



EVANSTON/SKOKIE
SCHOOL DISTRICT 65

Every Child, Every Day,
Whatever it Takes

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June 30, 2022

Electronic Correspondence

Duncan Agnew
Evanston Roundtable
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On June 15, 2022, the Evanston/Skokie School District 65 ("the District") received a Freedom of Information Act request from you. We extended the response to June 30, 2022. Your request and the District's response are provided below:

Request:

- 1) Any emails or written correspondence from Dewey Elementary School parents and teachers to District 65 Superintendent Devon Horton or Assistant Superintendent of Schools Terrance Little alleging that Dewey Elementary School Principal Kimberly Watson referred to Spanish as "gibberish" when speaking with Dewey TWI teachers about their lesson plans during the 2021-22 school year
- 2) Any emails or written correspondence from Dewey Elementary School parents and teachers to District 65 Board of Education members alleging that Dewey Elementary School Principal Kimberly Watson referred to Spanish as "gibberish" when speaking with Dewey TWI teachers about their lesson plans during the 2021-22 school year

Response: Enclosed please find records responsive to your request. I redacted personal email addresses, which constitute private information under the FOIA and may be redacted. 5 ILCS 140/2(c-5); 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(b). I also redacted information that constitutes student identifying information. The District is prohibited from disclosing student identifying information under Section 6 of the Illinois School Student Records Act. Therefore, the records are exempt from disclosure under Sections 7(1)(a) and 7.5(r) of the FOIA. 105 ILCS 10/6; 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(a); 5 ILCS 140/7.5(r).

To the extent you consider this response as a denial of your request, you have the right to have the denial contained in this letter reviewed by the Public Access Counselor (PAC) at the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). You can file your Request for Review with the PAC by writing to: Public Access Counselor, Office of the Attorney General, 500 South 2nd Street Springfield, Illinois 62706, Fax: 217-782-1396, E-mail: publicaccess@atg.state.il.us, Phone: 1-877-299-3642. If you choose to file a Request for Review with the PAC, you must do so within 60 calendar days after the date of this denial letter. 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). Please note that you must include a copy of your original request for documents and the denial letter when filing a Request for Review with the PAC. You also have the right to seek judicial review of your denial by filing a lawsuit in the State circuit court. 5 ILCS 140/11.

Sincerely,
Adeela Qureshi
FOIA Officer

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Carta de una madre del TWI
Date: May 16, 2022 at 1:04 PM
To: littlet@district65.net, hernandezs2@district65.net, khelghatia@district65.net, correaa@district65.net, hortond@district65.net, decristofaror@district65.net
Cc: Aviva Feldman feldmana2@district65.net, Maria Barroso barrosom@district65.net, Adam Macedo macedoa@district65.net, Patricia Medina medinap@district65.net, Carmen Granados granadosc@district65.net

AS

Aprecio mucho el esfuerzo que hacen por organizar una reunión para la comunidad de Dewey. Es importante para los padres entender lo que esta pasando en el Distrito y los efectos inmediatos en Dewey. Es una conversación necesaria y valiosa, pero no es SUFICIENTE. Necesitamos un espacio dedicado a entender lo que está pasando en el programa TWI.

Nunca pensé que tuviera que explicar la importancia del programa TWI y la urgencia que tenemos los padres al ver nuestro programa desmoronarse, especialmente a una administración que hace tanto hincapié en la equidad.

Nuestros estudiantes y nuestro idioma son más que una inconveniencia para la administración. Es el derecho de nuestros hijos el ser enseñados y aprender a valorar y querer el idioma español como segunda lengua en nuestras familias, en la escuela y la comunidad. Cuando la Dra. Watson utiliza la palabra gibberish, no importa el contexto, para referirse a nuestro idioma, es la falta de respeto más grande que me puedo imaginar. Valida todos los pequeños comentarios y micro agresiones que reciben nuestros niños de otros estudiantes. Estos otros estudiantes están aprendiendo sobre el respeto a las diferencias. Esperaba más de una Doctora y de esta administración. Esperaba una líder que estuviera interesada en conocer a la comunidad a la que está honrada en dirigir. Esperaba que ella se diera cuenta de que para muchas familias, el programa TWI y sus maestras, representan un vínculo de pertenencia a la escuela, la comunidad y la ciudad. Las maestras del TWI nos ayudan a navegar un sistema educativo que es abrumador incluso cuando hablas el idioma.

El hecho de no recibir respuesta de la Dra. Watson, es otra indicación de que mi familia y nuestras necesidades no son importantes para esta Administración. Por muchos años los recursos dedicados al TWI han ido mermando y a pesar de eso los maestros se las arreglan y están totalmente dedicados a sus estudiantes y familias. La Sra. Carbone, Sra. Fane, Sra. Granados, Sra. Feldman y Sra. Medina, con el invaluable apoyo de la Sra. B, Sra. T, Sra. Alfaro, Sra. Larios y Sra. García han trabajado bastante para ofrecer el mejor ambiente de aprendizaje posible a nuestros estudiantes y esperamos que la Administración los apoye en este esfuerzo.

Necesitamos que nos digan cuándo van a dar la oportunidad de que las familias de TWI sean escuchadas y que nos compartan el plan para mantener nuestro programa.

