

May 26, 2016

Superintendent Torlakson,

I am writing to you as a parent of three children attending Tri-Valley Learning Corporation (TVLC) public charter schools, Livermore Valley Charter School (LVCS) and Livermore Valley Charter Preparatory (LVCP).

I know you are already well acquainted with many of the issues surrounding TVLC, from your prior visit here and the attention being paid by your staff. I will not take up your time in this letter with preliminaries and background that I know you already have.

Instead, I want to make sure you are aware of the as-of-today state of affairs. I believe several critical issues here have reached a “boiling point”, and are tipping over an edge where the schools may not be salvageable through the efforts of our parent community alone – perhaps not even with the assistance of our authorizers, Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District (LVJUSD), acting within the limits of their authorities.

The minimum elements of “good governance” at TVLC have broken down. The corporation’s leaders have, explicitly, declared themselves unaccountable to anyone but themselves, and are engaged in actions that seem to be against the long-term interests of the schools. They have resisted community demands to give public explanations for their course. They seem unwilling (or unable, or uninterested) to arrest a cascading breakdown in their ability to provide a safe, stable, secure, fiscally responsible learning and employment environment.

A few specifics (omitting, among other things, issues documented in Notices of Concern and Violation that are already known to you):

- The TVLC Board of Directors (BOD) has been “hijacked” away from the parents.
 - Bylaws have been rewritten so that Directors are effectively not subject to external recall or control.
 - The current President holds a BOD seat because he represented himself as being the nominee of his school Council, when he was not. When the Council subsequently voted that he was explicitly NOT their representative, he refused to step down.
 - Seemingly contrary to the Brown Act, the current President was elected at a Special meeting without prior announcement or agendaization (over the objection of public comments pointing out his ineligibility).
 - Another Director has been requested by his nominating school Council to step down, but has refused.
 - There are indications of significant past irregularities in Closed Session business, not appropriately documented or reported-out.

- The overall appearance is of a “stacked” BOD, overly entangled with interests other than those of the schools. (In recent weeks we have had some success towards changing the BOD composition by seating new Directors, but that is incomplete, and has only been achieved with difficulty.)
- Since February, 3 TVLC BOD members, 4 LVCP Council members, and 1 LVCS Council member have stepped down – either as a result of, or in reaction to, governance dysfunctionalities.
- In official correspondence, TVLC threatens punitive lawsuits against any in the community who raise questions or speak out, seeking (with some success) to discourage public participation. They have specifically targeted BOD and Council members who they consider “subversive”, with the predictable effect of deterring sitting members from exercising oversight, and discouraging other conscientious prospects from stepping forward to take seats.
- To “Be TVLC’d” has become a local byword for being Lied To. Nearly every public TVLC communication shows such a complete disregard for factual accuracy, that there seems almost to be a purposeful agenda to wear the community down into accepting that we have no entitlement to truthfulness, and should give up on expecting it.
- Teacher morale (especially at LVCP) appears to be approaching breakdown. There is widespread – and understandable – mistrust of TVLC honesty, integrity, financial solvency, and future aims. Parents fear a mass exodus of our best-and-brightest teachers before the next school year.

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There is a group of dedicated, prudent parents who have been working hard for months to bring the situation under control. (Some of our efforts and the factual documentations behind our concerns have been compiled at Reformourcharterschools.org.) However, given the limitations to our leverage, and with uncertainty about what actions might be impending from your office and other authorities, we are approaching the limit of our ability to internally chart a recovery path.

We feel our ship has been seized by pirates. The passengers are plucky, but we are inadequately armed to take our ship back by force. There is growing consideration of getting into the lifeboats, our schools, and maybe striking out alone in those – but the unknown is frightening, and besides we know how hard the pirates will fight against us launching them. Many passengers are weighing the decision to just jump (some have already started), and make out individually for other shores.

What actions everyone will take depends heavily upon whether, and how soon, we know help is on the way”.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak with members of your staff, to more fully detail our concerns and obtain their counsel. I believe they would find us responsible, constructive, and well-grounded.

In closing, I want to add (and this is not gratuitous) that LVJUSD has been exceptionally professional and supportive, as we have worked to bring this situation under control. I believe it is widely recognized throughout our TVLC community that Superintendent Bowers and her staff are acting out of principled commitment to providing the best for our students. We greatly appreciate their guidance and support, and yours.

Sincerely,

Matt Weingart
Parent; LVCS 3rd-grader, LVCP 11th- & 12th-graders

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