

April 20, 2016

Ms. Stephanie Luke  
201 W. Burleigh Blvd  
Tavares, FL 32778

Dear Ms. Luke;

There have been articles recently printed in the Orlando Sentinel that describe the teacher evaluation process. There is a lot more information that the stories revealed. Eustis Middle School has a reputation for being an excellent school with a faculty and staff dedicated to students, and we are proud to teach here and be a part of such an excellent faculty. Over the past two years there have been many changes that have had a negative impact on students and teachers, including but not limited to the teacher evaluation system.

The two assistant administrators at our school can only be described as bullies. They bully students and they bully teachers. Ms. Walker Lawrence and Ms. Shriner bully students by yelling at them in front of other teachers and students, make disrespectful, sarcastic comments to students, and embarrass students. Students in turn use the same disrespectful attitude towards teachers. Teachers attempt to correct disruptive classroom behaviors. If teachers call for an administrator to assist with a disruptive student they are often told, in front of students, there is not a problem or to handle the problem themselves. Teachers do not call for an administrator unless it is necessary and attempts to correct the disruptive behavior have failed.

Teachers do not know, nor should they, the results of the evaluations of other teachers. However, without this information we can tell you who received poor evaluations. Our administrators make little effort to mask their feelings towards teachers and it is well known whom is not liked. Teachers whom are not liked are given poor observations. These teachers are literally afraid to say anything, even to LCEA, for fear of further retaliation.

One teacher has been hospitalized this year as the result of students violating the code of conduct and spraying chemicals in her classroom. Other teachers have things thrown at them during class. The answer for the hospitalized teacher was to blame her and move her classroom. No other action taken against the students. Items, including computers have been thrown out of the windows of the second floor classrooms, again, no action against students. Students using drugs on campus have been reported without administrators responding.

The assistant administrators have identified and use faculty to conduct their duties. There is one teacher who does not have a classroom, she just performs duties for the administrators. When an instructional dean was hired he was introduced as an administrator and the two assistant administrators gave him responsibility for their duties. If an assistant administrator speaks to a teacher the other one is present, a double team, if you will, but the teacher is not allowed to have a witness.

Several teachers left our school this year because of the way they were treated by administrators. One of those vacant positions was filled by the niece of Ms. Walker Lawrence. Another of the vacant positions was filled by the daughter of Ms. Walker Lawrence. Mr. Owens allowed Ms. Walker Lawrence to hire her niece and her daughter and she supervises them. Both of these "teachers" are allowed to do

things that other teachers are reprimanded for, such as dress code violations and not adhering to school policies. Ms. Young allows students to call her by her first name.

We have a sign in sheet that teachers initial in the morning when arriving at school. Sometime this school year the assistant administrators starting highlighting teachers who had not initialed. It was pointed out that often the teacher whose name is highlighted for everyone to see is at school but had not been able to sign in or the teacher may be out sick or on other leave. However, if administrators are late or absent, there is no public attention called to it.

Mr. Owens rarely leaves his office. Throughout the school year we have received email reminders from him to supervise students during transition times, especially if one or more of the assistant administrators are off campus. Even on those days he does not assist with supervision. Every day during the morning announcements he threatens to have students arrested and handcuffed.

Discipline is as inconsistent as the treatment of students. If an administrator likes a teacher or student they are able to do just about anything.

Teachers who in the past voiced concerns or answered surveys with honesty were not rehired. We also receive emails calling out teachers who speak up describing them as negative. There is simply no leadership here. Teachers are harassed to a point of crying or quitting. Humiliation is not leadership. Students suffer from the interruption of having long term substitutes, two or three teachers for one subject in a year, teachers who are out of field, and being in class with disruptive students. There have been 7 or 8 teachers leave this school year.

We are asking you to genuinely look into the situation at EMS. We are not willing to sign our names or contact you directly because of the fear of retaliation. We are sending a copy of this letter to LCEA knowing they cannot proceed without teacher's names. The risk of losing our jobs is too great. Teachers would be willing to speak if they were assured of not losing their jobs.

Signed,

Concerned Teachers of Eustis Middle School

PS – We have now received an email from Mr. Owens telling us they are going to place teachers where they (administrators) want next year regardless of what the teachers are currently teaching, were hired to teach, or want to teach. Another way to bully teachers and not provide the best for students.