

Remarks to LVCP Site Council, 8 Feb 2016

I've written down my remarks tonight – not to be excessively formal, but to keep it clear and get it all in within the time limit.

I have written a letter to the TVLC Board, that you all have a copy of. It puts to them the question that I asked at the last Board meeting: “Is TVLC in a crisis?”

I'm not going to be coy about my own position: I think that we are. The letter lists some indicators that give me, and I think any reasonable person, cause for alarm. I think we could lose our great schools if something doesn't change quickly. It is easy to be in denial and trust that “everything is going to be OK”... but generally once an organization has reached the point where it believes the world is so against it the only way it can survive is to deceive, turn inward, juggle faster, and hide from scrutiny, the end is near. From the outside it looks like “things are going to work out”... right up until the moment when they don't.

You the Site Council are going to have to engage. You need to demand accountability and answers from the Board, because past behavior makes it a fair bet those aren't going to be forthcoming unless we work together to compel them. We parents simply have to oversee our Board, and the strongest collective voice speaking for the parents is this Site Council.

Disaffected commentary on Facebook and sniping from lone parents is generally ineffective – but frankly it's all we have, if this one representative body that speaks for LVCP doesn't stand up. You can pose the clear, constructive, necessary questions that need to be asked – and you almost alone have a shot at actually requiring the answers.

A TVLC Board that ignores individual parents can claim that it's being judicious. One that ignores the legitimate questions of its own Site Council is plainly exposed as being evasive.

I know this is not what you signed up for. I know this is not supposed to be the Site Council's job. Sorry. When our kids go to recess it's not supposed to be their “job” to step in if they see a bully, either – but that's absolutely what we expect from them.

You have the unpleasant alternatives of either being enablers of the problem, or agents of the solution. There is not a middle choice. You need to do the harder right.

I do want to address one problem that I realize my challenge to you creates: There are individuals on this Council who are employees of TVLC. That is perfectly right for the body of work this Council is normally called upon to do; but it's wrong when this Council has to address itself to the unpleasant task of asking uncomfortable questions of a Board that seems unwilling to give answers.

So, I recommend you find a way to excuse employees from discussions about the performance of the Corporation. Even for them to individually, voluntarily participate or abstain is still conflicted and inappropriate. You need to take them off the hook altogether. This is between the parents and our Board.

On this point I need to say one more thing: Principal Dillie, I have the greatest respect for you and the way you are running our school. But this Council needs to insist that TVLC treats you as Principal and leader of our school first, and as an “employee” who speaks “for” the corporation not at all. The credibility of your office as Principal (which is inextricably bound up with the reputation of our school) is too invaluable to be risked in that way. If any of us might have been comfortable with keeping the delineation fuzzy before, the events of December should have made the dangers apparent.

You’ve sent a couple of emails in which you’ve asked parents, in effect, to “stay on the team”, and not ask hard questions of TVLC. On many levels those are understandable – but they need to stop. Silence is neither loyal nor constructive. A position on the Site Council by no means trumps the role or oversight responsibility of parent. These questions are between parents and the Board that works for us, and it’s wrong for the corporation to permit you as Principal to interpose yourself there. Like a Supreme Court Justice during the State of the Union, when these matters are being discussed we need to all have a clear understanding that the rules require you to keep your seat.

The Site Council is not subordinate to the corporation’s agendas, and the voices of the Site Council members – by virtue of being among the most informed and invested, and moderated by the benefits of this group’s debates – should be among those a healthy TVLC Board will be most eager to hear.

In closing, I ask that you not make the mistake of thinking time is on your side. A timeline of events over the past few months shows things deteriorating and unravelling rapidly. The corporation is mistrusted on virtually all fronts, and many families and teachers now openly wonder whether we will have a school here next year.

My letter is no more than an invitation for the TVLC Board to tell its story – to lay out the Board’s assessment and plan, so that we can then, knowledgeably, “get on the team”. I am asking you to call upon them to take the opportunity: to publically address the concerns that I’ve raised, along with any others that worry you. There is still a chance to turn this around.

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LVCP/LVCS Parent