

# Subject: Dear John: K. Hite Resignation/Cease & Desist

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to John Treu, Leidi Treu, Trisha Endaz, Lolly Honeycutt, Roy Boggess, Bryce Fordyce, hr@westvirginiaacademy.org, f

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Dear John,

The time has come for our professional and personal relationship to end.

When we started this adventure, we worked so well together.

We used to be friends, even you said that. I helped your family several times: a wellness check on Heidi, throwing away a dead animal carcass from your home, etc., and you mine: providing food and support after the birth of our second child, allowing our oldest into your home, and helping move heavy items. We went from "framily" to this.

Over time, you have stopped caring about the ones that supported you from the beginning and have siloed yourself, often coming off as pompous. I never thought you were this way until the most recent string of events. I've outlined many of them here so you know exactly where I stand.

When I began at the Academy, I took a large pay cut, but was made several promises that made my contract worth my time for my family. I was promised a nursery for our little one and 75% off extracurricular activities for our big one, just to start. I was also promised (during my interview) yearly merit raises and grant money that would lead to an increase in salary; none of these promises ever came to fruition either.

I was told that:

- Falling Water campus would be up in a couple of years.
- Preston County campus would be a school, for which I created a makerspace proposal that is now an outright, bald-faced lie.
- You would spend a week building a pirate ship playground.
- I would have the opportunity to build, develop, and grow a technology/engineering program for students at the school.
  - I was told that I would have the opportunity to help set up the school and then could move into a teaching role. Instead, I was given additional administrative duties. When I tried to develop a curriculum, it was blatantly neglected and ignored, all to end up as a half-baked Computer Science "course" taught by an untrained **bus driver**. How do you not see the ethical dilemma in this, John?
- WVA would use "evidence-based educational instruction and interventions that promote each scholar's well-being and academic progress." The only thing that I have seen is a hodgepodge of different approaches combined. Mixing American Preparatory Schools (APA) Primary curriculum with an International Baccalaureate (IB) secondary school. While these different approaches might be evidence-based used individually nothing shows that using parts of each system together would work.
- Teachers would be appropriately and adequately trained on the curriculum for the school.

Over time, I've seen numerous promises that have not been upheld. When teachers fall short, they are punished severely. You and Heidi have both made a hostile work environment where no one is safe and logic does not apply. Emotions rule the decision-making process and neither you nor Heidi think proactively or consult with appropriate team members to make well-informed decisions: you react emotionally and illogically.

When we were preparing to hire other executive team members, I reached out about my own salary increase. You pulled me aside and told me that there was no money for me, now or in the future. Yet, we then hired several individuals at salaries well above what I make, and we now continuously have issues meeting payroll and paying our vendors. At that point, in our discussions related to money, I began to distrust you altogether. You are a lawyer who has "practice[d] corporate and non-profit law for nearly a decade", "a CPA and an expert on financial disclosures," and have been involved in "litigating a multi-billion-dollar corporate lawsuit," and yet we struggle financially to make ends meet. My conclusion was simple: if you are such a well-trained financial professional, and your books are this much of a mess, I am not likely to trust your other decisions in which you are not as well-versed, such as running a school.

I find that your involvement in many of our everyday matters has drained the joy from the school, for our students, staff, and faculty. You were nowhere to be found during the Bobincheck era, so much so that my wife felt compelled to reach out to you to discuss her concerns with the direction of the school. She felt unsafe sending our oldest into the building. Now, you are on campus nearly every day. It's hard to see where your role as the Board Chair begins and ends, and your lack of consistency makes this distinction even harder to ascertain.

You remarked that I have seemed angry for a long while, and you know what? You're absolutely right. What was once a place where I exhibited pride, joy, motivation, and passion is now a hole of misery and hardship. You and Heidi decided that it was time to turn on me because you thought I was against you.

