

Charles Baldecchi:

All right. Well, welcome to week three. How's everybody doing? How's your week been? I appreciate everyone being on this call. I'm going to talk about a couple things. One I'm going to address the situation at hand that everyone, sort of the elephant in the room. But I also want you to know, actually, when we scheduled this meeting, I'm going to also address the new gift cop policy and give you a little bit of background of that. And then I'm going to answer a couple of questions that folks sent to Susan, and I'll make sure that I'll sort of try to address those if I can. Some of which I'm not sure I have an answer to yet. But let me start. Let me just make some things very clear from the beginning.

Charles Baldecchi:

If you have seen the PowerPoint presentation done by a parent group calling itself Refocused Latin, there's no other way to describe it than just awful. The executive committee and myself met in good faith with this group and the group met us with bad faith. By the time they left the meeting, they had sent that out to the point where it became viral, obviously, and viewed by many, including faculty. [DT Comment: Chuck intentionally made multiple untrue and misleading statements here. The Refocus Latin group has at least 60 active members that helped create this presentation over the course of two months. They collaborated via email, Zoom and in-person meetings. Refocus Latin (RL) had many more than that number of supporters who did not contribute to the presentation's creation but did want to see it and express their support. RL intentionally only kept the presentation and discussions to those within the Latin family. No one ever went "viral" by posting anything on the internet. Chuck knew that was false when he said it. There should never have been any issue with a carefully crafted presentation presented in a civil and respectful manner being sent to fellow parents that asked to see it. There never was bad faith by anyone other than Chuck in his denouncing and demonizing RL in his very public messaging.] One reads it and cringes. The statements made in it are inaccurate. They're invented in many cases, and very hurtful. [DT Comment: Chuck again knowingly makes false statements. What is inaccurate? Invented? Really? Review the PowerPoint and show us something that is "inaccurate" or "invented."] These comments are made about our colleagues, our friends, those that we respect and work with every day. Please know that I support you. What I've been struggling with is I don't want to dignify the document or the group. [DT Comment: "Dignify the document or the group" is a statement going out of his way to divide Latin, rather than bring it together through dialog. He is intentionally trying to demonize our group.] And the only reason I said their name is so that you know what I'm talking about. Therefore, I'm not going to disseminate the PowerPoint. People have asked for it. However, there is a copy in my office, and if you want to review it, you can get a copy from Michelle to read in the headmaster's conference room. [DT Comment: So, after slamming our group with false statements, he does not want anyone to actually see the presentation he is slamming, lest they could see for themselves the fact that what he is saying is just not true or begin to ask questions. People have to ask him to go into his office to see it? I am sure anyone that might be interested would feel comfortable going to him to ask for that after hearing what he just said.]

Charles Baldecchi:

I'm not interested in naming names of employees, parents, or advisors to this group. Not because I want to protect them, but because I don't want to dignify their lost cause. [DT Comment: Shortly after we create a presentation that took hundreds of hours of work from 60 parents, with the intention of starting a conversation, he is stating our cause is lost. This is the man you asked us to engage with directly going forward after the Executive Committee meeting on the 24th? Our members were trying to tell the Board that we had tried to engage with Chuck in the past and been summarily dismissed, which is why we went to the Board in the first place. The headmaster is supposed to listen to parents and try

to bring the school together. He only wants to crush any opposition and never had any intention of trying to meet in good faith with our group.] I stand solidly behind you, our faculty. I'm going to get some specifics here too. The way that Sonja is portrayed in this document is despicable. I stand behind her 100%. She's excellent at her job. The group makes mention of meritocracy. She is the epitome of it, and she isn't going anywhere unless she wants to. For many of you, this document echoes big brother. [DT Comment: What is interesting is that he is the government in this scenario with all the power. He is using the very tactic he claims we are, with his "big brother" reference. His is trying to silence and crush this message with his vehement public denouncement, stated in a most uncivil and disrespectful approach that is unfitting of a headmaster at Latin. None of your fellow parents at Latin that participated in the creation of this presentation deserved this very public retaliation. The Board specifically promised that there would be no retaliation, but here it is.] Please know that your jobs are not at risk, nor do I expect any of you to stop or alter the excellent teaching you do every day. Yesterday at parents council, I decided to give one example of sort of a model. And I chose the fourth grade team's teaching of their book, Indian No More as that model of how curriculum should be thoughtfully chosen, perfectly planned, and masterfully taught, but I could have used any number of you as an example.

