

May 17, 2017

Dear NOCCS Board of Directors,

I am writing tonight to express my support of our Head of School, Stephen Ajani.

I was recruited by Stephen to join North Oakland Community Charter School because we both shared a common vision of what a high quality middle school program should offer. I first met Stephen when I was a Teach For America corps member in Washington, DC. Stephen supported my growth and development during my first two years in the classroom. Currently, he supports my work to reimagine teaching and learning at our upper school.

Stephen invited me to visit NOCCS last year and I was immediately moved by his vision for creating a rigorous upper school program that would not only prepare students for the rigors of high school and college, but ultimately prepare them to make meaningful changes in our community. In addition, Stephen's desire to provide a high quality program to students and families with the highest needs was aligned with my core values. Together, Stephen and I developed a model of the upper school that would make this vision a reality. We created an upper school model where students would continue sharing, critiquing, and reflecting on their work and developing projects that demonstrated their understanding of material taught. He has made it possible for me to redesign the English Language Arts and History curriculum for 6th and 7th grades in order to meet the demands of the Common Core State Standards. At the same time, his support made it possible for me to develop a station rotation model that teaches foundational skills to struggling students while extending the learning of students reading at or above grade level.

The Upper school started the school year with 17 new students, 6 of whom were reading below grade level putting 37% of our middle school reading below grade level. As a result of the station rotation and targeted intervention, our upper school had the highest gains in reading achievement in K-8 based on our Teacher's College Reading and Writing Program reading assessment ending Trimester 2 with 72% of our middle school students reading at or above grade level by the end of trimester 2. In order to broaden impact across all content areas, we are developing this instructional model across all upper school classrooms next school year.

Unfortunately, academic gains were not observed across all classrooms in our upper school. Parents have expressed concern that there has been a lack of rigor in different classes and as a result, they feel that their children are unprepared for high school. I am confident that every staffing decision was made with this important fact in mind.

Removing Stephen as the Head of School would disrupt the groundwork that we have carefully laid in order to create an academically rigorous, dynamic upper school program that prepares our students for the challenges of the real world. His leadership is essential to ensuring the success of our students and families and our future as school. Without his support in envisioning and developing this program, we would not be able to make these necessary changes.

I am available to discuss my statements in further detail at your earliest convenience, as it is important to me to engage in clear, meaningful dialogue on this issue. I have included my contact information below.

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