

From: Lusher Charter <lusherexecutiveteam@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, April 29, 2016 4:43 PM

Cc: Kathy Riedlinger; Wiley Ates; Sheila Nelson; Frank Israel; Charlene Hebert; Lynden Swayze

Subject: A Letter to the Lusher Community

A Letter to the Lusher Community

As most of you know by now, there is currently an attempt to have the United Teachers of New Orleans union (UTNO) represent some of our teachers at Lusher. This is an issue that will probably be decided by a vote of our teachers in the coming weeks, but it will have an impact not only on teachers but on our entire school.

First, we respect the right of any teacher to express their opinion and to act in what they feel is their best interest.

As a group of administrators, we have over 200 years of combined educational experience—in many union and non-union schools. Because a teachers union will change Lusher in a serious way, we also have the right and the obligation to express our opinion on this matter.

We all recognize that Lusher is special: National Blue Ribbon Honors; U.S. News and World Report list of top schools in the nation; the highest performing K-12 program in Louisiana; The Times-Picayune's Top 40 Workplace in 2015. That is why we, and most of the faculty, are here. We are driven by excellence. Lusher gives us the flexibility to respond quickly and creatively without layers of bureaucracy. With the pace of technology and advances in learning theory, this is a very exciting time in education, but also a very challenging time. As administrators we have to make many tough decisions. When the decisions are correct, we build on them. When we make mistakes, and we do, we admit them and learn from them.

Lusher's accomplishments would indicate many more good decisions than bad. One of the first decisions made by the faculty in 2005 was a difficult one: 92% of the staff voted to voluntarily give up their tenure and affiliation with the UTNO union as part of Lusher's transition to a charter. That decision by teachers was a good one. As proof, Lusher teachers' salary and benefits package is significantly better than those at peer schools and our teacher retention rate is one of the highest in the city.

There is a rare chemistry and pride at work at Lusher. The Union's history with, and opposition to, charter schools are especially concerning to us. In our opinion, introducing a union into Lusher will negatively affect direct communication of administration with teachers, add an additional layer of bureaucracy, and feed an adversarial tone that has not previously been part of the atmosphere at Lusher. The two-sided relationship between administration and faculty will become a triangle, and the union side has interests other than the well being of Lusher students, like building power through numbers. This will inevitably change the positive relational chemistry between the administration and most faculty members that has proven so successful for our children.

Just as the vote in 2005 to become a charter set the course for the last decade, the upcoming vote on a union will set the course for the next decade, for better or for worse.

We will keep you informed as we get closer to the election and provide you with any relevant information. Thank you for considering our concerns. We are available to respond to any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Your Administrative Team

Kathy Riedlinger, CEO	Lynden Swayze, CFO	Frank Israel, Director of Operations
Wiley Ates, High School Principal	Charlene Hebert, Middle School Principal	Sheila Nelson, Lower School Principal