

May 6, 2022

On behalf of a parent group along with concerns from students we are reaching out to you with a request to look into inappropriate targeting and mistreatment of <<targeted teacher>> by senior teachers at Wayland High School. Many of our kids have been scared and nervous to come forward with this information for fear of being targeted or reprimanded with lower grades as a result, so we come to you in confidence.

We have received consistent and multiple reports from our children about repeated instances of unacceptable behavior by <<subject>> teachers, especially <<senior teacher>>. These behaviors include repeated yelling at, aggressive reprimanding and disparaging comments of <<targeted teacher>> in front of students. Of deepest concern is <<senior teacher>>'s inappropriate messaging to the children (e.g., that <<targeted teacher>> is a "bad teacher," that he "does not belong in a Wayland," and that he is the "reason for lower grades this year.") As a result, some of the children in <<senior teacher>>'s class say that they "hate <<targeted teacher>>" and that "<<targeted teacher>> needs to be fired." This kind of influence on our children is unacceptable! It has created an emotionally unhealthy environment for all of our children and an unacceptable, hostile work environment for <<targeted teacher>>. Instead of being welcomed to the community, celebrated for his wonderful contributions, and being appropriately mentored by senior faculty, <<targeted teacher>> has been subjected to bullying. This needs to stop now.

Additionally, instead of being mentored and appropriately supported, <<targeted teacher>> has been micromanaged by <<senior teacher>>. For example, he was told that he cannot write and administer his own quarterly assessments for his <<class name>> class. We believe that this practice is both unfair and inequitable for our children to be taught by one teacher and assessed by another. And it is unfair and inequitable that <<targeted teacher>> is unable to teach and assess his own students. Several parents have spoken with the principal over the last 3 months and things have only gotten worse. If one quarterly assessment is to be given to both classes, then why isn't <<targeted teacher>> being given equal opportunity to author assessments that are given to <<senior teacher>>'s class? He is every bit as capable and qualified to teach <<class name>> at Wayland High School and should be given equal opportunity to teach and assess his own students. We are confident in <<targeted teacher>>'s teaching ability and trust him, as you have in hiring him, to teach and assess.

We want to emphasize that <<targeted teacher>> has been an outstanding teacher to our children: devoted, supportive, hardworking, caring and kind. Not only has he been a stellar educator, he has truly fostered the joy of learning for our children. He has created a culture of trust and respect in his class which has engaged students to work through challenging content, and approach (vs. avoid) the heavy workload each week. He goes above and beyond every step of the way. <<targeted teacher>> supports not only students of <<subject>>, but also marginalized populations in our school (e.g., LGBTQ students, racial/cultural diversity, etc.). He models respectful, inclusive behavior for students and faculty. Throughout what we imagine has been a trying time for <<targeted teacher>>, our understanding is that he has consistently acted appropriately, as a teacher should (e.g., attempting to shield the kids from the conflict, and always being kind and respectful to his colleagues). This is the kind of teacher and role model we want our children to have!

While we work hard to raise our children to be kind, accepting and open to resolving disagreements appropriately, we are shocked and disturbed that such inappropriate behavior by senior teachers has been modeled and tolerated in Wayland, as this is contradictory to the values of our school system and our community. We would like to work with you to remedy this issue immediately and effectively. We are very concerned about the impact on our children, the messages they are receiving, and the impact on a young, talented, devoted teacher! This is not the Wayland way!

We have included several letters from WHS students who have asked to remain anonymous for fear of retribution. There are actually several more students in <<senior teacher>>'s class who have voiced concern to our children yet for their own grades and fear of <<senior teacher>> have declined the opportunity to speak out. This is unfortunate. Children need to see correct behavior modeled so they believe it's okay to speak out against wrong behavior, even if it's coming from adults in power.

Please let us know when you are available to meet so that we may discuss our concerns in more detail.

