

Dear TESH Board of Directors,

I appreciate your request for parent input regarding restructuring leadership positions at TESH. I will gladly share with you what my thoughts are on how the leadership at our school is unique, energetic, and supportive.

I would also like to take this opportunity to bring up some issues that I feel need to be addressed based on my experience as a 2nd-year TESH parent.

First, I do really appreciate that you are asking for parent input during this process. I do not remember the Board asking for parent input before regarding any of the decisions made at TESH, and I think this is a step in the right direction. I am aware that parents are in a unique and privileged position as contributors to this process, and this is one of the reasons that I enrolled my children at this school.

In the future, I would like to see parents have more of a voice regarding changes made at the school, and more of a parent presence on the board. Last school year, at the July 2019 board meeting, a group of parents asked for more parent presence on the board, among other things, and were ignored. I would like to reiterate that this is still important to the parent community. I would again like to ask that more (more than 2) TESH parents serve on the board, and that these parents are elected by the parent body, instead of the board. I would also like to remind the board that at the July 2019 board meeting, parents asked for more ways to give feedback- end of the year surveys that would allow us to give assessments on teacher performance, administrator proficiency, and board involvement. I believe that should be a resource to draw upon when making staffing or restructuring changes.

Secondly, over the last 2 school years, I have noticed quite a bit of staff turnover. I know this is a result of numerous obstacles, that some resignations have been voluntary, and some contracts have not been renewed. I also know that new charter schools must find their footing, and that some staff changes are healthy and necessary. I also acknowledge that what was working for my family may have not been best for everyone; but I, for my own piece of mind, would like to you to know how detrimental these changes have been for my children. Change is difficult for children in any scenario, but I think that TESH's unique model of learning makes losing a trusted mentor especially difficult. Success in Experiential Education hinges upon our student's willingness to be vulnerable in the classroom; asks for their trust and equitable input; and further relies on strong parent-teacher networks to connect the cycle of learning that does not end when the school day is over. These valuable elements: vulnerability, equity, and partnership are severely damaged when staff turnover is high. We lose our footing after the formula changes, and our classroom looping system cannot achieve its intended progression amidst frequent revision. Personally, I have seen my children suffer from staff changes in many ways. They have lost valuable instruction time when trying to adjust to new teachers; and they have struggled to find familiarity in a space that once felt like home. Although I know some staff changes are necessary, I implore you to makes these decisions carefully, and ask for more input from those who are impacted directly.

Thirdly, as an active and faithful member of the C4, and the liaison for the Staff Appreciation Team, the thought of restructuring at such an early and unstable time in our school's timeline feels overwhelming. The C4 has tried desperately for the past 2 years to gain some footing, and establish itself as a functioning, organized, elemental part of the school's community. As someone that has never missed a meeting, I can share with you first-hand that a lot has been asked of this group, and many people are very stretched. I worry that if heavy changes are made, setbacks will continue; and many parents may feel the need to step back- further delaying our progress.

Lastly, and finally speaking to the question at hand, I would like to give my input regarding the leadership at TESH. I would like to qualify that I think the current administrators, Dr. Bocci and Mrs. Moore are excellent leaders and admirable educators. I could tell so many complementary stories about them, but for the purpose of time, I will submit simply that they both have made a huge positive impact on the lives of both my children at TESH, and are what I believe to be excellent role models for my young daughters.

It is meaningful to me that TESH does not employ a hierarchical system of governance. The shared responsibility between 2 co-directors that does not imply dominance or authority makes TESH feel like a safe place where real community and collaboration can take place. Also, as a woman, and a mother of 3 girls, I am inspired that the initial leaders of our school chosen were women. I would encourage the board, moving forward with this process to continue to place minorities in authoritative positions as a model of innovation for educational facilities.

In closing, I would again like to thank you for your initiation in building a bridge between the parent body and the Board of Directors. I hope the board continues to reach out to parents to further develop this relationship, and to improve communication. I look forward to a new and meaningful school year as collaborators.

Thank you,

Rachel Morton