I appreciate the proposed town-hall meeting scheduled for Wednesday. It's necessary to inform parents about the changes happening in the District and its effects on Dewey specifically. It's a valuable conversation to be had but it's not SUFFICIENT. We need a separate conversation about what is happening with the TWI program. You are dishonoring the voices of all the Spanish speaking families at Dewey by not answering to our concerns.

In an administration that makes equity the top priority I didn't think I had to explain the importance of the TWI program for our families and the urgency we feel when we see our program crumbling.

Our students and our language are more than an inconvenience to the administration. It's the right of our children to be educated and to learn to love and appreciate Spanish as a second and very important language in their families, their school and their community. When Dr. Watson uses the word gibberish, no matter the context, to refer to our language, it's the greatest form of disrespect. It validates many other microaggressions the kids receive from other students. Students that are learning to respect and appreciate differences and that should learn from their leaders. I expected more from a Doctor and from this administration. I expected a new principal that would be interested in learning about the community she is honored to lead. I expected her to discover that for many families the TWI program and the teachers that speak our language, are our link to the school, our community and our city. The TWI teachers help us to navigate an education system that feels foreign and overwhelming even when you speak the language.

Dr. Watson's lack of response is another indication that my family and our concerns are not valued in this District. For many years the TWI Program has been chipped away from resources and still the teachers make it work and are dedicated to their students and their families. Sra. Carbone, Sra. Fane, Sra. Granados, Sra. Feldman, Sra. Medina with the invaluable support of Sra. B, Sra. T, Sra. Alfaro, Sra. Larios and Sra. García have worked very hard to provide the best learning environment to our students and we expect the Administration to support them in their efforts.

We need hear when are you going to give the TWI families an opportunity to be heard and to share with us the plans to save our program.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: May 18 Dewey Townhall - Response to your email
Date: May 13, 2022 at 9:03 PM
To: littlet@district65.net
Cc: watsonk@district65.net, hernandezs2@district65.net, correaa@district65.net, barrosom@district65.net



Hi Mr. Little,

Thank you for your email. My name is [REDACTED] and I am a proud parent of a Dewey TWI [REDACTED]. I am also a former educator and instructional coach.

I am extremely disheartened by your email. I appreciate your acknowledgment of the challenging years in public education, but what you failed to do in your response is listen to one of your most important stakeholders - parents. You clearly provide a lot of support for your district admins, something I can appreciate from my personal experience in education, but it seems like you are minimizing the perspectives of other stakeholders, particularly your teachers and parents. I am very worried about the LatinX community at Dewey and want to ensure you all have truly listened and heard the concerns.

You wrote in your email: "*I do not believe there is one person who approaches our responsibilities to educate the children of this community with malice in their heart or intentional disrespect for the culture or beliefs of any student or their family.*" While I genuinely agree that educators have positive mindsets about diverse communities and begin their profession with an open heart, it cannot be assumed. Educators should be held accountable when there are concerns or negative impact, regardless of their intention or 'mindset'. In my experiences, and as I have come to understand others, particularly the LatinX community, Dr. Watson's impact on the community has been detrimental:

- There are several examples where Dr. Watson has not approached the TWI community with "*respect, dignity, professionalism and humanization.*" These have not been words that represent my interactions with her or the interactions described by other parents and our TWI teachers.
- I don't believe Dr. Watson has established herself as a trusted leader. As TWI parents and caregivers, we have taken note of her extreme lack of visibility including at common places like pick up and drop off, where you would expect a Principal to make an appearance.
- Dr. Watson called TWI lesson plans "gibberish" (the lesson plans were written in Spanish). In my experience in education with diverse communities, a statement like this could be immediate grounds for dismissal. It shows a lack of understanding for language diversity that is foundational in our Evanston community.

I am very interested in understanding a few things at the Town Hall and we must make space for them. As an aside, I am very disappointed a 1-hour virtual meeting was scheduled and hope that you reconsider a longer in-person event. If the meeting remains virtual, my hope is a clear agenda will be shared for what is trying to be achieved and how time will be spent. Here are several concerns I want addressed:

- There has been no plan shared for the TWI program so I'd like to understand the future of TWI at Dewey.
- In particular, 50% of the TWI teachers at Dewey are leaving. How are we going to replace them in time for the Fall with teachers who are properly certified? In addition, why has there been no transparency on this? I understand there are always issues of privacy and how we share information, but our understanding as parents is that there is a lot more information that could be explained.
- I would also like more transparency into the dismissal of the first year TWI teacher. From the perspective of our parents in the TWI program, she is an ideal model of a teacher: a former TWI student herself. There is a lot of confusion regarding her dismissal.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: repair and rebuild
Date: June 8, 2022 at 2:54 PM
To: Sergio Hernandez hernandezs2@district65.net, weatherspoon@district65.net, tanyavuttia@district65.net, kims2@district65.net, hailpernj@district65.net, sud@district65.net, lindsayryanb@district65.net

JL

District 65 Board members,

I wanted to share the following letter with you. This letter is what grounds the Dewey TWI community in its advocacy. The disruptive and retributive leadership Dewey staff endured this year has left the Dewey TWI program in shambles. The loss of half its teaching staff means the program will be rebuilding itself for years to come; assuming no further turnover in the interim. The EL students and families that the TWI program serves rely heavily on teachers who have long standing relationships with these families. They are a lifeline to services for these families beyond just education. These losses will have the most harmful effects on the largest marginalized student population Dewey serves.