WHS Student Letters

At the beginning of the year, I was worrying about going into <<name of class>>. I expected that it would be a hard class that I would have to work a little harder in, but I was especially worried about whether or not my teacher would understand that. After a few minutes of being in <<targeted teacher>>'s class, I immediately started to feel more relaxed. He listed the expectations he had of us, but also told us about himself and asked us about ourselves. We spent a few days just getting to know each other and I think that really helped create a sense of comfort in the classroom. <<targeted teacher>> has expressed that he understands the difficulties that come with learning <<subject>>, and he's made sure that we get our questions answered and get the help we need whether it's before, during, or after school. I don't think I've ever had a teacher that I can go to after school or before school for help or even just a chat. <<targeted teacher>>, however, is almost always available. And I'm always comfortable talking to him about things other than <<subject>>, like my hobbies and other schoolwork. Especially during the middle of third quarter, I was struggling with my mental health a lot, and one of the only people I felt I could open up to was <<targeted teacher>>. And I knew I made the right decision when he showed nothing but sympathy and understanding. Knowing that I had one teacher that I could talk to about what I was going through took off a lot of the pressure and stress I was feeling at that time. So it made me worried when I found out that <<targeted teacher>> was having a hard time because of the pressure he was under to live up to the expectations of everyone, both students and teachers, around him. I really want him to feel like he's doing a good job at teaching his students, who I know he cares about so much. <<targeted teacher>> has assured me that even after <<subject>> is over, I can always come to him for help or just to talk. It's hard to imagine a year without having someone to talk about current events and real-life applications of <<subject>> with. I hope that <<targeted teacher>> is able to stay next year and the years after that, because I truly believe that he can help so many people learn and grow as both students and individuals.

Anonymous student

“I, as well as my entire class, have been very affected and upset by witnessing the targeting of <<targeted teacher>> by other <<subject>> teachers this year. I have several friends in <<senior teacher>>’s class, and It is very upsetting to constantly hear that <<senior teacher>> tells them about the “unfair advantage” we have, and how their lower grades are <<targeted teacher>>’s fault. She puts him down in front of the class and presents him as a “bad teacher.” For example, according to my friend in <<senior teacher>>’s class, she recently drafted an angry email to <<targeted teacher>> in front of her class and was speaking about him rudely to students while doing so. Her messages have turned students against each other, have affected our own relationships, and I personally am now not as close to some friends because of their constant pressing and blaming of <<targeted teacher>> for their low <<subject>> grades. Additionally, a few of my friends have walked into the <<subject>> office and, on multiple occasions, interrupted the <<subject>> teachers rudely “gossiping about <<targeted teacher>>.” <<senior teacher>> believes that because she has been here for much longer than <<targeted teacher>>, she can “do anything she wants,” as I personally heard her express to a student. I have personally witnessed repeated instances of other members of the <<subject>> department (specifically <<third teacher>>) rudely reprimanding <<targeted teacher>> in front of students. One time, when we were doing the paperwork section of our lab, she came into class and started yelling at the students for not having goggles on and having hoodie strings out (even though we had not begun the lab yet), and then proceeded to say “your teacher should know better than this.” Additionally, I remember one time she came into class and rudely, in front of all the students, accused <<targeted teacher>> of moving her papers. <<targeted teacher>> patiently explained that the teaching assistant had moved her papers, and then <<third teacher>> told him to “not let her move my things” and left. My friends and I were shocked and did not know what to do. We felt horrible for <<targeted teacher>> !

In general, we feel that <<targeted teacher>> has been micromanaged and not allowed to teach the way he would like. So many times I have walked into <<subject>> and have heard that we, once again, have to change our curriculum to mirror <<senior teacher>>’s class because our class is “not hard enough.” The constant press to be “as hard as <<senior teacher>>’s class,” which from what I’ve heard from friends in her class comes from a lack of teaching the material (her students are afraid to ask her questions because she puts them down, so they often go to <<targeted teacher>> for help, and he helps everyone).

I am concerned that all of this has taken a toll on <<targeted teacher>>. Recently he has been apologizing much more and blaming himself for the results of our quarterly test, and even sent an email to us after making a small mistake during a lecture reading “Overall, I do just need to be better for you, and for that I am deeply sorry.” He is a great teacher, and this bullying has taken an unacceptable toll on him. We are taught that repeated instances of targeting behavior constitute bullying. This is exactly what is happening to <<targeted teacher>>. This needs to stop before <<targeted teacher>> is affected even more.”

Anonymous student

“<<targeted teacher>> is probably the best teacher I’ve had at WHS. He is an empathetic and understanding human being, and also works so hard to ensure each and every student understands the concepts he is teaching. In addition, in each class he takes time to make sure that every student feels respected and like they belong. He shows videos that explain different cultures and backgrounds, important holidays, and practices, and lets students present about their own identity so that other students are more educated about the lives of their classmates and about different people in the world. He is the only teacher I have had who has done this, and I have learned so much from his class. He is also understanding and encouraging. Whenever someone is feeling discouraged or upset about <<subject>>, he makes sure to comfort them, allows them to take a walk if needed, assures them that they are smart and capable, and encourages them to try their best. This is so helpful for me and many others in my class, and I have not had any other teacher who acts in such a supportive and understanding way as <<targeted teacher>> does. I am so grateful for everything <<targeted teacher>> has done for all of us, and WHS will truly be losing one of its greatest teachers if he does not return next year.”