

Dear Tacoma School Board,

This is for all of you but specifically to the members of color: you should know better. As people of color who were once a kids of color in public schools. You should know better. Many of the people speaking at the meeting tonight are asking, begging, pleading with you to keep their funding for a SECOND teacher. My child, like many children in Tacoma (a greater number than the ones who attend Montessori or better resourced public schools), attends a Title I school. My child attends Blix. The board has lied to the public, the people who elected y'all by the way, about how many students attend Blix so that it could justify eliminating our Assistant Principal, Dr. Darius Mensah, a Black man.

Literature on the school to prison pipeline demonstrates that Black and Brown children are disproportionately impacted and it starts as early as elementary school, and discipline is one of the indicators. (And please, if you need resources, I wrote a thesis about education and have thumb drives full of articles I am happy to share. Don't hesitate to ask.) Dr. Mensah's presence has significantly decreased the severity and frequency of disciplinary actions at our school, ultimately ensuring that kids spend more time in the classroom and in the schoolhouse. We are not asking you to save the job of a second adult in the classroom or provide funding for specialized curriculum. We are asking you to use your conscience so that one of the least resourced schools in the city and a historically underserved and marginalized community can maintain what most would consider a bare minimum administrative role. We are asking you respectfully and with our dignity to not diminish what we have to crumbs.

How would Geiger or Bryant parents respond if you took one of their administrators? We at Blix may not be able to show up with the same numbers. Many of the parents and care givers of children at our school work multiple jobs, so the luxury of free time to write emails and letters or to show up at night to these meetings is not always viable. Additionally, a fair amount of the people in our community have to consider the risk to their freedom under the current federal administration. So forgive us for only being here as a group of four. We at Blix though understand what the brother James Baldwin said about all of the children being all our children. And so all 435+ of the children at Blix are represented by the four of us in attendance this evening. And we urge you to reconsider the reassignment of our Assistant Principal.

I will end by reminding you all that you know better, and shame on you for acting like you do not. I am especially disappointed in a particular member of the board I won't name because you've damaged the integrity of people who advocated for you when you weren't in the room. My children attend Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center, and my kids' aunty, a staff member there, advocated for a certain member of the board when they were running. She put her name and our community's trust in her behind YOU. I am an adult, so I know it's not on her how you're allowing our community to get done. I am disappointed in you for making her look like she is unable to be a good judge of character.

You all (should) know how schools treat Black and Brown children. And you're stripping the ones at Blix of having a full administrative staff at a critical and foundational point in their education - the beginning.

I hope you all find your conscience before it catches up to you.

I look forward to attending future board meetings and representing the voices of our students and the community within which Blix is situated. Our community may not be as well resourced financially as some of the others in Tacoma, but we don't play about our kids just the same. Maybe even more. I will be back regardless of whether Dr. Mensah keeps his role or not, and I hope that there is more integrity on the part of the board, the cabinet, and the superintendent in the future.

Audaciously hopeful,

TeyAnjulee Leon

she/her

Vice President

Blix Booster Club 25-26