Our community has reached out to Dr. Watson asking for engagement so we can begin to repair the damaged relationship that still exists; a need that Dr. Turner and Mr. Little both acknowledged at yesterday's board meeting. She has yet to agree to engage with the Dewey TWI community. Her voice was the only one missing at the Dewey TWI meeting last week. While I understand her absence at that meeting, I also know that in order to move forward together we, the Dewey TWI community, need to hear from her. We need to hear an apology for referring to Spanish as "gibberish." We need to hear accountability for a work climate that Dewey TWI staff felt was so untenable they had no choice but to leave. We need to hear plans to change that work climate so Dewey can retain the three new TWI teachers along with the three remaining TWI teachers so this program can begin to rebuild what has been lost. We want to work in partnership with her. We hope she does as well and look forward to her finding time this summer to engage with our community. Until then, how can we, as a community, go about engaging her so that she is willing to begin repairing this relationship?

[REDACTED]
Letter below:

Dewey Community-

Some educators in the TWI program have written this statement. We have worked together to verbalize the current climate at Dewey School, in particular the climate within the TWI program. TWI is already a very difficult program to teach. There is a lot put on teachers with very little support to actually help us to achieve the desired

not put on teachers, with very little support to actually help us to achieve the desired results of bilingual, biliterate and bicultural students. However, we take on this role gladly, and with love and care, because we value bilingualism and the Spanish language so very much. We know what students will need to be global citizens and work extremely hard to ensure that they are given the tools to be successful as they grow later on in life. No matter where they come from or where they are going, the ability to speak, read and understand the culture of a second language, in particular Spanish, is an asset that cannot be denied.

A huge tenet of the work being done by educators in this building is advocacy for the Latinx community. This is a community that is constantly being told to “speak English,” to “assimilate” to “acculturate to the culture they are in.” Many of us Latinx teachers can speak to experiences in our childhoods where the school system let us down because of our culture and where we came from. These experiences have greatly impacted our growth as people, teachers and learners. We take our role as advocates in this community very seriously and want to always ensure that our Latinx families have a voice and that the commitment to the Spanish language is valued and understood. This year, this commitment has not only been devalued and misunderstood, but it has been dismissed by the current administration. We have sat in meetings where the current administration has called our language, the language of many of our ancestors, the language that we have chosen to dedicate our lives to uplifting-- this language has been called “gibberish.” The scars that word has left on us cannot be described. That incident speaks to so many instances in our professional and personal lives where our experiences and feelings have been devalued, both as Latinx people and teachers that have chosen to embrace this culture. This administration has feigned deaf ears to our cry that lesson planning in English is not natural for us, that our curriculum doesn’t fit into a prescribed “lesson plan” format. This administration pulls bilingual TAs to decorate bulletin boards, instead of allowing them to run the groups that teachers so desperately need them to run. Bilingual supports, such as special education teachers and the school interventionist, are pulled out of classrooms frequently to sub or attend meetings, rather than provide the services that our students need. This administration will not attempt to say the Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish, does not take the time to make sure that communications are effectively translated, and has not attended a single TWI chat in its entirety. This administration has not shown that they value the Spanish language, nor its biggest advocates, its TWI teachers. And we continue to feel a prejudice against our culture, and we also have felt that our voices are not being heard, or even acknowledged. As a result, many of us are leaving this building, by choice to find an environment where our voices and our culture will be heard and respected. It is a heartbreaking decision, after an extremely difficult year. We appreciate the community support during this trying time and are grateful for Dewey TWI families advocating for our program, teachers, and students. Thank you for your time.

From: [REDACTED]
 Subject: Urgent need for Dewey TWI meeting!
 Date: May 17, 2022 at 10:50 PM
 To:



hernandezs2@district65.net,
 schoolboard@district65.net, hortond@district65.net, littlet@district65.net, decristofaror@district65.net, khelghatia@district65.net,
 correaa@district65.net, barrosom@district65.net, carbonej@district65.net, Adam Macedo macedoa@district65.net,
 fanem@district65.net, feldmana2@district65.net, granadosc@district65.net

Creo que la idea de [REDACTED] que 2 o 3 personas enumeren las quejas específicas de TWI es una buena idea. Enumerando algunas de las quejas específicas a continuación. El inglés está en tercera persona (Dra. Watson) y el español está en segunda persona (usted). No tuve tiempo de cambiarlo y no sé cómo hablaremos mañana: sobre el Dr. Watson o para el Dr. Watson.

I think [REDACTED] idea for some kind of organization such that 2 or 3 people list grievances specific to TWI is a great idea. I am listing some of the specific grievances below. The English is in the third person (Dr. Watson) and the Spanish is in the second person (you). I didn't have time to change it and don't know how we'll be speaking tomorrow: about Dra. Watson, or to Dra. Watson.

Specific grievances:

1) Two teachers are *voluntarily leaving* (that is, *they are not leaving because of district-wide movement*). TWI teachers have cited a lack of support from the Dr. Watson. We could lose the remaining three TWI teachers. Is there a plan to retain the remaining TWI teachers, and, if so, what is it?

