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March 9, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:  
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am typing this letter for question 5 of level one on my grievance report. I have spoken with Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Bixler about my situation and both stated that they would contact me within two days. It's been two weeks since my first meeting with Mrs. Crawford and a week since I met with Mrs. Bixler.

In order to understand what led me to this point I have to start from the beginning of the school year. I was hired on the spot with an interview given by Ms. Diaz in July 2008. She asked me to take the 4-8 Generalist State Exam this exam would determine what I would teach for 2008-2009 school year. I took the exam and passed it. I was given the position to team teaching with Mrs. Stephanie Flores. I would teach 5<sup>th</sup> /6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading and Writing. I was so excited to start school and apply all the great things I had learned at the workshop trainings. We began school with the first 21 days of school activities: AVID, School Expectations, Student Code of Conduct, Reading Notebook, and Writer's Tool Box. At one of our faculty meeting the teachers were told that Mrs. G would be working very closely with us on planning and would provide us with our lesson plan for that week. This would be done for all the teachers. We sometimes meet for planning, but we didn't always get our lesson plans. We would get them late or sometimes we would get them emailed to us on Sunday afternoon. Many times we received our lesson plans on Monday for that week. Our lesson plans/ schedule would be changed constantly. All new teachers have to attend Circle of Friends monthly meetings. On one of these meeting Mrs. Brown once again stated that any questions or concerns we had could be shared and it would stay confidential. They would be brought up during the principal monthly meetings in general. When everyone left except my co-workers I called Mrs. Brown over to our table and shared with her my concerns. I stated that I worked very hard on my lesson planning, took work home, and the majority of the week (worked from 9-12 at night) and weekdays for our lesson to be changed (I felt that all my hard work was a waste of time). That my husband wanted me to stop taking so much work home and spend time with my family. I told him that things would get better as the school year progressed and things got settled in. All the other teachers spoke up and agreed with me. The next day I was asked to go by Ms. Diaz office that she needed to speak with me. When I went in Mrs. G and Ms. Diaz were in the office. She began by saying that Mrs. Brown had given her a call that morning that had mad her upset. That since I was new at this campus she would be giving me a slap on the hand (warning) and that we didn't air our dirty laundry for all to see. If I had any questions or concerns that I should ask her. I

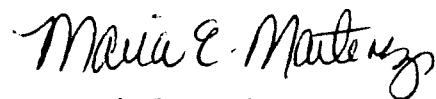
told her that I did say what Mrs. Brown had told her but that all the teachers felt the same way. She stated that all the other teachers had denied saying anything. When I asked the teachers why they didn't speak up some said they were scared and others said that they didn't get called in. Our new joke at our circle of friends meeting is... we don't air our dirty laundry, everything is great, fantastic, wonderful... so much for it being confidential! I had asked Mrs. G when I would start guided reading and target reading. She stated that I could start during the second six weeks. That I was waiting for the student's placement test results. I never received those results and never began guided reading. I would later write that on my things to do on my staffing report. Mrs. G stated that I didn't need to wait for her approval, and that a good teacher would have begun. That I should know where the students are, due to my lessons in class. I agreed, but stated that she had told me to wait for those test results. Students were told that we would have a ribbon cutting for our classroom library and the class who turned in the all student pack first would win a prize. This never happened. When I brought it up twice (once at the faculty meeting and once in my planning with Mrs. G.) she stated that she had left it up to Ms. Diaz and that she had probably forgot about it... and this is what happens when you don't do things yourself. Mrs. Gatica was going to work with me on vocabulary and the word wall, but this never happened. I ended up using the word wall for vocabulary words the students had trouble reading and didn't know their meaning. At one of my planning with Mrs. G she told me that she wanted me to use the following method with the students. 100% modeling reading strategies on reading passages for about four weeks, 50% modeling and 50% students work by themselves the 5<sup>th</sup> week, and 0% help on the 6<sup>th</sup> week (students would do all the work by themselves on CBA/Benchmarks). This is how it has been ever since, all we have done is read passages and work on TAKS questions. I had asked Mrs. Gatica for some material for reading (more passages) and she suggested that I should read a novel and use graphic organizers/TAKS stem questions. I liked her idea and we began planning. When Mrs. G asked her about it she told her it was ok for me to do, but when she came to speak to me Mrs. G stated that I could not use what she gave me. That she had made me a copy of the Florida Center for Reading and that I should use that. That I could do the novel, but that is should be done with TAKS stem questioning. At all my staffing Ms. Diaz stated that she wanted students to be at a 75% passing and to encourage the students to do reading counts. Later I was told that I could not do any research project (student needed to be on odyssey at the computer lab at all times), no writing/ writing grammar because it is not tested till 7<sup>th</sup> grade, reading counts, reading notebook, homework. That I am to do reading passages and reading TAKS questions only because that what's important. At one point I stated that I was overwhelmed that I felt that I still wasn't doing what was asked of me due to all the changes (this was my first year teaching reading and writing and I feel that haven't done anything right) and that I still took a lot of stuff home Mrs. G stated to deal with it and that everyone has a family and kids. That she has kids and gets things done. Mrs. G has told me in the past that what I was doing with the students was great: using strategies, finding objectives that need to be taught, etc... So when Ms. Diaz gave me the reason for not renewing my contract I was confused and didn't understand. All of Mrs. Brown evaluations have been good. She stated some tips for me to do and I have done (Popsicle sticks to ask all students questions). I was told during a staffing not to use Popsicle sticks. That I should only ask students who are good readers to read, because

