



LYCÉE FRANÇAIS DE LA NOUVELLE-ORLÉANS

Madame Gisèle Schexnider, *Director*

January 29, 2013

Dear Parents,

I'm writing in response to a story that appeared today in an online publication that recounted events that occurred three years ago at the school my older daughter has attended for several years, Audubon Charter School.

My daughter confided that a 5th grade classmate of hers had been repeatedly bullying her, including physical intimidation and teasing, with acts ranging from a punch in the stomach to mocking a great-grandfather who served as a rabbi in Eastern Europe and was the subject of a report she proudly presented to her class. In January 2010, the bullying came to a head when she told me through tears that he had made a very frightening and threatening comment to her.

The next day, I decided to visit the school to speak with the teacher to stop the behavior and perhaps elicit an apology from the young man. At the entrance to the classroom, I asked the teacher if I could speak to the boy, and I noticed him at his desk laughing with friends. The teacher responded that no, I could not do that, which was fine. I did, however want the situation resolved, so I turned in the boy's direction and from across the room said I would talk with him and his parents about his behavior after school. Actually, it has been a while since I made that statement three years ago, and I cannot recall whether I mentioned his parents or not, but I certainly intended to include them in any subsequent conversation. The young man laughed again, and I walked out of the school.

I ended up deciding not to have that conversation with him or his parents, but instead spoke with the principal, who assured she would investigate. Unfortunately, the school's administrators did misinterpret my words and actions that day as a perceived threat to a student. Nothing could have been further from the truth and I am sorry to say that was not the first disagreement I had had with the administrators. In any event, I did receive the letter from the assistant principal requesting that I not enter the school. In retrospect, had I any idea that letter would come to public light, even in the blogosphere, and reflect poorly on me or on this school, I would have responded forcefully at the time with the true interpretation of events. I did speak with the school I was working for at the time about the event and the letter, and of course, my employer trusted me and my version of the events.

The good news is that most of the bullying from the young man stopped soon after, and in fact, three years later, the kids are in 8th grade together and they get along just fine. Today, I

certainly can visit my daughter's school and I just visited for a report card conference the other day. Another positive outcome is that as a parent who has experienced first hand the problems of bullying in school, I have no tolerance for that type of behavior, and I am implementing an anti-bullying program that will emphasize and open the lines of communication to report such incidents. I'll write more about that program soon but in the meantime, rest assured I am fully committed to the safety and well-being of our children in a nurturing environment, and will personally handle any concerns a parent may have regarding bullying that may occur at our school.

I hope this letter answers any concerns you have from the unfortunate article and we can all turn our direction to the future needs of our school, including the selection of a top-flight permanent CEO to lead our school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G Schexnider". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a stylized "S".

Gisèle Schexnider
Director/Interim CEO
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cc: Staff of Lycée Français de la Nouvelle-Orléans
LFNO, Inc. Board of Directors