Varios maestros del programa TWI han compartido que hay una evidente falta de apoyo al programa bilingüe. Dos maestros han decidido dejar la escuela (y hacemos hincapié de que no se van como resultado del plan de reajuste del Distrito) citando la falta de apoyo al programa como razón de su decisión. Podríamos perder los 3 maestros restantes del TWI. Ellos están buscando ofertas de trabajo en otros lugares, mencionando igualmente el ambiente que ha creado la actual administración en Dewey como la causa principal de su búsqueda de trabajo en otra escuela. Queremos saber, ¿cuál es el plan para retener a las maestras que continúen en TWI?

2) Dr. Watson chose to not renew the fourth-grade TWI teacher's contract (Ms. Feldman). Ms. Feldman is a first-year teacher in our program with a bilingual background who has a positive relationship with her current class. She is also a graduate of the TWI program, and thus knows it well. Parents are not aware of any grievances related to her teaching. On the contrary, parents have described her as a "breath of fresh air" after a difficult year of online-learning. *Despite her contract renewal being denied in February, no advertisement for the position has been posted.* It should be noted that when parents learned of this decision they sent a letter praising Ms. Feldman, expressing their deep shock at the decision, and requesting a meeting with Dr. Watson so that they could understand the reasoning behind the decision to let go of an excellent and popular teacher. In response to our requests for meeting we have received only generic responses that do not address our concerns or offer an opportunity to meet. Our letters have not been considered and responded to individually or with any specificity.

With three open positions at Dewey for the coming school year, we are worried that Dewey will hire a long-term substitute who does not speak Spanish or, perhaps, not hire one at all. What is the timeline for putting up job postings? And how can you expect to fill two or more positions with excellent bilingual staff at this late date?

Se tomó la decisión de no renovar el contrato de la Sra. Feldman, la maestra actual de 4º grado. La Sra. Feldman está en su primer año de trabajo en Dewey y tiene experiencia bilingüe y ha desarrollado una relación muy positiva con su grupo. Los padres de este grupo no han escuchado que haya quejas en contra de la maestra. Al contrario, los padres se refieren a ella como "un soplo de aire fresco" después de un año tan difícil de enseñanza en línea y después de un 2º grado con 3 maestras. A pesar de que su contrato no fue renovado en febrero, no se ha hecho promoción del puesto. Es importante hacer mención que en cuanto los padres del cuarto grado se enteraron de esta decisión, enviaron una carta a la administración realzando la buena experiencia que habían tenido con Ms. Feldman, expresando el shock ante la decisión y pidiendo una reunión con la Dra. Watson para que les ayudará a entender el razonamiento que hubo detrás de la decisión de no renovar el contrato de una excelente y querida maestra. Como

respuesta a dicha carta solo se han recibido contestaciones genéricas que parecerían tener como intención distraer del asunto. No se ha dado atención a las cartas que han enviado los padres de TWI y tampoco han sido respondidas individualmente o con especificaciones.

Dewey ha tenido dificultades para llenar vacantes del programa TWI. En el año escolar 2019 se tuvo dificultad para encontrar una sustituta de largo plazo cuando la Sra. Fane tuvo su permiso de maternidad. En el 2020 el 2º grado empezó el año escolar sin maestro sustituto y se tuvo que hacer uso de otros miembros del staff hasta que se pudo encontrar una persona. Con tres vacantes en Dewey para el siguiente año escolar, tenemos miedo de que Dewey podría terminar con un maestro sustituyente que no habla español u incluso sin maestro en alguna clase. ¿Cuál es la línea de tiempo para promocionar las vacantes? ¿Cómo se planea conseguir 3 maestras calificadas en tan poco tiempo? ¿Qué está haciendo la administración para lograr que Dewey sea un lugar competitivo y atractivo para los candidatos?

3) You will not allow parents into the building to support teachers. This is clearly *not* about COVID (students are mask-optional) and it seems not to be about the district either, because in some instances Dr. Horton has approved Dewey parents entering the building to help in the classroom only to have Dr. Watson prohibit such entry, thereby directly contradicting both Dr. Horton and the pre-COVID norm at Dewey. When will parents be allowed in the building?

Usted no permite que los padres entren al edificio a apoyar a los profesores. Claramente esta decisión no es relacionada al COVID únicamente, ya que es opcional para los alumnos utilizar mascarillas, y tampoco es regulación del Distrito ya que el Dr. Horton ha permitido que padres entren a la escuela, decisión que ha sido revocada por usted contradiciendo los mensajes del Dr. Horton y las normas pre-COVID de Dewey. ¿Cuándo van a poder entrar los padres a Dewey?

4) You have only attended one TWI Chat, and even then only stayed for 5 minutes. These are meetings that the district set up to help support the TWI program. TWI families feel very little support when the principle never shows up.

Usted se ha presentado solo a un TWI Chat, y se quedó por 5 minutos, estas son reuniones que el distrito organizó para ayudar y apoyar el programa TWI. Imagínese lo muy poco apoyo que sentimos sin la directora allí.

5) TWI teachers have been told that they over-communicate with parents. Communication with families must be more open and direct, not less.

