are capable of.

Ms. Dhaliwal provides her students with an exemplary role model, as she often volunteers her spare time in orphanages and helping to serve the homeless community of San Diego. She has taught our daughter to become a more compassionate individual who is thinking more about the needs of others and ways she can improve our community and the world as a whole. She sets an example not only to the students, but also to us as parents of the type of people our school is trying to raise our children to be.

We could not be more pleased with Ms. Dhaliwal's performance as Isabelle's 2nd grade teacher and would like to give our highest recommendation to Ms. Kang and the Board. It is our hope that you will seriously consider offering her a position to return as a teacher to Leonardo da Vinci Charter School for the next school year.

Sincerely,

Jonah and Michelle Knife