

Dear NOCCS Board of Directors,

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

Great school leaders know their own professional strengths and interests; they recognize staff members' talents, skills, and professional growth; and they know how to foster shared leadership amongst their best employees. Stephen's implicit trust in his staff has motivated me and many of my colleagues here tonight to do our best work, and it keeps us inspired to turn NOCCS into a destination for all Oakland students.

When NOCCS joined the El Dorado Charter SELPA and brought special education programming and services in house, Stephen took it as an opportunity to completely rebuild a program that had previously failed our most vulnerable children. Stephen empowered our team to rethink what special education can look like at NOCCS. He not only listened carefully to our ideas and goals to create a true inclusion program at NOCCS, but he pushed us to make decisions that aligned to this vision we share.

Building a Special Education program that is designed around our population's unique needs, and that keeps students at the core of every decision made, has been of utmost importance to Stephen since day one. This decision making process that Stephen embodies is unfortunately not the mindset of every head of school. NOCCS is lucky to have a leader that exemplifies this student's first mentality which has allowed us to make significant strides in serving all students.

Over the past two years under Stephen's leadership the special education program at NOCCS has grown in a multitude of ways - an increase in the number of students served through special education, an increase in the identification of English Language Learners with special needs, and a diversification of the types of disabilities served at NOCCS. For growth in all of these areas to be accompanied by both teacher and family satisfaction and praise is a true testament to Stephen's vision for this program, and this school.

I look forward to working alongside Stephen, our teachers and families to continue making NOCCS an exceptional place of learning for ALL children.

Respectfully,



Christine Parker
Special Education Program Specialist
NOCCS