Se les ha dicho a los maestros que se sobre comunican con los padres. Esto demuestra el miedo por parte de la administración a que una honesta y abierta comunicación con los padres pueda exponer el comportamiento no deseable de la administración. La comunicación con los padres debe ser siempre abierta y directa no restringida. Muchos padres están en desacuerdo con su falta de comunicación clara. En una ocasión un padre recibió mensajes contradictorios por parte de la administración sobre los protocolos de COVID, por lo que tuvo que escribir directamente al Dr. Horton. Este ha sido el caso también sobre la noticia de la partida de los maestros del TWI. Hubo mención de algunos casos en el boletín, pero no se ha enviado información específica a los padres del TWI sobre la renuncia de los maestros y sobre el plan a seguir. Esta falta de información es muy preocupante para la comunidad TWI.

6) Parent after parent have expressed concern over the complete lack of in-person interaction with Dr. Watson. Many parents have neither met nor seen Dr. Watson in person. The previous two principals built relationships with Dewey community members through informal, in-person interaction. Dr. Watson has not done this. Some of the children are not even aware that Dr. Watson is the Dewey principle. Families with children who were at Dewey during the tenure of previous principals know that this was never the case prior to this year. It should be noted that they have had extensive interaction with Mr. Ellison and are very grateful for his engagement.

We have learned from at least four families – English speaking and Spanish speaking - whose students have had IEPs that Dr. Watson has not attended their children's IEP meetings.

Muchos padres y tutores han expresado su preocupación por la falta total de interacción en persona con usted. Muchos padres no conocen ni la han visto a usted en persona. Los dos directores anteriores construyeron relaciones con los miembros de la comunidad de Dewey a través de una interacción informal en persona. Usted has hecho esto. Algunos de los niños ni siquiera saben que Usted es la directora de. Las familias con niños que estuvieron en Dewey durante el mandato de los directores anteriores saben que este nunca fue el caso antes de su llegada al puesto de directora de Dewey. En total contraste, el Sr. Ellison está afuera después de la escuela la mayoría de los días, lo que permite que los padres interactúen con él. Los padres han expresado su gratitud por eso.

Rara vez asiste a las reuniones del IEP de los estudiantes. Nos hemos enterado de al menos cuatro familias, de habla inglés e hispanohablantes, cuyos estudiantes han tenido reuniones de IEP a las que usted no ha asistido.

7) TWI teachers were asked to submit lesson plans in a new format, and when they turned in their lesson plans in Spanish, Dr. Watson returned them and said that they might as well have turned in a blank page because it was just "gibberish" to her. This is a culturally insensitive and unacceptable response from the leader of a school with a Spanish language program serving 25% of its students. How will Dr. Watson address this? And will the school be hiring a Spanish-speaking administrator? If so, what role will that person have?

Este año se les pidió a los profesores de TWI que entreguen los planes de enseñanza en un formato nuevo, y cuando los maestros

entregaron los planes en español, usted les dijo que hubiera sido igual que si entregaran una hoja en blanco porque era "gibberish" para usted. (En este caso "gibberish" es una referencia directa). Esta es una respuesta racista e inaceptable de un dirigente de una escuela donde el programa de inmersión en español sirve a 25% de los estudiantes. ¿Cómo y cuándo se ofrecerá una disculpa oficial a los maestros y a la comunidad? ¿Cuál es el plan para mejorar el reconocimiento y el respeto hacia la comunidad Latino/a/x?

On May 17, 2022, at 20:11, [REDACTED]

wrote:

Hola a todos. Lamento no poder estar en el Ayuntamiento mañana, ya que estaré en una sesión de enseñanza de mi trabajo. Desde mi experiencia organizando alrededor de los ayuntamientos, sugeriría (pero siéntase libre de tomarlo o dejarlo) que este grupo se auto organice antes del ayuntamiento y elija 2-3 portavoces a quienes se les asignará la tarea de hablar sobre las preocupaciones principales de TWI. Estas personas deben estar preparadas para tener solo 2 minutos para hablar y presentar las principales preocupaciones de la comunidad TWI.

Sé que hay muchos padres que no tienen estudiantes en TWI que planean asistir al ayuntamiento de mañana con muchas de sus propias preocupaciones y creo que puede convertirse en un poco de caos con tantas voces que quieren ser escuchadas. Si nuestra comunidad (y particularmente los portavoces) viene preparada con quién está hablando y diciendo qué, y puede estar al menos unos minutos antes de que comience la reunión para ponerse en cualquier lista que se ofrezca para comentarios públicos o preguntas que sea bueno.

Estaré en reuniones la mayor parte del día, pero debería tener algo de tiempo entre 2-3 y 4-5 si puedo ser de alguna ayuda para la preparación o si alguien tiene preguntas. Todos ustedes tienen esto y son increíbles!!!

pa'lante,

[REDACTED]

Hello all. I am sorry I won't be able to be at the Town Hall tomorrow as I will be at a teach-in for my work. From my experience organizing around town halls, I would suggest (but feel free to take it or leave it) that this group self organize pre- town hall and pick 2-3 spokes people who will be tasked to speak on the primary TWI concerns. These folks should be prepared to only have 2 minutes to speak and to present the top concerns of the TWI community.

I know there are a lot of non TWI parents planning to attend tomorrow's Town Hall with loads of their own concerns and my guess is that it can devolve into a bit of chaos with so many voices wanting to be heard. If our community (and particularly the spokes people) comes prepared with who is speaking and saying what, and can be on at least a few minutes before the meeting starts to put themselves on any list that is being offered for public comments or questions that would be great.

