

3/13/2022

To the Board of Trustees of ██████ Academy,

The decision to leave the faculty of ██████ Academy, and to take my children (4th grade and Kindergarten) with me, was not an easy one to make. I have many compelling reasons to stay and to try to make ██████ Academy the best school it can be. The pictures of my wedding reception on campus that adorn the walls of my house, the banner bearing my name on the wall of the gym, my class photo hanging in the hallway on campus - these all attest to my deep roots and history in this place. The work that I have put in over the last seven years has been sincere, attempting to make the English Department an outstanding example of pedagogical excellence, and I am proud of every moment I spent in front of the students of our school. I am the same man I was when I took this job - the same one who studied here, played here, and graduated from here. The principles I learned in those days are the ones I still hold. What *has* changed is ██████ Academy itself.

This is not to suggest that change in itself, per se, is a bad thing. The river that flows by our banks proves that nothing stays the same. My argument, instead, is that a confluence of events - the astounding gift of ██████, a moment of intense political division, and an impossible-to-predict pandemic - have placed us in a dangerous moment and one that has transformed our school, in the blink of an eye, and made your role as trustees suddenly critical. You are important as a check, a deep breath, a way to say "Wait a minute, does this actually match with the values I believe or that our school has always embodied?" The role of the Board of Trustees is, as I understand it, to defend the basic academic and spiritual mission of the school.

We are failing that mission, I can report, from the inside. Whether kids are in sixth, ninth, or twelfth grades, none of them are being adequately educated at the moment. Masked-depression-school is not real school. Any reasonable person who walked onto our campus over the last two years would wonder what kind of zombies we were training up. Faceless kids are harassed by paranoid adults, unable to make decisions about basic autonomy, told what to do, and moreover *think*, all day long. They stare at screens for nearly the whole day long. Phones in hand, they practice tik-tok dances and amble around campus like mind-numbed imbeciles. Any commitment to curriculum has been almost totally tossed aside.

Hardly anybody is teaching anything of substance and hardly anybody is learning anything of substance. The teachers have been told crazy things in meetings - grades are white supremacy, gender doesn't exist, some people are oppressors and others are oppressed because of their race, the climate is going to destroy humanity in the next decade - and activism, rather than scholarship seems to have become the primary goal of a ██████ Academy education.

While it often feels like this sea-change has happened in an instant, I think it goes back to the gift of the ██████ Foundation and the retirement of ██████. Such a gift opens doors but it also draws flies. A tiny little school with a unique history that just plugs along, that barely manages to keep its doors open but nonetheless churns out capable and interesting citizens into its nation, is a school that can be patted on the head and left alone by larger, outside forces. Give such a school an **endowment** and it suddenly becomes an opportunity - it can no longer be allowed to continue making its own decisions unaided. The consultant class smells money. I don't know the exact story of how or when ██████ Academy joined the NAIS. Maybe you do. But I do know that the faculty was never consulted and I have certainly seen the consequences of that decision. They have been disastrous. When I started teaching here, there really was a spirit of collective deliberation when questions of import arose. We met *en masse* to discuss and debate big-picture, philosophical issues. Once we ceded authority to the NAIS, however, these things simply began to be mandated from on high. Segregated affinity spaces a good idea? Well, now we have them - decision made. Teaching kids that men can get pregnant? Sure, we're there now. These things didn't happen because the ██████ community got together to have discussions and hash out our priorities. They just sort of materialized in the fog of hyper-political miasma and expedient panic over a virus. No alumni are aware of the fact that the Book of Common Prayer hasn't had its spine cracked in the chapel by a single child in years, even before Covid, or that one of our current "chaplain"s refers to God exclusively by the pronoun "They". Were you<sup>1</sup>? We put on a show suggestive of continuity for potential donors while carefully hiding the fact that almost nothing is the same anymore.

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<sup>1</sup> Example: the *chaplain* recently said to the Upper School that, "Queer theology shows us that putting on the robes of Christ is an act of 'holy drag' that 'destroys the binary.'" She ended the service with the playing of holy-hipster-rap-music. The organ, by the way, so integral to our memories of the school, has as far as I know been played only twice in the last two years - at the Christmas mystery, where we had a female Joseph this December.

The NAIS has a strategy in place for colonizing independent schools like ours. Step one is to control the headmaster<sup>2</sup>. Making this position the single most important one, institutionally, allows for the capture of the school under the larger, nationalized umbrella. Obviously you have decided, as a simple ProPublica search shows, that the headmaster's compensation should race past ██████'s one hundred and thirty thousand dollar ceiling to well more than double that in just a five-year span. No doubt some slick arguments were employed in the selling of such a necessity to the board. Basic question - how much money *should* the headmaster of ██████ Academy make, ideally? If the answer is three or four hundred thousand dollars or more, why exactly? To keep up with the Joneses? Which Joneses? ██████, ██████? With whom are we really competing? No other positions at the school are on the verge of tripling their starting rate in the time I've been teaching here, of course. But such cementing of authority, of signaling who's really in charge, is part of the plan. It's making an "investment" in the structural procedures of the institution<sup>3</sup>.

Step two involves snowing the trustees into not looking too deeply into anything *day-to-day* or *operational*. They're to be told that their offices float above such [minutiae](#). You are to be the strategic planners and big-picture thinkers! This makes it easy when someone asks whether ██████ Academy has been, for example, captured by the CRT craze, to brush such queries off as ill-informed nonsense from overly partisan, hyperventilating outliers. "Of course we are not!" one can comfortably claim - "We know and love all children..." - when the reality is that under [NAIS](#) diktat the faculty and students have been absolutely inundated with the craziest, most radical, postmodern trans, racial, and Marxist ideological propaganda<sup>4</sup>. I've written about such things before and been ignored, cowed into silence, and have ultimately

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<sup>2</sup> The rollout of the linguistic change - from headmaster to *head of school* - provides a perfect distillation of the nature of our problem. It was announced to the faculty during a condescendingly verbose Zoom meeting and seemed to only be initiated under pressure because other NAIS schools were doing it. A position founded in 18███, with a long etymological history, was eliminated via a computer-meeting in 2020, without any deliberation, and then held up somehow as an example of progress. Thank goodness that no one will be *triggered*, moving forward, by the designation of "headmaster".