they would model to other students what a good reader looks like. This method was the latest research. During all the staffing, I spoke to Ms. Diaz about students I was concerned about and she stated for me to write those students up and she would speak with students that that was her job. I asked her about the GT students, that I wasn't doing anything separate for them on my lesson plan. She stated those students were not performing at that level and to continue to do passages with them. I was later brought in by Ms. Diaz and asked why I wasn't doing lessons for GT students that a parent had gone to speak with her. I reminded her of what she had told me at a staffing about GT lessons and she stated for me to get with Mrs. G. and begin planning lessons for those students. I recently assigned them a project to do at home linking it to the novel we read in class. After the Christmas holidays the doctor stated I needed surgery on a hernia and to remove my gallbladder (that this was the reason why I always felt sick). I was told that Mrs. Diaz was upset. When I let her know that I was going to be out for 3 days and the doctor's results, she wasn't too happy and laughed to herself for the reason I was having surgery (she made me feel like she didn't believe me). The surgery didn't go as planned and I stayed in the hospital for four days and had to stay home for two weeks. The Batesville staff sent me a card wishing me the best (Ms. Diaz didn't sign it) and she never called to see how I was doing. When I returned we had a staffing for that previous 6 wks. She kept asking me why I hadn't began tutoring, had conferences, etc... I had to remind her several times that I had just come back from surgery and that I would get those things done. At one of our faculty meetings after my return from surgery we were told that we would not be teaching Social Studies that it would be replaced by Corrective Reading. When I asked, "When will I be teaching Social Studies?" Ms. Diaz replied that I wasn't and if I said anything I would not have a job next year. Grades for Social Studies were made up these six weeks; we were given those grades by Mrs. G. I have been told that sadly teachers are viewed upon how well their students do on the TAKS test. On 3/9/2009 Ms. Diaz stated that I am to integrate Social Studies into Reading and that would help us get grades for Social Studies. Mrs. Chapoy has been assigned to teach with the third grade teacher to help her students prepare for the TAKS test. Mr. Prado has been assigned to teach writing for Mrs. Ayala and Ms. Dovalina to help the 4<sup>th</sup> grade prepare for the TAKS test. I was given the opportunity to set in and observe Mr. Prado the "Master in Transition", but it never came about. Ms. Diaz pulled me (2/12/09) and stated that she was giving me the chance to resign. That she had thought long and hard about this... that she believes that maybe I wasn't a right fit for the school or the grade level. That do to my scores on benchmarks, discipline referrals, not having a good relationship with my students... she was asking me to resign or she would put that I wasn't a nonrenewable on my observation (she did a two-15min observation) and that I wouldn't be able to work with the school distract next year. I asked her if that was the only choice I had and she said yes. She told me she wanted it on her desk the next morning and to date it May 31, 2009. I didn't resign just then, but I did write her a letter of why I wasn't resigning. I later called AFT and they stated that she had this right and that she didn't need to give me any reasons. Ms. Diaz later pulled me back in to question my letter (she stated that she was letting me go for many reasons) and I told her that I didn't agree with her. She stated that I had all the help I needed and that she would not let me transfer. That if I didn't resign and when other principles called to ask about she would give them her opinion of me. I stated that I wasn't going to resign, for her to do

what she needed to do and that I could also give my opinion of her. I went to speak with Mrs. Crawford and she basically told me that Ms. Diaz had the final say so. I told her about not teaching Writing, Social Studies, etc... She stated that she would speak to Ms. Diaz about this and that she would get back to me within two days. She stated that I could have a second observation

And that 60% of Ms. Diaz observation and 40% of the second observation would determine the outcome of the final observation, but that at the end the second observer could write nonrenewable and Ms. Diaz would have the final decision. That she could see how upset I was about this. She went on to tell me stories about how she felt and how those teacher felt who had nonrenewable contract when she was principle and that on had come back and thank her letting her go. She had gone and worked for another district and had acquire new knowledge and is still working for UCISD for many years now. She stated if I resign I can reapply next year and if I didn't that would follow me everywhere. I felt that the only choice I had at this point was to resign. I later got legal counsel and she stated that I could file a grievance and to speak to the School Board. I later spoke with Mrs. Bixler (she was falling asleep through our conversation) about the same things I mentioned with Mrs. Crawford and she took all my concern and stated she would get back with me within two days. It's been a week and she still hasn't gotten back with me. I feel that my concerns are not important because I am seen as a first time teacher. I am a first year teacher with UCISD, but I have taught GED for 5yrs and at Gabriel Tafolla Charter School for 2 years. I feel that you should look at all my observations done by Mrs. Diaz, Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Flores. I feel that circle of friends she be looked at, if Mrs. Brown states that it is confidential that it stays that way. A teacher recently told me that Mrs. G had stated that she didn't know I was a trouble maker due to the comment I made a circle of friends or if I just didn't know any better. So I feel that this all began at the beginning of school with circle of friends and that I wasn't given the opportunity to succeed. That something should be done because we aren't teaching all core subjects only focusing on TAKS. I feel that I should be given the opportunity to transfer to prove that I am a worthy teacher (that I belong here) and that I love what I do. I will include my journal with this letter and I hope that someone hears me and gives me the opportunity to continue working at UCISD.

Sincerely,



Maria E. Martinez  
Teacher

cc: Dr. Wendell Brown  
cc: Dr. Sara Bixler  
cc: Diane Crawford