I will be in meetings a lot of the day, but should have some time between 2-3 and 4-5 if I can be of any help at all for prep or if anyone has questions. You all have this and are amazing!!!

pa'lante,

[REDACTED]

On Mon, May 16, 2022 at 10:29 AM [REDACTED]

wrote:

| Dra. Watson,

A estas alturas asumimos que usted está enterada de las preocupaciones que tienen las familias de TWI en Dewey y nuestra petición de reunirnos con usted para discutir personalmente nuestras preocupaciones y hacer un plan concreto para el programa TWI. Este programa es muy importante para nuestra comunidad, lo que incluso ha motivado a algunas familias a mudarse a Evanston para poder tener acceso al programa. Parecería que a usted le parece suficiente la reunión de una hora por zoom para atender a nuestras preocupaciones, pero no lo es. Entendemos que hay muchos asuntos importantes que enfrenta nuestra escuela Dewey y estamos de acuerdo en que se tienen que abordar, pero nuestras preocupaciones son específicas al programa TWI y necesitamos una reunión donde se discuta exclusivamente el programa.

Por favor, responda a esta carta antes del martes 17 de mayo con planes específicos para una reunión dedicada al programa TWI en Dewey (en persona es mejor, incluso si es al aire libre) para juntarnos antes del 24 de mayo. Se requerirá traducción simultánea en español para esta reunión. Gracias por su rápida atención para organizar una reunión.

Sinceramente,

Padres y cuidadores de Dewey TWI

Dear Dr. Watson,

By now you are aware of many of the concerns shared by TWI families at Dewey and of our request to meet immediately to address these concerns in person and plan for the future of the TWI program at Dewey, which TWI families cherish and which many of us relocated to Evanston to attend. It appears that you believe the all-Dewey-Townhall Zoom meeting on May 18th will suffice to do this work, but it will not. While there are other problems at the school level, which we are eager to address at the townhall and at other venues, we have been repeatedly reaching out to you with concerns that are specific to TWI and we need a meeting that is specific to TWI.

Please respond to this letter by Tuesday, May 17th with specific plans for a Dewey TWI specific meeting (in person is best, even if outdoors) to occur by May 24th. Translation to and from Spanish will be required at this meeting. Thank you for your swift attention to arranging a meeting.

Sincerely,

Dewey TWI parents and caregivers

From: [REDACTED]
 Subject: Serious Concerns about Culture and Climate at Dewey (particularly with Latinx community)
 Date: May 14, 2022 at 8:40 AM
 To: palmere@district65.net, hernandezs2@district65.net, hortond@district65.net, correaa@district65.net

CE

Good morning/Buenos Dias,

I am a single, Latinx parent of two kids in District 65, one who went through TWI at Dewey and is now at Nichols and one who is currently [REDACTED] at Dewey in the TWI program.

I am also the Co-Executive Director of the Chicago Torture Justice Center (CTJC) in Woodlawn and intentionally chose to live in Evanston and commute two hours a day so that my kids would have access to the TWI program and their Spanish could be reinforced as we live far from my family in Venezuela.

I recently met with a large group of TWI parents and was horrified to hear what has been going on this past year at Dewey, the impact of decisions made and action taken (or not), and in some ways most egregiously, by the complete lack of meaningful response from the Dewey administration and the District.

To be clear and to the point, here is what I know:

- 1) While there are overall very difficult staffing decisions being made district wide, there are a shockingly large number of teachers **voluntarily** leaving Dewey because of the culture and climate that the administration has created at the school.
- 2) **Half of the TWI teachers who teach 25% of the Dewey students are leaving**--two of them **voluntarily** as a direct result of feeling the TWI program is unsupported and not respected by Dr. Watson, and one whose contract was not renewed (even though as far as I understand no parents or students have raised concerns about this teacher).
- 3) Filling TWI positions is incredibly difficult, and there has been **no communication by the Dewey administration about what is happening in the TWI program** and what the plans are for filling these positions. This shows a complete lack of respect for the TWI community and has the potential to have a devastating impact for many students.
- 4) Dr. Watson in a group setting at the school **referred to looking at Spanish as like looking at gibberish**. This coupled with the actions (or lack thereof) taken around the TWI program are of great concern bringing into question the administration's support for this very important program and the Latinx community at Dewey.
- 5) Parents have repeatedly reached out to Dr. Watson to attempt dialogue and to share their concerns. The only reply to these messages has been a cut and paste template email which we all received (the exact same response to each email), only referring to the district wide staffing changes and **ignoring the very specific concerns raised by TWI parents at Dewey. And as of yet, Saturday, May 14th, Dr. Watson has not agreed to meet with parents.**
- 6) Many messages from the Dewey TWI community have also been sent to District 65 (including most of you in this email) requesting a meeting to address specific concerns...and we have similarly received a generic response referencing only district-wide staffing shortages and the invitation to attend a larger town-hall about all Dewey concerns.

Parents and students are feeling incredibly anxious and unsupported. We are nearing the end of the school year and it is ridiculous to say that at this point in the school year, I (and 90% of the parents I have spoken to) have never seen or spoken to Dr. Watson--which is a drastic shift from previous administrators who knew most parents and students by name and from Mr. Ellison who has made himself available and accessible.