Charles Baldecchi:

I do want to tell the story of the fourth grade team though, because I do really feel like it tells a story of sort of how things are bent and misconstrued. The fourth grade team a couple years ago, almost a couple years now wanted to diversify their readings. And so the team read multiple books over the summer and came back from that and sort of had book discussions about it, decided what they wanted to choose, and at the end of the day, they chose Indian No More. It's an award-winning book, absolutely developmentally appropriate. And what I love about their thoughtfulness is that it's a tough book. It deals with some tough issues and it actually has the N-word in it. But again, they wanted to do it right. So they actually reached out to Sonja and asked her to sort of work with them on how do you teach a book at this age, with the word, with that word in it.

Charles Baldecchi:

And they spent a great deal of time with Sonja going over the right methods to do that. And I applaud that effort. But one of the things that Sonja also asked that they consider is that they would reach out to every African American family and tell them that they're reading this book, the content of it, and ask for a permission, which they did and they received. And so now you have the book chosen. It is a bit controversial potentially, but at their September parent night, or in their materials, they let parents know that they would be reading this book way ahead of time. They would not read it actually until March or April. Again, thoughtfully giving parents notice and plenty of time. And there were parents that reached out to the team, to Mark, to myself, with concerns. In the document, the group likes to say that we didn't meet with folks or we didn't meet and to listen. I'll just give my personal example. So I met with six people about Indian No More, four of whom did not have a fourth grade student.

Charles Baldecchi:

I listened for 45 minutes to each family. And I'll be honest with you in the first five minutes, I knew that they didn't know what they were talking about. But I wanted to have an open door and I wanted to listen to people. It also happened to be the week after Thanksgiving when COVID was cranking up. And I honestly didn't have time to meet with people, but not only did I meet, but I know that they met with Mark and again with the team. But I just want to state my own personal experience because I think it's important that you all realize how things were skewed in this document. The amazing thing though, is that I didn't hear anything again until the book was actually taught in late March and early April. And

then the emails of praise came in one after the other, about the critical thinking that the students did in the class, the writing exercises, the way it was handled, the fact that there really was not any shaming of anyone or making people feel guilty, but the growth of them as an individual class, I mean individual student, but also as a class.

Charles Baldecchi:

And the reason I just bring this up is that that is the thoughtful way we go about choosing new books.

Charles Baldecchi:

And I know that's what you do. And I just want you to know, I'm proud of that. Are we perfect in our teaching? Of course not. If you are doing your job correctly, you are taking risks and trying new methods and material regularly. I expect the same of you as I do from our students, to take full advantage what we say in our mission as growth promoting opportunities. It is the only way we improve and get better. You make mistakes and you go sit down and say, what can we do better next time. Your division's heads are here to help you navigate this landscape. Please use them.

Charles Baldecchi:

I also want to put this in context. This is a national issue, the issue that was brought up in this PowerPoint. I don't know how much you have read recently, but there are New York times articles, wall street times, I mean, Wall Street Journal articles, Bloomberg, Town and Country just had an amazing article about out this. All schools across the country are struggling with this idea of people bringing really politics into the classroom, talking about critical race theory, which quite frankly, I did not know existed until last spring and still have had yet someone that explain it to me fully. But it is, it's out there in the country. And I say that only because it's not a surprise to me that it's here at Latin. [DT Comment: Here he is saying that Critical Race theory and politics in the classroom is here at Latin. He is "not surprised", in order to make it sound like it is ok and appearing everywhere, so don't be concerned everyone. This is just fine and normal.] In fact, when I went to the Malone school heads, we had the Malone scholarship, the Malone school heads meet every summer. It was actually a first in person conference I've been to in a while. This topic had overtaken COVID as the number one topic for heads. So very, very interesting, unfortunately. Excuse me. Their presentation ultimately is an attack on our community with the intention of ripping its fabric apart. We cannot allow this to happen. I'm not going to allow this to happen, but I can't mend it without your help. We have to come together, trust each other, and support each other. [DT Comment: Refocus Latin asked for private dialog with the Board and Administration, with the goal of having our voices heard and trying to come together with civil and respectful dialog. Chuck is intentionally trying to divide us into "us" and "them" groups and is actually the one "ripping its fabric apart".]

