

February 2, 2017

To: Steven Cook, Superintendent, Haslett Public Schools
Susan Jones, Assistant Superintendent

Cc: Chris Coady, President, Haslett Board of Education

From: Eric Thompson, Patricia Morley

Re: Response to January 27 meeting

Dear Mr Cook and Ms Jones:

Thank you for taking time to field our questions relative to the events that occurred in September and in October that we brought to the board meeting for investigation. Here is a synopsis of our impressions of that meeting.

The first topic that we want to respond to is that we heard from you that Principal Gillings did not speak with Patty in September but instead you told us that it was Ms Woodhams, Associate Principal, acting on direction from Principal Gillings. Patty agrees that she might have mistook Principal Gillings name as introductory vs. on behalf of. We understand that you both agree that regardless of whom Patty spoke with the content of the discussion is not in doubt, nor is the response from Ms Woodhams that she thanked Patty for speaking to her and would be sure to contact us relative to any issues that Evan may have in the future and keep an eye on him. We also took away from the discussion that you both agreed that the context of that discussion along with agreement that we would be contacted about any issues relative to Evans behavior should have been communicated to Evans team as a matter of course.

We asked what Ms Woodhams did with the information that was verbally communicated to her by Patty? Did she take this back to Principal Gillings? If she was acting as you said on direction from Principal Gillings then we expect that she would subsequently report back on the content of the discussion. Did she or Principal Gillings subsequently disseminate this information to Evan's team to be on the lookout for anything that might be out of the ordinary with Evans behavior and to contact us immediately? We understand that you will be investigating these questions and provide clear and definitive responses.

We also understood from your response to our questions about teacher interaction that Mrs Allen had shared Evans condition to the other teachers in Evans team who subsequently confirmed that he was in distress. There was no doubt that Evan elicited signs of distress and his teachers commented on it while not acting to send him to the office or have us contacted.

There is another issue that we wish to be cleared up relative to the assertion by Eric that students spoke to teachers warning them of Evans behavior; in particular Mr Luea. You informed us that it was not possible that a student spoke to Mr Luea as Mrs Bobeda was the substitute that day. We reached out to the parents of the student who informed us that yes, indeed their son did speak to Mr Luea, specifically as he was packing up his laptop and getting ready to leave his room just prior to Mrs Bobeda taking over as the substitute. We want to know if you spoke personally to Mr Luea to confirm our statement that a student spoke to him about Evan or did you just take it on faith from someone else? We are prepared to have the parent of the student contact you in writing should Mr Luea dispute this fact.

We also learned from you to our dismay that Mrs Allen had not one, but three specific interactions with Evan and actually wrote him a permanent hall pass so that, in your words "he could walk it off in the hallway that day if he needed to without fear of being questioned by other teachers". This is deeply disturbing to us that Mrs Allen would see such emotional distress that she felt compelled to write him a permanent pass but did not seem to think that she should send him to the counselor or to the office to have us contacted.

We were not happy with the way in which Mr Cook attempted to dispute that the two emails sent by Eric to Principal Gillings were not specifically requesting a response. Mr Cook told us that someone tried to call Eric, and also seemed to imply that the language used in the emails requesting a response did not explicitly request contact. A careful reading of that email will see the final sentence is quite clear to let us know if we are correct or incorrect. We were also told in that the boy that struck Evan had special needs, as if that was some type of reason for him not being given out of school suspension! The disciplinary policy is very clear, and there is no written carve out for students with special needs. If indeed Principal Gillings thought as much then why didn't she respond in email to the request for an explanation of why multiple occurrences were not escalated to stricter punishment? We believe that this further demonstrates lack of policy adherence by Principal Gillings and by extension Ms Woodhams. As we spoke in the December board meeting, the next day when Evan approached Principal Gillings for an explanation she told him "Evan, sometimes you just have to let things go". It was the night after he told me this that I wrote the last email to her telling her that I was going to come in but Evan begged me not to because he said she would only make it worse for him. This demonstrates what we have said to the board, Principal Gillings behavior and attitude to Evan broke down the level of trust that a student should have with the principal, and her actions and words created a barrier and environment of distrust which is in direct contradiction of the written policies for the middle school to create a safe learning environment.

There was also assertion by Mr Cook about the email sent by Mrs Brookhouse that the content of the email was more about the test than it was about Evans emotional state. This was deeply disturbing to us as there was an entire paragraph about Evan's emotional state, and only a final single sentence about the exam. We took this as a repudiation of our argument that the teacher clearly saw something wrong with Evan and had heard it first hand from Mrs Allen at noon that day. We consider the fact that she did not see it as her responsibility to send Evan to the office and have us called as further proof that she had probably not been told of the phone conversation Patty had with Ms Woodhams and that Principal Gillings did not inform any of Evans teachers. We are confident had she been made aware of this that a phone call would have been made at lunch time at the latest after having discussed Evan specifically. We feel that Mr Cook is deliberately attempting to defend Mrs Brookhouse's failure to contact the office about Evan. We could not disagree more and the email stands as written proof of our assertions.

We asked about the state journal FOIA request not being honored and were given a quasi-legal mumbo jumbo about redaction to the point that those emails would be unusable. This is patently insulting, as it would be very easy to redact any student names and leave in all of the particulars relative to date, time, from and to addresses and the content of the emails themselves. We were told that only October 10 emails were requested, and not October 11 which is contrary to what we were told by the State Journal. It is our position that any email exchanges between staff that discussed events on or after October 10 should be released, and that many of those emails had no student information in them other than that of Evan that could not easily be redacted yet still have meaning.

In the final analysis, it is our position that nothing was communicated by either Ms Woodhams or Principal Gillings to any of Evans teachers after the phone conversation with Patty and thus would explain your statements to us that Principal Gillings never knew anything about Evan on October 10. Furthermore, Principal Gillings notwithstanding, we are adamant that your statements about how middle school teachers see lots of kids crying as part of the middle school experience as if that should be some sort of excuse for those teachers failure to have the parents called as insulting. Patty gave you a perfect example of how as a cancer nurse she sees patients in distress on a daily basis but she should then just ignore that as part of the condition?

You both agreed with us that the principal is the leader at the middle school, responsible for managing policy adherence. She is also responsible for communicating information to staff that might be critical to the safety of the student population. Your own middle school policy states that the school has the

responsibility to provide for a mental and physically safe environment (see page 4). We also believe that the individual responsible for determining what punishment was given to Evan reports to Principal Gillings, and takes direction from her exclusively. The middle school policy is very clear that multiple occurrences of disciplinary violations are to be progressively harsher in nature (see page 6). This policy was not followed by your staff and warrants appropriate action. We believe that the leader of the middle school has failed on so many levels that she should no longer be allowed to be the principal. It was her responsibility to communicate policy and information to staff and the facts speak for themselves that she failed to do that which resulted in Evan being overlooked as well as having to suffer emotional distress many days prior to October 10 and overtly on October 10 itself.

We expect that you will be in a position to answer the open questions that we raised during our January 27th meeting and be prepared to provide us with further clarification of what transpired October 10 relative to teacher knowledge of the conversation that Patty had with administration the week of September 28. Our feeling is that you were polite, but were attempting to dispute or obfuscate our arguments that Haslett middle school staff and administration failed in multiple ways to recognize and act on Evan's behalf based upon information provided to administration not 10 days prior to his death.

As Patty made it clear to you both, if Evan had been held and we had been contacted then he would be alive today. There is no disputing this statement as fact and we expect you to take action to hold accountable those that failed Evan.

Signed
Eric Thompson
Patricia Morley