



October 7, 2020

Dear GPA Staff and Parents,

As most of you know, over the last year and more, GPA has been working diligently to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the newly formed teachers' union (SDEA) at GPA. There have been some disagreements during the course of these negotiations which led the union to file an Unfair Practice Charge against GPA late last year. In this Charge, the union accused GPA of essentially acting in "bad faith" by not devoting enough time to bargaining, retaliating against a former teacher for his union activity and violating the law by sending letters to the parents/community which presented GPA's side of ongoing issues with the union.

GPA recently received the decision on the Charge. GPA was pleased that the judge rejected nearly all of the union's arguments claiming GPA violated the law by sending communications to the community. This is a critical decision for GPA as we believe in transparency with the GPA parents/community and believe we communicated events truthfully and fairly to our families.

The state agency that heard the Charge decided, however, that GPA bargained 'in bad faith' because it did not devote sufficient time to bargaining with the union. GPA disagrees with this decision as the members of GPA's Bargaining Team are almost all employees of GPA who are already fully committed to serving GPA's students. In addition to the time spent on their duties and the time at the bargaining table, GPA's bargaining team also spent untold hours drafting proposals to negotiate with the union. This was not quick work, as it required deep thought and discussion about how each element of the union contract could potentially affect the longstanding success of GPA. The GPA Bargaining Team is fully dedicated to bargaining for a contract that respects and incorporates GPA's unique spirit, culture and mission.

Despite this, the ruling means that GPA will be required in the future to bargain "on demand" with the union regardless of their other obligations at school. Please rest assured that GPA is committed to going above and beyond to meet this "on demand" bargaining obligation while continuing to place your students' needs first during this very challenging time.

Finally, GPA was very disappointed by the ruling finding that GPA retaliated against a former teacher because of his union activity, first by transferring him to a different grade level assignment and then by addressing behavioral concerns. What was perceived as retaliation was nothing more than normal business decisions, which GPA has always made, in order to prioritize student needs and to enforce GPA's high expectations and standards for all.

GPA is evaluating its legal options in light of this ruling. In the months ahead, we look forward to working with the GPA parents/community and the teachers' union to continue to ensure that your students receive the same high level of education at GPA as they always have.

Sincerely,

GPA Bargaining Team

Dr. Cecil H. Steppe - 15 years of service at GPA (*GPA Founder*)

Lisa Maples - 25 years of service at GPA (*GPA Founder*)

Cheryl Cooley - 18 years of service at GPA (*GPA Founder*)

Anne Robinson - 13 years of service at GPA (*GPA Founder*)

Michelle Evans - 15 years of service at GPA (*GPA Founder*)

Sergio Suárez - 15 years of service at GPA - *habla español*

Jenny Parsons - 12 years of service at GPA

Jane Levenson - 12 years of service at GPA

Ivette Limón - 9 years of service at GPA - *habla español*