

February 19, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

According to the *Framework for School Board Development* on the *Texas Education Agency Website* (<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147489092>), school boards and superintendents must function together as a leadership team. The Framework for School Board Development has been approved by the State Board of Education to provide the critical areas of development for all public school boards. The Framework consists of the following five major areas, each with subsections:

- I. **Vision:** The board ensures creation of a shared vision that promotes enhanced student achievement;
- II. **Structure:** The board provides guidance and direction for accomplished vision;
- III. **Accountability:** The board measures and communicates how well the vision is being accomplished;
- IV. **Advocacy:** The board promotes the vision;
- V. **Unity:** The board works with the superintendent to lead the district toward the vision.

Apart from these five major sections, there should always exist an open dialogue method that is effective, non-threatening, and conducive to constructive dialogue among board members. This dialogue should encompass the major needs of our current school situations as data indicates addressing the needs to increase attendance rates of students and staff, attract more and retain highly-qualified teachers, increase overall achievement, differentiate instruction to ensure that English language learners participate and succeed, increase graduation rates, ensure that more of its graduates are college ready, and provide the support for more of its graduates to attend college.

Unfortunately, this necessary dialogue has not taken place. So much has been the inability to work cohesively as a single unit of a school board that on January 14, 2016, the Texas Education Agency (T.E.A.), sent a letter to the Superintendent's Designee, Mr. Kenneth Jacobs, informing of a Special Accreditation Investigation that was going to take place on allegations of the alleged systemic breakdown in Edgewood ISD Board of Trustees' ability to govern and oversee the management of the public schools of the school district as required by Texas Education Code (TEC) §11.151(b). The alleged conduct included but was not limited to the following:

- a) Edgewood ISD Board members are acting in their individual capacities on behalf of the board;
- b) Edgewood ISD Board Trustees have failed to fill the vacant Superintendent position which has been vacant since the beginning of the current school year; and
- c) Edgewood ISD Board of Trustees have failed to fill two vacant high school principal positions which have been vacant since the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year.

All of the above is correct, for we were relieved, after all of our attempts to seek assistance from various groups, to have the T.E.A. come and investigate such allegations and we were hoping that more could be investigated. We had sought the help of several senators and FBI and we believe that it is through this that the T.E.A. came in to inquire.

Garza/Gonzalez & Associates (Certified Public Accountants) presented a Report on Conduct of Audit at the January Regular School Board Meeting containing information that we believe also needs to be reviewed intensely by the T.E.A., Texas Rangers or FBI.

Greg Gibson, CPA, founder and president of Gibson Consulting Group, was also asked to come as an external auditor to do a risk assessment audit for the Edgewood Independent School District. His findings also lead us to question several areas of need and propel us to ask for the T.E.A.'s assistance in researching his findings much more thoroughly, since data integrity concerns were mentioned in the findings, as well as, funding not being directed for years to high areas of need—academics primarily. According to monthly reports we receive in our regular school board materials packet, it is evident that an extortionate amount of money is spent on overtime and supplemental pay, primarily in non-academic areas (i.e. athletics), thus not addressing the true need of our students as indicated by data.

Over the course of a year and half (since November of 2014), if not more, we have attempted on numerous occasions to work collaboratively with the other school board members at fulfilling the five major areas of the *Framework for School Board Development* (and its subsections) mentioned above and in “putting students first”. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Our inability to collaborate has caused the image of the Edgewood ISD school board to be tainted, so much so, that when teachers or constituents complain about the school board, they are unfortunately inclusive of all of us when in fact, we are the ones bringing concerns and questions forth—something that had not been done under previous leadership. We are the ones who believe in transparency. For many months, we have initiated and upheld the conversation of seeking a new superintendent for our students and teachers, a request that has been turned into a “no action” vote by the other members of the school board time and time again. The collaborative nature that is essential in all governing bodies has unfortunately been almost non-existent due to the oppressive nature of the opposing side and their continued complacency.

Without question, there is a clear division on the current school board which is causing the opposing members of the school board to vote against the common good, believing false and anonymous allegations without any substance or evidence. Even the body language and behavior at school board meetings by the opposing side is disturbing and evidence to their lack of cooperation. We have not been able to fill essential administrative positions because of such beliefs and the students and teachers have been losing out. They vote without reason simply to vote against an idea or person because “if it is not their idea, it is not a good idea” or fail to abstain in voting when motions pertain to their own personal matters connected to the school district. Also, we believe that a board member has violated abstention requirements when voting as mentioned in Texas Local Government Code §171.003, when pertaining to personal financial business transactions with the school district, as asked for under Texas Government Code chapter 572. Additionally, as school board minutes will show, many of the most important decisions end in a dead lock, thus impairing any progress of the school district. We have also asked repeatedly for a five-year Strategic Plan, which never materialized, and none of the board members on the opposing side helped in any way to assist with our request, thus indicative to us of their unwillingness to hold anyone accountable or work together as a board to fulfill this important and necessary request.

In the past, the District Education Improvement Council (DEIC) whose purpose is to serve as an advisory committee to the school board, was much more active. The DEIC, whose members consists of teachers, administrators, staff, parents and community, brought recommendations forth to the school board regarding decisions related to many items of the schools. Recently, we have not seen them in this capacity. We have not been offered opportunities to hear DEIC recommendations on district concerns. Perhaps DEIC members have become disillusioned with the fact that many of their recommendations, which they have

researched and analyzed for the benefit of the students, many times have not been accepted by the opposing side when brought forth for a school board vote and have “given up” in trying.