<sup>3</sup> While the phenomenon is not unique to our school, the explosion in the number of administrative positions also contributes to dysfunction. How many deans of this and that does such a small school need? The DEI infrastructure is an obvious cash grab, but so too are tech and curricular bureaucracies.

<sup>4</sup> There are so many [examples](#) - Zoom recordings, documents, emails, etc. - that I could mention here, but I have them all for posterity and don't want to send you down a rabbit hole at the moment. In the parlance of our times, I have the receipts.

given up in the face of a clearly predetermined decision making apparatus. I've weathered the storm thus far by telling myself that I can only control what happens in my classroom. That I have been consistent and clear about my commitments to literature, discussion, Socratic dialogue, and apolitical, classically liberal conversation. Unfortunately, what happens in my classroom is only a tiny slice of what happens on campus writ large. My blinders can only contain the madness by degrees.

Let's get you down into some of the weeds for a minute then. I won't claim to speak for other departments like the sciences or the arts, some of which are amazing here - I'm half tempted to keep my kids here only for Mrs. ██████'s sake. But I *can* speak to the English department. You deserve to know these things if only because a prospective parent might ask, "Why should I send my child to ██████ Academy?" or "What kinds of things do students read?" What are they reading right now, trustees? One answer, according to what's on the books from our 2021-2022 curriculum maps, is that they are reading my [list of texts](#), of which I am very proud. Take away my courses, however, and things begin to unravel. Compare my reading list to that of all other upper school classes [combined](#). Does it seem like an awful lot of movies, performative virtue signaling, and woke activism with very few recognizable literary touchstones? It should, because that's precisely what it is. The problem is perhaps even worse in the middle school. Here's the [entire list](#) for 6th to 8th grade. That's it. For *three years* worth of English class. The urtext appears to be The Hate U Give. The end result of this is that, as a parent, I cannot be certain that my children will be given a solid foundation in literature as a result of a ██████ Academy education.<sup>5</sup>

As sad as that last sentence was for me to write, the rot unfortunately metastasizes when the lens zooms out. The only things that I can be certain my children *will* be taught at ██████ Academy over the next few years are wacky gender theories, divisive racial praxis, and

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<sup>5</sup> The recent appearance of an entirely new YA collection - "generously donated" - is even more disturbing from a parental standpoint. Entirely unvetted and never read by anyone, these books are being encouraged for our children. The very briefest perusal reveals an obvious and twisted [agenda](#). Pushing such stuff on 11 year olds? Sure, why not? Again, no one has even read these texts. *In loco parentis* indeed. Just to be clear, I am not claiming that there are no good books in this collection. I'm sure there are. I haven't had time to look through them in any meaningful way because I'm, you know, busy teaching real books to our students. But it seems plain to me that what harmless "windows and mirrors" really means in practice is actually promoting an entirely inappropriate gender-identity philosophy on ever younger-and younger children in order to advance an aggressive LGBTQIAP+ world view.

climate alarmism. The Latin and Greek that marked my uniquely interesting personal education in these buildings have been replaced by extra counselors who pathologize normal childhood under the guise of social and emotional learning (SEL), and by preening, navel-gazing JEDI and DEI exercises that elbow out actual education while the identity-industrial-complex feeds its perpetual graft. “The work”, as we are continually told, is never done. Meanwhile, actual work - the reading of substantive, informative texts, and the discussion thereof - goes by the wayside.

I know I can be easily dismissed as disgruntled, which I’m certain I will be, and I’ve made my peace with the consequences. At least I finally know I’m doing what’s best for my children. But, my goodness, trustees, are we ever going to wake up from the delusions that have ruined the things we once held dear before our very eyes? To take stock of how destructive what we’ve done really is? Our students didn’t go on a field trip, sing a hymn, eat a Thanksgiving meal, take communion, kiss, use a water fountain, go up the “down-only” staircase, play a concert, do a group project, have their parents in the buildings, or see their teacher’s faces for *more than two years*. And, of course, the great hypocrisy is that *we all did* do many of these very same things ourselves all along - these human things - we just pretended that kids couldn’t do them *at school*. Because the goofy governor said so. Or because the paranoid grad-student-types that we apparently have to beg for permission these days might have gotten the vapors. And we’re congratulating ourselves for having imposed this insanity on the very young people we claim are the most important to us?

I understand that all of our worlds have been upended in disorienting and unsettling ways. I have tried to put purposeful empathy into daily practice. I especially have attempted to be most feeling for my students, who haven’t deserved any of what’s been foisted upon them by awful, selfish, and cruel adults. But I also have to prioritize my own offspring. I can’t continue to force them into miserable conformity (most consequentially of viewpoint), year after year, with no discernable offramp just to fulfill some idealized vision of what I thought a ██████████ Academy education might have been. I’m not a pageant mom, reliving the glory days, determined to force my vicarious vision upon my progeny. I’ve tried to frame my thinking, as much as possible, from my children’s perspective. The *only* place that they’ve been forced to wear masks is at our school. Not at Whole Foods, or Costco, not at the gym in children’s classes, not at Mom Mom’s or Bubbie’s, not at baseball or dance, not at church (where they’ve