Charles Baldecchi:

I spent the entire day with our board two weeks ago at our strategic planning retreat. I want you to know this. We talked, we actually talked a little bit about this issue even before the presentation was leaked. [DT Comment: This claim that the presentation "leaked" is absurd. It was worked on since June. Ideas were circulated by many via email. There was a massive effort to create a professional presentation to be provided in a private format, to start dialog with the Board, because we knew from past experience Chuck had no intention of dealing with us honorably or fairly. The presentation was intended to go out to supporters of the RL Group - and there was nothing wrong with that. It did not get sent in a broadcast email to all parents. It was kept in the Latin family and there is nothing wrong with

that.] I have never felt more supported by a board in my career. You have that same support. I mean it, I don't see any daylight between us. [DT Comment: Chuck has taken your expression of support to feel emboldened to publicly slam parents, with knowingly false and misleading statements, then expel my children to make an example of them to silence the rest of the group. He is creating a climate of fear within both the parents and faculty groups to eliminate opposition. Is the Board ok with this?] We have had a couple of questions about how to handle the, so I'm done talking about that, but we have had a couple of questions about how to handle the subject. If it comes up on parent night or at any other time. My advice is this. Do not engage with parents at parent night about this topic, if it comes up. If someone at asks point them to me, please. If someone disrupts your class in any way, remove them from the meet and then inform your division head. I don't suspect that'll be the case, but I just, I don't, I know that we've got parent nights coming up and I don't want you all to feel like you've got to answer these questions. Okay. [DT Comment: Both the RL Group and the Turpin family were civil and respectful in all our communications. Chuck clearly is not. He is falsely implying we were threatening or disruptive, then telling everyone to shut us down and not engage with us. He even says he will take care of removing anyone that brings up "this topic". This is truly big brother and intentionally threatening when he says, "point them to me". His message was heard loud and clear by the faculty, as Todd took a communication I sent requesting a call about how my son was being treated in class, then did not address it, just pointed us to Chuck. Chuck then expelled our kids to make an example of them to silence any opposition to what he is doing. Is this the type of atmosphere of fear and intimidation the Board wishes from its leader?]

Charles Baldecchi:

All right. So going from one tough topic to the next. I want to talk about gifting and really specifically for folks to just sort of understand there is a tradition, not in every division, or areas of school, but there are here for a long time standing where there's a parent representative that collects money on behalf of the class, or the team, or the bus, or the play, whatever it may be, and then gives sort of that gift in cash in usually at the holidays and at the end of the year. And I want to say this. It's well deserved. This isn't about this. But the IRS and our audit group made it very clear that this practice is not kosher. It's not allowed. And we, to become in compliance, we have to basically follow through on ending this practice.

Charles Baldecchi:

We're not alone in this. I will tell you, varying schools are dealing with this, but we all are going to have to deal with this in the next couple of years, or if some people dealt with it previous year. It's just, it's the law. Let me explain a little bit why. So, when someone emails a group of parents, there's documentation, they're asking for a specific amount, and then they are giving that money to the parent representative who are then turning around and putting that money in their own personal bank account. Okay. Which makes people nervous.

Charles Baldecchi:

And then they turn around and issue those bonuses or gifts. And quite frankly, that is considered income when they do that. It's also, just to state it clearly, it's all documented very clearly via email. So from an auditor standpoint, it's very traceable. Okay. So it needs to be reported. The other thing about these bonuses, right or wrong, is they weren't done equitably across the school. Like I said, certain divisions were, had a more of a tradition of doing it. And certain teams also had a varying amount. It wasn't consistent across the board. And another thing I do want to say is increasingly as our school became more economically diverse, there were more questions coming to the school from parents that felt pressured to give when they did not necessarily feel financially able to give. And so it just created an

awkward tension within the grade. It's for all of those reasons that we really have decided that we needed to tackle this issue this year.

Charles Baldecchi:

So what is okay? And I think there's some, there was some confusion about this before, and I'm glad that we sort of straightened it out. So, the IRS actually has a term called de minimus, which means that an amount of money is not enough to be traced or documented. That number for them, I think we originally thought was like \$25, which is just impossible. It's actually a \$100. So it gives a little bit more room. Meaning if you receive a bottle of wine at Christmas and it's a nice bottle of wine, you're not having to report that or, but of course also here's the other piece is that really what we're encouraging is for students to give thoughtful notes, make things for you, bake things for you. But I also do want you to know that there is a gifting allowance of that the value of that gift is about \$100.