- You held a grudge after the Board meeting where I, along with others, didn't vote Trista off of the Board because of your unprofessional methods. It seems since then, you got very short with me and seemed to counter everything that I would bring up at Executive Team meetings. I consequently stopped speaking up at those meetings; I was sick of my voice going unheard.
- You falsely accused me of standing outside the room of a meeting of the newly formed executive team with no proof. If you look at security cameras, you will not see me (unless I've mastered the Art of Invisibility).
- You thought I played a role in the Board's attempt to give Heidi feedback from the staff when, in fact, it was Holly who helped facilitate it. Holly said several times that she wished she could "get underground" during the meetings she's been in with Heidi because of Heidi's inappropriate and unprofessional behavior. Let's be clear: I do not hide behind anonymity: I am here, listing my grievances out and have spoken them directly to you before, as well. Remember the last time we spoke?

For the record, I was never against anyone until you started to betray my trust. I have consistently maintained a position of neutrality and factual-based decision-making. I do not make emotional decisions because there is no place for them when it comes to education.

You and Heidi have shown a side of yourselves that is unprofessional, threatening, and bullying.

- You sent a cease and desist letter with the following: "***It is imperative for both your own good and the good of WVA that you cease such actions immediately!***"
- You talked about some scholars who dress like "sluts."
- After the board meeting at the PCYC, I watched you go around to several faculty to corner them to "interrogate" them on their involvement in the faculty concerns brought up to the Board.
- Several times during executive team meetings, you threatened to take your money and leave.
- You came to me and another director to ask how we would feel if you took your money and left the school.
- You do not use professional or official forms of communication, instead resorting to communicating via personal phone (text) or in-person.
- You actively tell Finance to hold payment to vendors without care for the impact this has on the staff and faculty.
- You refuse to communicate issues to the Board, related to financial matters. They were shocked to learn of financial backing you have provided to the school and the financial hardship we often endure.
- Lack of care/effort to solve the air quality in the building but rather twist standards, which are backed by research, to keep the building open. This air quality issue seems to be largely caused by a focus for "cheap" renovations rather than a focus on doing things correctly.
- The Executive team would rather spend hundreds of dollars on painting walls and decorating than deep cleaning the entire building to keep individuals safe inside the building. We have been there over 1.5 years with no professional deep cleaning done. I understand we are *finally* looking to have this service completed.
- The way you and Heidi handled yourselves with Glenn Larew during the PCYC discussions. You constantly blamed Glenn for his role in the issues without acknowledging that "we" didn't actually try to make it happen.
- Your stretch of the truth for gains. You mentioned the "proposed" Preston campus to the YASS folks well after you and the Board decided to dissolve the PCYC agreement, and you had no intentions of working with Glenn after that, especially after the colorful words/language you used to talk about Glenn after the dissolution.
  - YASS Money Article: <https://www.dominionpost.com/2023/12/16/west-virginia-academy-will-use-its-500k-yass-prize-to-extend-its-mission-in-the-mountain-state/>
  - Prior to YASS Decision: <https://wvmetronews.com/2023/12/10/west-virginia-academy-hopes-for-recognition-in-new-york-this-week/>
- Lack of long-term vision. There is no forward progress on the Falling Water campus location. Whenever Falling Water is mentioned in meetings, the status update is always the same. Over 1.5 years in with little to no progress on it, almost not worth mentioning or finding a new property.
  - Yes, I am aware that you have toured other facilities for short term growth without actually recognizing the operational issues they present or bringing in the people to help figure out solutions.
- Constant meeting adjustments/creations with little to no notice. Instead of creating Calendar/Teams invites, last minute messages are sent about meetings.
- Constant school calendar adjustments that impact students, staff, faculty, and parents. Heidi does not seem to appreciate the gravity of her actions and arbitrarily makes adjustments with little to no consideration for the effect it has on others.
- Your lack of respect for PTO. Just because something constitutes an emergency for **you**, doesn't mean that it overrules the time I have with my family.
- Yours and Heidi's lack of understanding of data security. Without listening to the security experts you have on staff, Heidi demanded full admin control of all IT systems. Past incidents involving Heidi's access to systems, such as in WVEIS, have resulted in disruptions to critical workflows and backend issues, causing additional workload and challenges for the IT team, administration, and faculty members.
  - And when I reached out to the board for help, you told me that it wasn't a board issue but an executive team issue. This seems counterintuitive when half of the executive team has been telling me to do the incorrect actions, according to data security standards set. And instead of working with me on a safer solution, you just demand the same. I was told to focus my energy on a task that I refuse to do in order to maintain my professional and ethical standards.

