

A Failure of Leadership – A Retaliatory Expulsion

“Charlotte Latin School prohibits retaliatory behavior against anyone who complains in good faith or participates in the complaint and/or investigation process pursuant to this policy, regardless of the outcome of the investigation.” - CLS Family Handbook

Charlotte Latin Leadership under Chuck Baldecchi and Todd Ballaban have discouraged open dialogue, abandoned the parent school partnership and created a culture of fear. This is best displayed by the expulsion of Logan and Olivia Turpin in retaliation to Doug and Nicole’s participation in REFOCUS Latin.

Discouraged Open Dialogue

Refocus Latin was created around concerns from at least 60 Latin parents. On August 24th, Refocus Latin created a presentation for the Board of Trustees’ Executive Committee, at the request of the Board’s Vice Chair, Mike Freno. “Respect is the foundation of the Charlotte Latin School community” and the presentation honored that spirit by identifying concerns, providing recommendations, and identifying specific reasons for the concerns. The presentation was meant to be the starting point for dialog, created at the Boards request. You can see the [presentation in full here](#).

However, Mr. Baldecchi was not interested in a dialogue. Instead, he began disparaging the parents involved in Refocus Latin, making inflammatory comments about the presentation even accusing the group of taking the presentation “viral”.

ReFocus on the Parent Partnership			
Situation • There are parents at Latin that are upset by the direction of the school and feel increasingly silenced with their concerns. • BFG decisions on policy, curriculum and culture are being made at the school with insufficient parent collaboration.			
Recommendation Similar to Latin's process leading to the change of math curriculum, establish a series of parent and other stakeholder forums to discuss any significant changes to school policy, curriculum or communications prior to implementation.			
Reason #1 Dismissive Attitude of Administration	Reason #2 Erosion of Trust in School Leadership	Reason #3 Lack of Accountability at Any Level of School Governance	Reason #4 Parents should not accept "Blind Trust" and should have a Voice
• Many parents report feeling "silenced" after expressing concerns to administration • Shifting of responsibility from Administrators to collaborate with parents before making a major decision to burdening parents with having to actively "protest" a decision - in large numbers - to have a significant change overturned	• Several changes, made swiftly and with little or no input from the broader parent community, have been actuated by passionate groups of staff, faculty and other parents that are aversive to the rights of other School community members, particularly parents and students, that are equally passionate with their view (ex: signage, tuition reimbursement)	• Messaging from Board Members. • The Board does not get involved in the operations of the school • Messaging from Head of School. • "I don't get involved in book choices; the great thing about an independent school is that teachers can set their own curriculum"	• Faculty have told parents that, "As educators, we know what's best for your children." • Parents Council is currently not a willing forum for parents to voice concerns and discuss school issues • "It is incumbent on all of us to trust leadership and also those who choose the leadership"



On a 9/02/21 video to parents and teachers Mr. Baldecchi referenced the presentation by saying “One reads it and cringes. The statements made in it are inaccurate. They’re invented in many cases, and very hurtful.” Again, dissuading dialogue by saying “Do not engage with parents at parent night about this topic, if it comes up. If someone asks, point them to me, please.”

You can view the faculty [video here](#), and the transcript of it with our comments [here](#). And the Sept Parents Council video transcript with our comments are [here](#).

Mr. Baldecchi speaks of inclusivity and a supportive environment but that is only afforded to those who agree with him. Mr. Baldecchi is quick to label, alienate even expel when his views are questioned, or approaches challenged.

Abandoned the Parent-School Partnership

The Parent-School Partnership is part of the foundation of Charlotte Latin. There is an expectation that parents will be an active member in their child’s education, and it promises the school will address concerns through direct conversation with parents. Over the years many have felt that this Partnership has devolved into a Parent-School Endorsement, where the new expectation is that the parents will fully endorse all of the school’s decisions acting as “Model Parents”. If parents raise questions or express concerns they are placated or ignored, because mutual respect and open communications are no longer valued by the Charlotte Latin Leadership.

A Culture of Fear

“I’m not going to dignify the inaccuracies of the presentation that many of you have may have read.” - Mr. Baldecchi. By discouraging open dialogue and abandoning the Parent-School Partnership, the head of school is creating a Culture of Fear. To the point where your opinion won’t be granted dignity, if you disagree. The fear of being publicly labeled a white supremacist if you hold a different opinion (see tweet from Latin parent). Or having your children expelled because the headmaster does not like what you have said. “You need to leave Charlotte Latin. OK, I’m just gonna tell you it is not a good relationship, you clearly are in violation of this. I don’t like the way you communicate.” - Mr. Baldecchi from the recorded conversation on Sept 10th expulsion, the entire transcript is available [here](#).



Charlotte Latin is devolving from a strong community of families to a politically divisive community of Us and Them. This is happening not just because of failure in leadership but because it is being cultivated by the leadership itself.