

<h1>Woodside High School</h1>		BOARD OF TRUSTEES Carrie Du Bois Richard Ginn Amy Koo Sathvik Nori Shawneece Stevenson
199 CHURCHILL AVENUE WOODSIDE, CA 94062-1152 <i>Karen van Putten, Principal</i>	(650) 367-9750	SUPERINTENDENT Crystal Leach

March 5, 2024

Delivered via Email ([REDACTED])
 Sam and Andrea Kasle
 [REDACTED]

Re: Investigation Findings

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Kasle:

Woodside High School (“School”) has completed its investigation into the Uniform Complaint Process written complaint that your family, (“Complainant”) filed with Woodside High School on February 15, 2024 (“Complaint against faculty”). The Complaint brought concerns that a teacher, Greg Gruszynski (“Respondent”), was biased and discriminatory in his teachings on the Middle East, specifically related to Israel and the current conflict between Israel and Hamas. Ultimately the lessons and instructional materials had a detrimental impact on your daughter, [REDACTED] Kasle, in the classroom. Prior to the complaint filed on February 15th, Sam Kasle completed a ‘Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials’ pertaining to the lessons and materials being used in Greg Gruszynski’s class. The ‘Findings’ will address some of the concerns brought in the reconsideration of materials request, but not all of them. The entire Sequoia Union High School District has received a request for public records through a separate complaint. Teachers must provide all teaching materials to District counsel containing the terms “Zionism, Zionists, Israel, Israelis, Palestine, and/or Palestinians” that have been used in their classroom from September 1, 2023, to the present. That issue will be handled through the Superintendent’s Office.

The Complaint was investigated by Chuck Velschow, Administrative Vice-Principal, under District Board Policy (“BP”) and Administrative Regulation (“AR”) 1312.1 (Complaint of School Employee). Copies of BP/AR 1312.1 are enclosed for your reference.

As part of the investigation, Mr. Velschow interviewed six student witnesses and one staff member. Further, corroborating evidence and, where necessary, witness credibility was also considered. Relevant evidence was evaluated under a preponderance of the evidence standard in order to determine whether, based on the totality of the evidence, there was sufficient evidence to sustain the allegations. “Preponderance of the evidence” means that the evidence on one side

outweighs, or is more than, the evidence on the other side. Following a thorough analysis of the evidence, findings of fact and conclusions of law were made, as are set forth below.

Findings of Fact

At the conclusion of the investigation, the following factual findings were made:

Substantiated in Part

After the Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip, Mr. Gruszynski's World History class discussed the invasion as part of its current events component of the class (on or around October 31, 2023). This discussion was largely dominated by a conversation between Mr. Gruszynski ("Respondent") and [REDACTED] ("Complainant"). The conversation between Mr. Gruszynski and [REDACTED] was very civil, but student witnesses reported that Mr. Gruszynski was "pro-Palestinian" and the student "pro-Israel", and Mr. Gruszynski's position was further buttressed by a 'Free-Palestine' bumper sticker on his wall, which student witnesses noticed or was possibly referenced by Mr. Gruszynski. The full context of the bumper sticker was not explained by Mr. Gruszynski, it was distributed at a fundraiser he had participated in for the organization called the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA). This discussion between teacher and student went on for approximately 10 minutes, during the discussion [REDACTED] challenged Mr. Gruszynski on many of his assertions, for example (possibly in response to the number of Palestinian deaths being reported), [REDACTED] stated, "who attacked first?" Mr. Gruszynski reported that he allowed the discussion to go on longer than normal because he wanted [REDACTED] to provide her perspective. Mr. Gruszynski was very impressed with [REDACTED] and complimented her individually (not in front of the class) for both her knowledge of the topic and her strong articulation.

After this initial current events conversation, the class continued with its unit on Latin America and began a unit on the Middle East in mid-November. During the unit on the Middle East, Mr. Gruszynski brought forth classroom materials that provided a historical perspective on the Palestine-Israel Conflict, current topics related to the conflict in Gaza and its repercussions in the US (ex: resignations of college presidents), and readings on violence against Jews and Palestinians in the US, along with videos. Much of this material comes from the organization 'Democracy Now'; the "Complainant" alleges this material and the organization are "anti-Israel", Mr. Gruszynski stated they are a legitimate source because they do not allow any corporate funding. Mr. Gruszynski stated that it is not the teacher's role to support a country's foreign policy in any case. He further defined a teacher's obligation to present factual material, even if that includes counter-narrative material.

During Mr. Gruszynski's unit on the Middle East student witnesses reported that [REDACTED] was never discriminated against or called out in front of the class as being wrong. However, [REDACTED] told a classmate that she did not want to attend class or deal with Mr. Gruszynski because the classroom materials and topics related to Israel and Gaza were making her feel uncomfortable.

Mr. Gruszynski did not get this sense from [REDACTED]. In a few instances during the unit on the Middle East [REDACTED] positively participated and always seemed comfortable to raise her hand and express an opinion. She brought up the issue that Israel was "not an apartheid state", and challenged the definition of 'checkpoints' being presented in class. Mr. Gruszynski stated that he felt the relationship between him and [REDACTED] was a positive one. Near the end of the semester [REDACTED] asked Mr. Gruszynski if he was going to miss having her in class (she had found out her transfer to Sequoia had been approved), and he responded in the affirmative that he was disappointed she would no longer be a 'Wildcat'. He did not get any sense that the [REDACTED] had felt "browbeaten". The initial concern by the "Complainant" (specifically the father - Sam Kasle) was brought in an email the weekend of December 9th, 2023 to AVP Velschow. At that time the "Complainant" did not want Mr. Gruszynski to know his identity. Almost two weeks later the "Complainant" expressed a willingness to meet with Mr. Gruszynski, but the semester was nearly over, attempts for the two sides to meet in January disintegrated during email exchanges in which Mr. Gruszynski described the "Complainant" as becoming increasingly hostile.

Conclusion

The Respondent's actions were addressed with the school administration in accordance with District policies and procedures. Due to the laws pertaining to personnel files, additional information cannot be shared.

Parties should consider and accept the School's decision as final. However, you have the right to address the Superintendent or designee regarding the complaint. See the enclosed BP/AR for more information about this process.

Sincerely,



Chuck Velschow
Administrative Vice-Principal ('A-L')
Woodside High School

[REDACTED]
650-367-9750, ext: 40030