

May 1, 2018

Dear Dr. Starosky,

We are writing this letter in order to document a series of events that have occurred at Thornton Creek Elementary beginning at the start of our school's new principal search in March 2018. The following is an overview of some of the incidents that have taken place since then:

1. In discussions with the BLT around new principal "look fors" as Site Council Chair and Vice Chair, we explicitly advocated for a strong race and equity lens in our future leader.
2. We experienced resistance from BLT staff around this request, who seemed to believe that protecting Expeditionary Learning was the top priority, and to include race and equity would necessarily divert focus away from that.
3. We persisted in our request to ensure race and equity leadership abilities were also noted as a top priority, *based on feedback we had received from several families who believed this was an unaddressed issue at Thornton Creek.*
4. We were pulled into an informal one-on-one meeting with a BLT staff member in advance of the principal interviews. This staff member requested that we join the rest of the BLT in prioritizing Expeditionary Learning in our principal search, and promised that we would deal with race and equity issues at our school once the principal search had concluded.
5. After it was revealed that the candidate desired by the BLT had not been selected to become our next principal, we began to hear from the parent community that this was the fault of "Site Council leadership".
6. On Monday, April 30th, a parent from one of our Site Council committees verbally indicated to Evan Briggs, Site Council Chair, that there was a movement to return to Site Council bylaws specifically in regard to selection of chairs, despite the fact that these bylaws have not been used in years and are in the process of being updated. The parent explained that people in the community did not feel "safe" with Christina Ellis as Vice Chair, claiming she has repeatedly "barged" into John Miner and Kristin Bailey's offices "yelling", and acknowledged this sudden return to the bylaws was an attempt to unseat her.
7. Also on Monday, our current principal, John Miner, included a blurb in our weekly newsletter in which he encouraged anyone interested in chairing a Site Council committee to submit their nominations by June 1st. In addition, we received email correspondence from one of our children's teachers encouraging parents to become involved with Site Council and indicating that the current term for Site Council leaders is up on May 31st. Neither the Chair nor Vice Chair were consulted in advance of either of these communications being sent out, and in fact believed that we would be serving a second year in our leadership roles, as per the norm.

We believe these incidents reflect a pattern of retaliation and harassment by administrators and certain staff at Thornton Creek, based on their belief that we were seeking to undermine

Expeditionary Learning by advocating for increased awareness around race and equity issues at our school. The characterization currently circulating within our community, that we believe originated with staff involved in the hiring process, of Christina as an angry, irrational, and “unsafe” woman of color, reveals a racially-motivated attempt to ostracize her from the community.

Please feel free to follow up with any additional questions.

Sincerely,  
Christina Ellis and Evan Briggs