



June 15, 2023

Dear PASD School Board,

Once again, thank you for considering the following facts as you weigh your decision about renewing Gillingham's charter and the educational future of our students. We hope the information included in this document will provide clarity to some of the questions and concerns that have been raised.

I'd also like to thank you for listening to the public comments made by Gillingham students, parents, grandparents, employees, and the board president Scott Herbert, during your public board meeting on May 24, 2023. I believe their passion and commitment to Gillingham was clearly evident.

In a true spirit of collaboration and in support of our students' future, we would welcome the opportunity to coordinate a meeting, as suggested by Mr. Herbert, to bring both boards together to discuss any remaining areas of concern and to answer any additional questions directly and in-person.

We ask that you take this request under consideration.

Fact #1

Gillingham Charter has implemented a plan for physical education and will continue that plan as the school partners with the gym's owners.

The May 24th board meeting was the first time we heard that PASD wants to know our plan for offering PE to our students while the gym is closed to us.

Gillingham strictly follows the guidelines set forth by the city. For the past 11 years, the city has classified the gym as a "recreational gym." When the city inspectors and fire chief inspected the building on 1/10/23 the fire chief informed Gillingham that the gym was then classified as an educational classification, and thus changes would need to be made.

In the meantime, Gillingham received written permission from the city to continue to use the two local parks, as we have done for the past 12 years (see attached email), for PE class. The classes are held at the parks and on Gillingham's campus when weather permits. Health classes are held indoors during inclement weather.

Fact #2

Over 75% of Gillingham's teachers and staff were properly certified during the 2021/22 school year.

As we stated in our previous letter dated 5/11/23, Gillingham has documentation from a third-party consultant confirming the school exceeded the state's certification threshold of 75%. As you are aware, our first calculation



contained a clerical error regarding the timeframe the certs were active, that has since been corrected. **Our current staff certification stands at 84%**. If there are any remaining discrepancies on certification, please provide further details on what is needed and we will forward the necessary information.

Fact #3

Gillingham Charter School has two active searches currently underway.

Like all educational institutions across the nation, Gillingham faces teacher turnover. We are proud of our record of attracting strong candidates to replace educators who may choose to seek a different path. Furthermore, we are unaware of specific language within the Charter School Law or other school law that stipulates a required percentage for teacher retention. Please share any documentation you may have that indicates a required teacher retention percentage.

While there are a number of positions currently posted on the Gillingham Charter School Website, the only two positions in an active search are for an **Art Educator and a Middle School English Teacher**. The other positions are posted as a proactive measure to generate a robust applicant pool in the event of retirements and/or resignations.

Fact #4

Stable Staffing

As mentioned above in Fact #3, specific positions are posted on the Gillingham Charter School Website to ensure a robust applicant pool for current and future vacancies.

In response to statements made regarding GCS second graders having three different teachers during the school year, after the resignation of Mrs. Steiff on 9/21/22, Mrs. Montejo, our full time support teacher who has been with GCS since 2016, was placed in the classroom as a long term sub. Mrs. Montejo remained with the class until Mrs. Visgarda, who served as the Elementary Nurtured Heart teacher, expressed interest in, and accepted the position of, 2nd grade teacher in February of 2023.

As you are aware, the use of long-term subs is a common practice when resignations, leaves of absence, or lengthy illnesses occur during the school year.

Fact #5

Cost of Lengthy Renewal Process

GCS approaches the charter renewal process in a true collaborative spirit, with hopes of district support to ensure GCS students a continued positive learning experience and environment. As part of the process, both parties secure legal assistance and support.



PASD expressed concerns of misinformation being shared by GCS regarding expenses and fees incurred on both sides as part of the charter renewal process. All of the figures that have been shared were a matter of public record and reported by the Republican Herald in 2017 (article enclosed) in reference to expenses incurred during GCS's last charter renewal application process.

GCS recognizes the continued expenses on both sides as the process extends, and will certainly provide all information and documentation that is clearly requested by PASD in writing to expedite this process and minimize the time frame involved in charter renewal.

Sincerely,

Nicolle Hutchinson
Executive Director
Gillingham Charter School

CC:

Scott Herbert, Gillingham Charter School Board President
Sharon Klinger, Gillingham Charter School Board Vice President
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