*For the record, it was this most recent email exchange that ultimately drove me to my decision to leave the school. The “straw that broke the camel’s back,” one might say. I cannot remain on as a staff member with such poor leadership and guidance, especially during hardships.*

Your negative impact to the school has grievously affected the faculty. I have watched many faculty members go from loving teaching to hating to wake up and come to work every day, largely because of the way you and Heidi treat them. While you did not believe the remarks presented to you at the October Board meeting, you know that there are teachers who are unhappy with the work Heidi has done, at the very least. You and Heidi are a drain on the school morale, but you are known to “fight dirty” so those who need to keep their job at the school do not speak up or out against the Treu administration. You are an intimidator, not a motivator. This fact is disturbing, unsafe, unprofessional, and unethical.

You and Heidi are ineffective leaders. Countless times, I have sent out communications with no response. I asked for an updated duties list, organizational structure, job descriptions for personnel I was on hiring committees for, just to name a few (there are many more). There were many days that we (the executive team, including myself at the time) had no idea if Heidi was coming into work or not. If you are more involved with the school beyond being a Board Chairman (significantly more than a traditional Board Chair), I would expect more communication and information than what was ever provided.

This past week has made me really think. With the addition of our new family member, priorities came back into focus. I don’t need this drama in my life. I no longer enjoy coming to work, primarily because of you and Heidi. I still love working with the students, staff, and parents. I will miss my peers and the school families the most, but I am making this decision to take care of myself and my family.

John, I am not perfect. I recognize and acknowledge my shortcomings. Frankly, I would have been okay with the missteps you made if you had taken responsibility for your part in the events, but you never did/do take any responsibility. I am confident that I will be used as a scapegoat for issues, just as you have with everyone else that has left the Academy.

#### **Action Items**

**First and foremost, I formally request that you, John Treu, and Heidi Treu, cease and desist from any further direct communications with me or my family and the making of any defamatory statements.**

1. I will make sure my keys and other items are left with HR.
2. I already have removed my personal belongings from campus and I have no reason to return.
3. We are in the middle of replacing Clever with Classlink. I am willing to continue to help as a contractor on an as-needed basis. I am willing to discuss this further with HR, if deemed necessary.
4. There are some smaller items left unfinished that I will work to hand over to several members of the Operations team.
5. I will make sure someone in the administration has access to all systems and logins before my departure.
6. I will work to hand my vendor relations off to the appropriate parties.

The Academy could thrive without you, John (and Heidi) in positions of power. It is time for the Treus to step aside. After your work in bringing the charter to the area, it is time for you to leave the school permanently. Let the Board hire a real CEO with appropriate and relevant experience to turn our school around.

I would love to help in the future if an effective leader was put into place. I would not work for the school again but would be willing to serve on the Board as a technological, engineering, and education consultant, given my background in IT, electrical engineering, teaching at the University for over a decade, instructional design, and teaching teachers how to teach. If this potential should ever arise, please, **Board Members**, feel free to reach out to me. I’d gladly provide my resume, experience, and a list of references that can attest to my experience and expertise.

**All that said: It is with a heavy heart that my last day will be January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.** I should still have one more day of PTO after that, which you can donate to faculty bonuses.

Kind Regards,



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