The TWI community at Dewey has made multiple efforts to address their concerns through dialogue that have gone unmet. **We (the Dewey TWI community) are requesting an in-person meeting this coming week with Dr. Watson and the District 65 staff** to have an opportunity to raise the issues we are seeing, to ask questions, and to be part-of the problem-solving planning that is necessary to ensure the TWI community at Dewey is ready to be supported next year and the years to come.

I also want to name here that I very much understand that all of you and Dr. Watson are in incredibly difficult positions on various fronts and are attempting to manage multiple and intersecting issues (the word doesn't encompass the severity of recent incidents at Haven). And, it is the responsibility of the administration to make sure that all of our communities, particularly our Black and Latinx communities, feel supported, heard and safe.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you with a meeting date/time early next week.

pa'lante,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
 Subject: [REDACTED] y at Dewey - a follow-up
 Date: May 20, 2022 at 10:28 AM
 To: littlet@district65.net
 Cc: [REDACTED]



Hi Mr. Little,

My name is [REDACTED]. I was one of the TWI parents you were speaking to outside of Dewey yesterday morning (Thursday, May 19th).

First, I'd like to say thank you. Thank you for embodying what I expect out of a leader - someone who listens, takes accountability and seeks to understand the perspectives of other people. I really appreciated seeing you at our school. Thank you for taking the time to listen to all of the parents.

Next, I am following up to share some of my concerns more directly with you regarding Dr. Watson. Overall, I do not believe she is capable of rebuilding trust with parents or the Dewey Staff and ultimately needs to vacate her position. Here are some reasons why:

1. **Dr. Watson has repeatedly disrespected the Dewey staff, particularly the LatinX teachers:**
 - a. She called Spanish lesson plans "Gibberish"; something for which she has yet to acknowledge or apologize for. I highly encourage you to read the letter our TWI teachers vulnerably wrote as to how this impacted them (it is attached).
 - b. She has left teachers out of important decisions and conversations. **Specific example:** she told teachers they were not allowed to be present at our Community Dewey Town Hall.
 - c. She hasn't taken the time to get to know the teachers and the history of what has made Dewey a special school. **Specific examples:** She hasn't taken any time to identify the history or research behind the TWI program and what makes it such an incredible asset for the school. If she did understand the TWI program, she wouldn't be asking the TWI teachers to 'adopt' a new lesson planning format (instead she would HEAR from them when they talk to her about why they plan and format their lessons the way they do).
 - d. The staff have repeatedly told parents stories of her 'retaliating' against them when they speak out or question a choice she's made. **Specific example:** [REDACTED] a parent substitute at Dewey) was fired this morning. She was also a parent who happened to share a lot at the Town Hall yesterday. As of this afternoon, she was reinstated after a lot of effort on her part (I am sure the district recognized Dr. Watson's error).
 - e. We have two other TWI teachers who are voluntarily leaving Dewey as a result of Dr. Watson's behavior. They shared very openly with parents that their decision to leave was a direct result of Dr. Watson's disrespectful attitude and lack of support for the TWI program.
2. **She is not transparent and doesn't seek first to understand:**
 - a. We have no idea why the 4th Grade TWI teacher did not have her contract renewed. I know there are HR concerns as to why this information cannot be shared, but when your parents are happy and students are learning, why would a first year teacher be let go? Especially when Dr. Watson observed her on only one occasion for 10 minutes? In addition, this teacher literally represents the TWI community - she identifies as a Latina who graduated from the TWI program.
 - b. The story Dr. Watson has told of her involvement in the school this year is in direct contradiction to the story teachers have told us. It also doesn't line up with what parents have experienced (never seeing her at pick-up or drop off; even the day after Town Hall where she mentioned she would 'do better'). Instead, she sat in her office while parents gathered outside her school for 2 hours yesterday morning.
 - c. Dr. Watson has repeatedly shown that she doesn't know how to take accountability or responsibility for her inaction or mistakes. She has an excuse for everything or an explanation for how she will do better in the future -- she never just listens or validates what others are saying. **For example,** during the follow-up Town Hall with parents and teachers, somehow Dr. Watson thought she was 'invited' to this separate space. She showed up in that zoom, a space that was intended to be safe for teachers to share their experiences openly with parents, and immediately began to disagree with previous speakers and defend herself. Not only was it inappropriate for her to be in the meeting, but the simple fact that she interrupted a parent/staff conversation after leading her own town hall was so offensive. It is representative of her inability to read situations and simply be a listener.
3. **She has not done anything to build meaningful relationships with students, parents or teachers.**
 - a. During the Town Hall, Dr. Watson attempted to explain how she plans to build relationships in the future. Coming from a principal who has done irreparable harm in her first year at the school, these promises of 'improvement' felt extremely disingenuous. I think the community as a whole would certainly like to believe that our principal is capable of improving, but our confidence in Dr. Watson is rapidly declining as she refuses to self-reflect, take ownership of and apologize for her mistakes, and attempt to repair the damage done to the TWI community.
 - b. Dr. Watson is rarely visible in the school community - she is not present at drop-off or pick-up. Anytime I've been in the office to drop something off, or pick my kid up from school early, her office door is closed. How can anyone possibly believe her claims of an 'open door' policy?
 - c. I personally have given Dr. Watson feedback on her interactions (for context, I had a meeting with her in March regarding an opportunity for my son to accelerate in math). I wrote her a very thoughtful email about how important it was as an administrator to capitalize on moments with parents, even if just for 30 seconds, and she simply disregarded my comments and told me that meeting was 'not for getting to know each other'. This type of mentality is NOT the type of mindset I think is good for kids or this community.