For several years, despite the many attempts to remedy the toxic environment and fear of retaliation for speaking out, that permeated throughout the school district set by those in higher leadership positions, to which the three of us have been vehemently opposed to, the resistance from the opposing side continues to uphold ideas that do not allow the school district to move forward towards a direction that puts it at the same or higher level as the rest of the successful school districts in Bexar County. It is important to make mention that Edgewood ISD, despite the hard work of its teachers and staff, continues to lag behind in state assessment scores and ratings when compared to all school districts in Bexar County.

What is happening in Edgewood ISD at this time is disheartening. The Edgewood Independent School District who on March 21, 1973, began a “revolution” towards the march for funding equity for all students in Texas, and who has the first school in the United States named after President John F. Kennedy, has been taken advantage of by individuals who do not want to be held accountable; do not want to read, research, or inform themselves; incessantly make capricious decisions instead of prudent ones; but are in fact the first to associate their position with power—intimidating others and ordering people around. The opposing side has been perhaps accustomed to have people “back off” and they have seldom encountered individuals such as ourselves who question and ask for evidence and proof regarding issues discussed.

This position of power is now spreading to one of the individuals, an employee, who was assigned as the Superintendent’s Designee prior to the superintendent’s departure in August 2015. Because we, as school board members have as our primary duty to be judiciary agents overseeing the school district’s budget, we have recommended on several occasions the need to post a job assignment for a Chief Financial Officer, one who is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), and it has yet to be done. Despite multiple conversations with him and reminding him of the T.E.A.’s mention of his assignment, he still is engrossed with the perception that only he is in charge of the district, of which he has no superintendent’s certificate or teaching knowledge regarding schools and their administration thereof. We have come to him, as school board members, with various concerns that need to be addressed immediately and they have yet to be dealt with. Also, in working with the other superintendent’s designee, his decisions have appeared to hinder the progress of the academic component due to his lack of action on immediate needs.

The children of Edgewood deserve better. Our community deserves better but due to our action to uncover concerns and make them conspicuous and transparent, our lives are literally now at stake. In the past months some of our homes have been vandalized with either objects being thrown breaking windows and damaging our vehicles or vandalized with actual bullets shot through our front door—none happening without first receiving a phone call threatening us for being on the school board. Police reports are on file to document these unfortunate occurrences. This is unacceptable and downright cowardly on the part of the perpetrators.

It is because of the fear for our lives and those of our families that we are resigning from the Edgewood School Board effective immediately. We are also resigning asking for **HELP**. We are asking for the T.E.A. to step in and step up with their assistance, so much so, that by us leaving, we are hoping that the T.E.A. expedites in their coming and investigating all the concerns that initiated their Special Accreditation Investigation in January. Also, we hope that they investigate issues and matters found and mentioned by the auditors mentioned above. We hope that this drastic action on our part will give credence to our desperate call for help. We struggled with the lack of transparency for years, from child abuse of the most

vulnerable that the media has disclosed time and time again, to the lack of financial accountability, and fidelity to policies in place. We are **DESPERATE**.

This is Edgewood ISD. Our community that we love and are a part of day in and day out. It is a school district composed of great, ambitious, very capable, and full of potential students. It is a community of parents who, like any parent, expects the best for their children and who at this point has come to the realization that their children's education can no longer be bought and stuffed in a district provided backpack with school supplies; in a marquee; or on a new multi-million dollar football field or press box—but instead should contain schools that are suitable for learning by being clean and with new furniture; the best educational opportunities; strategies that meet all students' needs; challenging curriculum and expectations; great resources that are research-based; low student-teacher classroom ratios; and make the school district's slogan of "*A World-Class Education*" a true reality instead of just four words on a school district website. Parents of Edgewood have bestowed upon all of us, the board members, the responsibility of supporting teachers and staff as well, who continue to work hard despite the lack of votes for additional and so much needed administrative support.

We know that people will judge and criticize our decision today based on false assumptions or rumors, but criticism is the price we pay for leadership; however, we have evidence and knowledge to substantiate today's difficult decision. Criticism can easily be avoided altogether by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing, but that in itself has led to where we are today by those that did nothing and said nothing, but this is not us. We can no longer remain silent on these issues and allow these inequities and travesties to continue that appear to only benefit adults. Our district must move forward for the sake of our students. To the critics that will believe that we are "bailing out" because of the T.E.A.'s investigation, we say, "if had we anything to hide or had in fact done anything wrong, would we be the one's seeking help and asking for investigations?" Our personal safety is at risk with these disclosures but we are adamant about doing what is right and about being transparent.

Perhaps our supporters who understand us will be disappointed and will feel that we have let them down, for they depended on us to cause positive change. The change that we are seeking that will come forth from today's decision will hopefully be the most important one that we are expecting and for this we hope they understand.

Again, we seek the help from the T.E.A, State Board of Education, the legislature (our State Senator and State Representative(s)), as well as from our city council members. We fear for our lives, and to maintain the credibility of our service to Edgewood ISD, we are hereby submitting our resignations effective immediately.

Sincerely,



Dr. Eddie Muzquiz Rodriguez Board President



Mrs. Velma Peña, Vice-President



Mrs. Tina Morales, Secretary