

5/16/17

Dear NOCCS Board of Directors,

I am joining you this evening to share my perspective as an employee of the school and as a member of the leadership team at NOCCS. I would like to speak to my *concerns about the process of the Head of School Review as well as where I think this school is headed under Stephen's leadership.*

Over the last two years I have worked closely with Stephen and our leadership team to *focus the school's vision and align the staff towards goals we can all strive for. We have used the mission and core principles, the strategic plan, regular evaluation of school data, family and staff feedback, as well as our own experiences and observations to do this work.* At the beginning of last year Krea, David, and I were all placed on the leadership team to support Stephen, I believe, because of our unique skill sets and knowledge of the school. We have worked very closely over the last two years to bring what we're each best at to support Stephen and ultimately the school. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be part of this team. We have definitely hit some obstacles along the way (some expected obstacles and more often unexpected) but we were able to keep a positive attitude and our focus on the future through all the challenges we have faced. Much of this forward motion is because of the sunshine that seems to always be shining on Stephen's soul, no matter the situation. He has somehow seemed to share this sunshine a little with all of us every day. I am excited to be able to honestly say that all of our hard work seems to finally be starting to pan out in a way that I can clearly envision the future of NOCCS and see how our future aligns to both the strategic plan as well as the understandings and visioning of the leadership team. While I wish we had gotten here sooner, I don't believe we had the right people in the building to reach that vision and needed to reimagine our staff before we could reimagine our school.

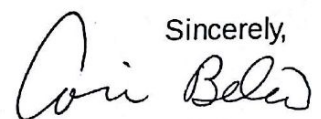
A couple weeks ago, Stephen shared with me that he had been placed on a Performance Improvement Plan that would be measured by the LCAP, Coffee and Conversation, and State of the School. The plan and its measures implied to me that the quality of these events would show whether or not Stephen was the right person for the job as our head of school. The timing of the plan also seemed to imply that if these culminating events didn't meet expectations, Stephen might be asked to step down from his position before the beginning of next year.

I became and am still very concerned with the timing and process of this plan. Creating an uncertainty as big as whether or not our head of school will return next fall at this time in the school year is distracting, to

say the least. It is especially hard to plan for the future when it his vision, support, and guidance that is creating many of the exciting plans we have for next year. It leaves me feeling as though much of the effort I have put in, along with our school team, might not be realized if we are left without the person driving and cheerleading much of this work. I am disappointed and sad that we might not be able to implement the plans we have worked so hard to create.

I counted last night and I have worked with 5 principals or heads of school in my time in education. My first principal got me in shape as an educator both in the classroom and in the field generally. I have her to thank for my stamina and work ethic in a job that requires everything you have. My next two principals set the non-example for me. They weren't present, didn't talk to kids, had surface level connections to staff, and were not in touch with the needs of the school. I left because I wasn't motivated by their leadership. Most recently, I worked with the previous leader of NOCCS. While Carolyn inspired me to take on the role I have today, and I will be forever grateful for her seeing something in me that I couldn't identify in myself, the sense of community and team is different with Stephen here. He brings his whole self every day. He is on the floor with students from 7:30 am until 6:00 pm most days because those are the hours there are kids in the building and that is what our school and our kids have needed. We've often talked about the things he isn't able to get to in this model of constantly being present for kids and staff. He knows it isn't sustainable but I couldn't imagine the last two years with his role being any less present. He drives and motivates this school to be excellent and it is an honor and pleasure to work with him every day. I have learned so much.

Please consider my comments as you identify how you can support Stephen in the ways he needs support. Our school would not be the place it is and could not become the place we hope for it to become without him.

Sincerely,


Cori Belew

Dean of Instruction

NOCCS