



January 12, 2018

Via US Mail and Email  
[claudia\\_rossi@sccoe.org](mailto:claudia_rossi@sccoe.org)

Claudia Rossi, Trustee  
Board of Education  
Santa Clara Unified School District  
1290 Ridder Park Drive  
San Jose, CA 95131-2304

**RE: Your Slanderous Statements Regarding Voices College-Bound Language Academies**

Dear Trustee Rossi:

During the relative quiet of the holidays, I took the opportunity to reflect on the false and defamatory statements you made during the December 13, 2017 public meeting of the Santa Clara County Board of Education regarding Voices College-Bound Language Academies ("Voices"). I am writing to demand an immediate, public written retraction and apology. In the spirit of a new start with a new year, this is our preferred route to initiating litigation.

As a reminder, you made multiple reckless, unsupported, and inaccurate statements, with what seems the intention of only hurting our image in the community. Your first patently false allegation was that Voices artificially deflates student test scores at the beginning of the year, in order to later show growth. You sought confirmation of the same from the Morgan Hill Unified School District ("MHUSD") Superintendent, who could not bring himself to explicitly agree with your statements. You stated that you were leveling such unsubstantiated accusations under the banner of protecting parents.

Voices operates at the highest ethical standards in all operations, including the assessment of the efficacy of its educational program. The reading assessments we use throughout the school year are reliable, research-based, highly respected and widely utilized in the United States. Moreover, after years of development, field testing and independent data analysis, the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System texts were demonstrated to be both reliable and valid measures for assessing students' reading levels. In my 30 years in education, it has never even been hinted that the results I and my organization achieve are anything but laudable.

Yet another defamatory statement you made was that Voices Charter Management Organization (“CMO”) team members were “a bunch of people in suits” who no one ever sees and who take money from students to line their own pockets. Again, you unsuccessfully attempted to get the Superintendent of Morgan Hill Unified to confirm that Voices CMO fees were exorbitantly high. Voices CMO fees: (a) are comparable with other County-approved charter schools; and (b) have been assessed by County staff and found to be fair and appropriate. You claimed and encouraged parents to believe that the reason they didn’t have a permanent facility in Morgan Hill is because the CMO is taking Voices MH’s public funding. This is an intentional falsehood seemingly designed only to perpetuate fear and anger toward Voices, and is patently untrue. Our CMO is set up to serve each of our schools at the highest and most efficient levels. A non-inclusive list of the services the CMO provides for Voices Morgan Hill includes: Instructional and Professional Development, Operations Management, Legal Counsel, and Financial Management and Reporting, as well as back office services. Both the positions we hire and the structure of our support are designed to ensure the students and schools come first in all of our decision making.

You also made a factually incorrect comparison of teacher salaries between Voices and MHUSD, again, apparently designed to confuse and mislead not only parents but our teaching staff. Your comparison of \$51K annual salary for Voices teachers to \$76K for MHUSD teachers is comparing a first year teacher at Voices to someone in the District with more steps and experience. In reality, a more appropriate comparison shows that Voices outpays MHUSD. Voices pays teachers on waiver or intern credential a starting salary of \$50,000, while the district pays \$48,115. Additionally, all Voices teachers are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 in bonuses or stipends each year for performance and achievement.

County staff shared no concerns whatsoever about Voices’ assessment practices, management fees or salaries. Your statements were even more shocking in the wake of a positive staff recommendation for renewal of the Voices Morgan Hill charter renewal petition. County staff combed through the charter petition and visited the Charter School multiple times since it began operation. They’ve conducted annual audits, plus multiple other visits to Voices MH throughout the years, including unannounced visits. Additionally, the credentialing and HR staff has been out to the site once a year. Your response to the favorable staff report was to discount it by spreading falsehoods.

Your false statements served only to unnecessarily alarm parents and expose yourself to liability. If even one student disenrolls from Voices or a new student chooses not to enroll in a Voices charter school, or one teacher leaves our organization due to your false statements, Voices will have met the damages requirement for an action in defamation. Your statements harmed the Morgan Hill community you were elected to represent.

Again, I demand an immediate, public written retraction and apology of your slanderous statements against Voices, no later than the County Board meeting on January 17, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frances Teso".

Frances Teso  
Executive Director

CC: Rosemary Kamei, President, Santa Clara County Board of Education  
Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, Interim Superintendent, SCCOE  
Servando Sandoval, Board Chair, Voices College-Bound Language Academies  
Jed Wallace, President and CEO, California Charter Schools Association