



Notice of Perceived Problem #2

Dear Washington State Charter School Commission,

I am writing on behalf of the Pullman Community Montessori (PCM) Board of Directors to provide an update on the Notice of Perceived Problem #2 (NPP). We believe deeply that maintaining a safe learning environment is our top priority as a school and paramount for the well-being of our students, staff, and families. The Board also understands its contractual obligations as parties to the approved charter contract.

Our team has been diligently working to address the areas of concern highlighted in the NPP by the Commission. In order for the school to address any concerns, stakeholders must follow the approved and publicly-shared [grievance process](#). PCM understands its obligation as a public school to ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff, and the Board believes it's critical to note that several of the concerns noted by the Commission did not come through the approved and appropriate notification channels so that the school and Board could deliver appropriate and timely resolution. We are working hard to address any gaps and challenges with our current processes.

I am pleased to report that significant progress on the remaining areas of concern has been made, and we are confident in our ability to achieve full compliance. Some of the issues identified have already been addressed prior to the notice being rendered. Please see the table below for a response, and some clarifications, to each of the areas highlighted by the Commission. Please let us know if any additional information is required.

Thank you,

Bev Wolff, Chair of the Board of the Directors
Pullman Community Montessori



Area of Concern	Context of Concern	Updates & Information
<p>Threats of retaliation from the Head of School</p>	<p>In the Commission’s meetings and correspondence with both current and former teachers, the threat of retaliation by the Head of School in the form of the Head of School indicating one’s job being at risk if negative information was made public by employees, was described multiple times.</p>	<p>The specific allegation named by the Commission here has to do with a staff meeting in which the HOS issued a reminder to staff that sharing confidential information outside of the school's outlined channels of communication was grounds for termination. This, along with adhering to professional expectations outlined in the staff handbook, has been an issue this year and the staff subsequently had a staff-wide discussion about it.</p> <p>The expectations were clearly outlined in the Staff Handbook, through meetings held before and during the school year, and through trainings staff have participated in related to: The Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act (FERPA), 20 USC 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99 (regarding student educational records); Washington State Student Education Records Law, RCW 28A.605.030; The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 USC 1400 et. seq. and 34 CFR Part 300 (protecting the confidentiality of personally identifying information contained in students records of students with disabilities). Particularly relevant sections of the staff handbook include: Professional Expectation (pg 45), Employee Behavior/Personal Conduct (pg 46), Confidentiality (pg 49), External Information and Public Relations (pg 50), Staff use of social media and tech (pg 51), Corrective Action (pg 53).</p> <p>No staff member filed a grievance about this concern or brought it to the HOS or to the Board, which is the body that handles concerns regarding the HOS, per the school’s publicly posted grievance policy.</p>



		<p>The Board discussed the NPP at the March 5 Special Board Meeting. The following next steps came out of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given that several of these allegations did not come through the school's approved grievance process, the Board will initiate a third-party investigation into the claims of retaliation. The Board has met with Schwabe Law Firm and is in the process of starting the investigation.• The Board immediately put into practice the following process to address allegations of retaliation by the Commission:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A Board member will attend as a note taker for a meeting between HOS and another party who is bringing a concern.○ Meeting notes and any action steps will be shared after the meeting with all parties, to ensure that the notes reflect what was shared at the meeting.○ A date for a follow-up will be arranged.○ The party bringing a concern to the HOS may also invite an additional person to attend for support.• The Board required that the HOS make no hiring or firing decisions without consulting with the Board first.• The Board required that all important communications about changes, etc. are done in partnership with a Board member, to ensure alignment with school policies and procedures.• Trustee McDonald will continue to offer Board office hours twice a week. The first office hours took place on 3/6, and two parents and 1 teacher attended. She has been vocal about making sure people know they can reach out to her, leaving flyers at the front office with her PCM email and office phone number. She had 4 1:1 conversations with staff members prior to the open office hours about how they feel about the current situation and what they feel the school needs to move forward.• Directors McDonald and Burton will be reaching out to HOS to collaborate on a HOS Transition Support and Accountability Plan, as the HOS'
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	<p>In the Commission's meetings and correspondence with parents, the experience of and fear of retaliation by the Head of School in the form of targeting one's student for reporting safety issues was described.</p> <p>Section 5.25 of the charter contract prohibits against any direct or indirect intimidation, interference, or coercion of the employee in disclosing alleged improper action by the School, and hinders safety improvements.</p>	<p>The Board and HOS are taking the steps listed above to address this allegation. In addition, it is critical that all stakeholders follow the school's approved grievance process. The Board reminds the public about this process at each Board meeting. It is also posted on the school's website.</p>



<p>Unilateral Change to Education Program Term #1</p>	<p>Developmentally appropriate age-grouped classrooms, including three-year blocking of ages by developmental appropriateness.</p>	<p>The HOS clarified in a communication sent via email to the Commission on February 9, 2024, and in the PCM Scenario Planning for Enrollment Loss shared with the Commission that the 3rd through 7th graders were not being joined into a single cohort, thus not violating our program term 1. Rather, the cohorts were being brought into similar proximity so the classroom team could address their needs.</p> <p>Per the suggestion of Commission staff, PCM opted to have Jordan Bovee (AC IA), who is emergency certificated, become the teacher of record as a long-term sub for the OE cohort. The OE cohort is housed in room 205a. The AC cohort remains in room 205. Dave Schneider will remain the teacher of record for the AC community and will mentor Jordan.</p> <p>The two classes combine at occasional points in the day to strengthen community, which can be seen in the daily schedule. Core academic courses (Math/STEM, SS, ELA) are held separately. 145 minutes of community-building time, including PE, are spent with the cohorts together. 205 minutes are spent with the cohorts apart in their respective developmental grade bands, working on core subjects.</p> <p>The ED of the Commission was on site for a visit on a day when five of the staff were out from 12:30 pm onward for a fellow colleague's funeral (2/26/24). Classroom configurations were atypical because of the significant coverage needs. All students were supervised by a certificated teacher.</p>
<p>The Board has failed to:</p>	<p>Ensure legal and contractual compliance</p>	<p>The Board received a training on its contractual responsibilities and obligations from Jessica de Barros, the Executive Director of the Charter School Commission at the Feb. 26th meeting. The Board is offering more time and support to HOS and plans to have more frequent check-ins with HOS to ensure the compliance requirements and deadlines are met on time. The Board is receiving regular coaching from WA Charters and BoardOnTrack on compliance, governance, and</p>



		management of the HOS, and has regularly engaged their legal counsel to address concerns and questions, including at the last two Board meetings.
	Hold the Head of School accountable to resolve concerns raised by members of the school community.	The Board and HOS are taking the steps listed above related to enhanced monitoring and a 3rd party investigation to address this concern. The school must receive concerns to resolve them. We will look forward to engaging in this process as concerns are brought to the HOS and Board.