I look forward to hearing from you as I know you promised to get back to emails within 2-3 days.

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: watsonk@district65.net; correaa@district65.net
Date: May 9, 2022 at 9:55 AM
To: hortond@district65.net

LR

Buenos dias,

We write with broken hearts, discouraged at what is transpiring with the Dewey TWI program. The news of the departures of three TWI teachers, 50% of the TWI program at Dewey, and the anger and disappointment of the ones that are still there, for now, is very worrisome and probes the question, why is this Happening? What is causing these amazing seasoned teachers to ask to be transferred, resign and start interviewing in other districts?

We have witnessed a lack of support from the school towards our child this year. Notwithstanding, our teacher Señor Macedo, has done an outstanding job of helping our son to exceed expectations. We are forever grateful for his dedication. There seems to be low prioritization from the school towards the TWI program throughout the year. There is this feeling that inside the building the school is pushing them away and not listening to their expertise, advice, and insight towards something that we deem of utter importance, a Spanish education.

We left Guatemala almost 6 years ago with the idea that Evanston was a place where we could raise our children in a safe, professional, and nurturing environment. Instead, we have found resistance towards our heritage - calling Spanish 'gibberish' when it is the second most spoken language in the US, is a disrespect that borderlines xenophobia -.

We understand the challenges and setbacks that COVID and the current state of this World presents, but this is the time when those who adapt in resilience will shape a new world. We believe that Dewey school has all the traits, values, and history to overcome such a hard season, but that will happen with respect, humility, and hard work. We, as parents, are ready to come alongside the school to find the best solutions and path forward to provide the best education for our children.

Humildemente enviamos esta carta esperando comprender el motivo de esta situación, así como mantenemos la esperanza y fe de que nuestra comunidad será más fuerte a raíz de esta situación buscando lo mejor para nuestros hijos.

Saludos cordiales,

[REDACTED]

From: Sergio Hernandez hernandezs2@district65.net
Subject: Re: weatherspoonm@district65.net; schoolboard@district65.net; tanyavuttia@district65.net; kims2@district65.net; hailpernj@district65.net; sud@district65.net; lindsayryanb@district65.net
Date: May 12, 2022 at 2:41 PM
To: [REDACTED]

SH

[REDACTED]

Thank you for reaching out to the school board. Writing back to confirm that we have received your email.

Our school district, along with many school districts across the state and country, is facing difficult decisions regarding school staffing, as a result of declining enrollments. School districts are having to eliminate positions, or staff, or both, to continue providing education services. Federal and state funding for education is tied to how many students are enrolled, and we can only provide education services within the budget we currently have.

In our school district, although we have eliminated positions, many due to retirements and standard staff movement in and out of the district, we have been able to maintain the majority of our staff employed in our district. In collaboration with the teacher's union, District 65 Educator's Council (DEC), we made the tough decision of having to move staff across the district, while trying to honor their expertise and experience as best as possible in order to deal with this new reality of low enrollment across the district.

As a bilingual educator myself, and as a parent who has 3 children who have gone through the TWI program in our district, it pains me to hear that we may be losing some of our TWI teachers as a result of this new reality. We are working with the Superintendent to address the concerns brought up by the Dewey TWI community, and he will be reaching out soon with an invite to a virtual town hall scheduled for May 18th at 5pm.

I do want to let you know that the Board is dedicated to increasing the quality of the TWI program across our school system. We have invested in a culturally and linguistically responsive Spanish curriculum and have created a local teacher pipeline called CREATE teacher residency, which will prioritize local, Black and Latino para-professionals and community members interested in becoming educators in our district. Also, the district has applied for the Federal Elevate grant, which focuses on building stronger bilingual support across the district and will help to strengthen our TWI programs. If awarded, we could receive anywhere between 3 to 4 million for 5 years to strengthen TWI and bilingual programs across the district.

While these supports don't immediately address the loss of some of our beloved educators, they are a commitment to ensuring our District 65 TWI program becomes the strongest it has ever been.

Again, I thank you for reaching out to our board, and I apologize for the pain these changes are causing.

Sinceramente,
 Sergio

On Thu, May 12, 2022, 6:58 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good morning,

I wanted to confirm you received my email and that these concerns will be addressed.

Once again, we as parents offer any help we can give for TWI program at Dewey to maintain success for years to come.

Thank you,

On Mon, May 9, 2022 at 9:49 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Buenos dias,

We write with broken hearts, discouraged at what is transpiring with the Dewey TWI program. The news of the departures of three TWI teachers, 50% of the TWI program at Dewey, and the anger and disappointment of the ones that are still there, for now, is very worrisome and probes the question, Why is this Happening? What is causing these amazing seasoned teachers to ask to be transferred, resign and start interviewing in other districts?

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Humildemente enviamos esta carta esperando comprender el motivo de esta situación, así como mantenemos la esperanza y fe de que nuestra comunidad será más fuerte a raíz de esta situación.

Saludos cordiales,

[Redacted Signature]