
From: Alfred Harms, Jr. [mailto:aharms@lhps.org]
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2018 3:03 PM
To: davidjablonski@bellsouth.net
Cc: Mike Jakubisin
Subject: Re: A Letter to The President & Chairman of Trustees of LHPS

Dear David,

Thank you for your detailed email from 04 Jan 2018, covering numerous issues, but concentrating on a widespread phenomenon frequently labeled "Postmodern-Cultural Marxism" (PMCM) which has permeated many of the country's educational, governmental and societal organizations, including secondary schools and higher education institutions. To be sure, I care greatly about these issues and their consequences. However, I often find it challenging to respond fairly when confronting the issue due to the difficulty of clearly identifying, precisely articulating and exactly pinning down what one is attempting to discuss (or solicit or bemoan) when speaking/writing about these topics. That said, I will not attempt to answer or comment on all of the highlighted concerns in your email. Rather, I will briefly summarize my overall feelings and intentions regarding the basic issue, and invite you to a one-on-one conversation to discuss further, if you so desire.

I believe that in total, you are principally expressing deep concern over the proliferation of the "political correctness" which pervades much our society today--a phenomenon often accompanied with heavy-handed, socialist-leaning views and questionable activities regarding equality, justice, prosperity, freedom, individuality, and more. Furthermore, I fully agree that a key dimension of Lake Highland's charge is exactly opposite the intent of many interpretations/intentions associated with these issues. Whereas I deeply believe in and am fully committed to the founding (and current) bedrock principles underpinning LHPS' educational experience (academic and whole person), I also believe in healthy exposure to, appreciation for, and quality discussion of prevailing national and world trends no matter their origin or intent. In my view, to do any less will handicap our children in deciding which road to travel. We all know that evil agendas seductively abound in every corner of the world, and our foremost responsibility is to arm our students with the knowledge, values and critical thinking skills necessary to become functional adults who are able to consistently make good choices and courageously lead lives with integrity, pride, charity and honorable service.

Given that viewpoint, I fully agree with you in feeling that every freedom we enjoy hangs in the balance of how we educate, and concomitantly motivate and inspire our nation's children. Interestingly though, I also believe that each generation of Americans has faced and will continue to face ongoing threats (of varied nature and origin) to our many freedoms. The key to thwarting them is rooted in quality education and worthy core values. If we stay steadfastly focused on LHPS' stated mission {and I (plus I know I speak for the entire Board) have every intention of doing so}, I firmly believe that we can and will "win the day" in the ongoing struggle of individualism, choice and self-determination versus collectivism, group think and moral servitude. To do any less would be treasonous to our most cherished values and freedoms, and risk our very existence as "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

That said, I will make no specific action promises at this point for I need to further assess where the Lake Highland programs actually stand in the morass of perceivable conditions, intent and outcomes. However, I unequivocally commit to meeting this (or any) threat head on, and will do everything that I can to ensure that our curricula, activities and faculty align with our stated mission precepts. I will also work to ensure that we embrace “balance” in executing any chosen course of action. Our nation (and the world) is rife with examples of seemingly good causes hopelessly derailed by “extreme” execution (verbal and other) practices. Additionally, I will not categorically discard uncomfortable counterviews or purposely proselytize any given viewpoint. Rather, I will embrace our nation’s core values and work hard to ensure that our children develop (1) an appreciation and respect for our country and its most dear ideals, (2) the critical thinking skills necessary to make good choices, (3) the courage to think and act as responsible individuals, and (4) the grace to work towards a more peaceful, thoughtful and prosperous nation/world.

Finally, I’m energized by your willingness to assist in this effort; and although I’m not sure where your services might best fit our needs, I certainly believe there may be several areas where your involvement (time, talent and treasure) could be particularly impactful. As an example, given your background, skill set and stated desires, it’s conceivable to me that support of our school’s debate program could be very helpful. At a bare minimum, I know we need program financial support to assist our students with travel expenses to various debate events where they can hone their debate skills in real time/high pressure conditions. If interested in this type of support, I would ask you to contact Mr. Mike Jakubisin (Director of the Upper School and responsible for the Debate Team) directly in order to set up a meeting to discuss specific modes of support—FYI, I’ve cc’d Mike on this email.

Additionally, we are at the beginning stages of crafting a new (FY 19–FY 21) strategic plan for our school. Parental involvement will be a key element of capturing overall LHPS family needs and desires for our future plans. Again, your views and support in ensuring that we capture key initiatives to help prepare our children for a challenging future could be very useful. Please know that I will be sharing more specifics on how parents can assist with this effort in the coming weeks/months. Those are two important areas that quickly come to mind for parental support, but I’m sure there are more and I am interested in your thoughts/feedback when appropriate.

Finally, thank you again for your interest in, and caring about, this critical and timely issue. If you desire to discuss in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact either me (aharms@lhps.org) or Lynn Math—my Executive Assistant (lmath@lhps.org) for scheduling assistance. As you might imagine, I’m currently pretty busy sorting out my new responsibilities at Lake Highland, but am certain we can find a mutually convenient time in the not too distant future.

Have a terrific day/weekend!

Warmest regards, AL

Alfred G. Harms, Jr.