

Dr. Amy George-Hirons
1726 Broadway Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

Board of Directors
Lycée Française de la Nouvelle-Orléans
5951 Patton Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

December 3, 2012

Dear Board of Directors:

I am writing to document an event that I witnessed at approximately 3:40 PM on Friday, November 30th. I hope that the Board will take immediate action to prevent a similar event in the future and investigate the offending party.

When I was walking into the school to pick up my child in his designated car pool pick-up room at the end of the day, I noticed a sign on the wall of the school that read "The Board is Killing our School." I had not read the e-mail about Darleen Mipro's firing before I arrived on campus.

When I walked into the classroom where my son waits to be picked up, I realized that the teachers were writing and posting these protest signs. I prepared to gather my son's things and leave.

I then noticed a very tall man removing the signs almost as quickly as they were put in place. The man in question went to remove a large banner that was being hung by two female teachers. As he reached for the sign, the two teachers stood in front of it in a stance that is easily recognized by people who have studied social movements as peaceful. The man reached between the women and attempted to tear the sign down. At this point, two more female teachers put themselves between the man and the banner, all four with arms crossed in front of them. There were loud thumps against the glass wall as the man pushed the women from side to side to reach for the sign.

At this point, my son was visibly disturbed, and I went outside, leaving my son inside where there were other teachers and parents present. I positioned myself between the man and the female teachers and told him that I wanted him to stop touching these women. The man replied that he wanted the police called. The female teachers stated that they would like the same. I realized that another parent was already on the phone with the police. My son then approached me in tears, absolutely terrified.

At this point the man walked down the carpool line toward the front entrance to the school. I followed. A police officer in front of the school took the man aside and spoke to him. The man then approached me and apologized for his behavior. I told him that, as I was not the person he had been aggressive to, I was not the one he owed an apology to. The responding officer told me that this was not the time for that and that "cooler heads would prevail." I certainly hope they shall.

The officer also told me that the man had been removing the signs at the request of Dr. Montès. While the removal of the signs may have been at Dr. Montès' direction, the physically intimidating way in which this was carried out was unnecessary. At this point another parent informed me that the man in question was the husband of Mary Carstens, whose business maintains the LFNO website and has the contract for school pictures.

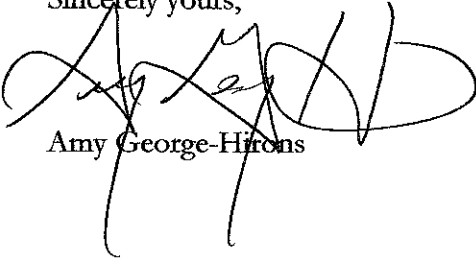
It is my opinion that at a minimum Mr. Carstens owes these teachers an apology for the physically aggressive way in which he responded to this situation. I understand that emotions were high but nonetheless his behavior was a flagrant violation of the rules against harassment as stated in the Proposed Personnel Policy of the Charter PDF downloadable from the Lycee website.

That this man chose to engage in this level of physical aggression in front of a roomful of children is terribly distressing. What could have been a lesson in civic engagement instead became a reiteration of basic playground etiquette: you do not use a physical advantage to get what you want. No pushing. No shoving. Use your words. My son spent the entire weekend talking about “the man who pushed all the teachers,” and I now must re-teach him that we don’t push people just because they are doing something we don’t agree with.

I must note that I know from international travels that writing protest signs and staging protests at one’s place of work is a normal part of civil discourse in many countries; therefore, the teacher protest was not alarming but rather energizing, indicative as it was of the need for open dialogue in this school community.

As the Board, it is, per the school’s charter, your role to foster and create an atmosphere of harmony and a culture of excellence.” I trust that you will continue to work toward this goal.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amy George-Hirons', written over a printed name. The signature is stylized and somewhat illegible due to overlapping loops and lines.

Cc: Gisele Schexnider, Academic Director and Interim CEO