Charles Baldecchi:

I will also point this out though. You want to avoid cash. And I know that sounds obvious in some ways, but part of this is the problem with giving gifts to, from parents to teachers, and especially even with sort of the bonus before, but we do not want there to be any sniff of quid pro quo, and neither do you. And that's sort of why you don't want this number to be large, nor do you want it to be something like cash. Because it doesn't want to be seen as I'm giving you this really wonderful gift, make sure you take care of Johnny, and I'm not accusing anyone of doing that. Please know that. It's just, that's sort of, again, a little bit of the background of this policy. I do want to say a couple things, right.

Charles Baldecchi:

There's no problem giving gifts to coworkers. There's no problem giving gifts that to a teacher that is a thoughtful gift. We want people to be thanked and honored. And again, it's not just teachers, it's sports, and arts, buses, various different places around campus. And so I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news and have to sort of do this in what is already a difficult year. But I also know this, and that is that I've got an obligation to keep Charlotte Latin school a nonprofit and its nonprofit status. And this is something that we have to take. So I hope that explains it. You're certainly welcome to ask any follow up with me or Fletcher, but a really would be, happy for you to do that. All right.

Charles Baldecchi:

All right. So, I'm looking over the questions that came in. A couple things, Refocused Latin, which we I've already dealt with. I don't have an answer to this, but I know that it's come up a couple of times. Mandatory vaccinations, now that the FDA is approved. I'm going to be honest with you. I haven't landed that plane yet. It would've been something different if school had started, if it were done before school started, but I don't have an answer for you there. I am going to obviously look into that, and the full FDA approval and have to read that, but I know it's a question asked, but I don't have an answer. The other question that came up quite a bit is childcare. The week before school starts, several of you asked this question. I'm going to add it to the discussion for administrative team and we'll discuss it for next year. I appreciate your feedback on that. Obviously, it's something that would help us all do our jobs. So I do appreciate that. That's all I have for this. I want to end on a positive note, but before I do that, are there any questions that people have or anybody?

Charles Baldecchi:

Okay. All right, Mike.

Mike Weiss:

Everyone, Chuck, I know you said you didn't want to reference the Refocus Latin topic again, but Susan reached out to me today. I know we've been in correspondence. And so I just wanted my colleagues to know that I know many of us maybe have been working on written responses to it as I have. And I've shared that with Chuck and Sonja and a couple of other people. And my understanding is that, I will be sharing this with all of my colleagues as soon as the meeting is over. And Chuck, if you sort of officially authorize that, I'm certainly happy to do that. [DT Comment: Chuck is engaging in a one-sided battle, where only what he wants people to hear will be presented. The presentation and fellow parents he is demonizing are not going to be represented, their presentation is to be kept in his office and not shared, and he will orchestrate a public response from his supporters that is only what he wants to portray. Is this conduct fair, reasonable, civil, respectful, honorable, or in any way looking to bring the school together in the way a responsible leader should?]

Charles Baldecchi:

Yeah. I certainly understand that there may want to be a faculty response. And so I don't want to, I do understand the importance of that. I also, just so, you know, I have a really wonderful response from our student body, mainly it started by seniors. But just a really thoughtful letter from them as well. And so I've received that. I will take yours, and I'll share that with Denny and the board. But anyway, Mike, I do understand that some people and I get it, want to feel compelled to sort of write something down. And so I appreciate that. Okay. Any other question? Anyone else? [DT Comment: Would any child feel comfortable in opposing Chuck publicly in this atmosphere? Did any of the children even know what they were asked to oppose or see the presentation? Did he provide an opportunity for a debate, where the other side could be heard and fairly evaluated?] I do want to end, and I mean, this on a positive note, because it's actually been a great start to the school year from our student's perspective.

Charles Baldecchi:

And I just, I want everyone to remember, it is our students, this is why we're here. The energy, and I have to sort of also give props out. This senior class, I asked for them to set a tone. I just feel like they really are trying to make the best of their senior year, and therefore this school year. Lawrence and I have talked about it. It's just is a palatable thing in the hallway. But the energy enthusiasm and excitement of being back in school is palatable. Our senior class has truly set a tone for the school year that I admire and I believe will keep us focused on what is essential at Latin, our students, your students. And so thank you again, it's an honor to serve and lead you all. It has been a crazy two years. It'll continue to be a interesting third. But you know what, the other thing is as, I'll just put it this way. When I received the letter from students, I have to tell you, I just, I actually started crying. This is a great school. And our students love this sense of community. And we are all in this together. So with that, have a good evening. And I will, I know we meet with a different group of folks tomorrow and I'll do that as well. Thank you everybody take care.