

CAVA Organizing Committee  
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Cavirtualeducators.org

December 3, 2014

The North Carolina Board of Education  
301 North Wilmington Street, Room 212  
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Raleigh, NC 27699-6302

To the Members of the State Board of Education:

We are writing to you in our capacity as teachers at California Virtual Academies (CAVA), the largest virtual charter school in California as well as the largest school managed by the for-profit company K-12 Inc. (K-12). As teachers at CAVA, we have grown increasingly concerned about the direction of our school. We believe that decisions being made by CAVA and K-12 management are oftentimes not in the best interests of either students or teachers, and have negatively impacted the quality of education offered at our school. Given that North Carolina is considering whether or not to authorize a K-12 virtual school, we feel it is important to share our experience here in California so as to help prevent what's happening in our state from happening in yours.

While our concerns are many, we would like to share with you our experience as it relates to three main issues: (1) CAVA's failure to provide required services to special education students; (2) the increasing number of clerical duties being assigned to CAVA teachers, which prevents teachers from teaching; and (3) the diversion of tens of millions in taxpayer funded public resources out of California to K-12 corporate headquarters in Virginia.

**We believe CAVA is Failing Special Education Students**

The first concern relates to special education and what we see as CAVA's failure to provide SPED students with the required and appropriate services. As of this writing, there are many SPED students at CAVA who are not being provided the services required by their individualized education plan (IEP). These services include: speech language services, psychological services and counseling, daily in person learning coach services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, intensive educational services, and nursing and health services.

In addition, we have SPED students who are not receiving a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). There are many CAVA special education students who CAVA administration and CAVA School Psychologists have found "cannot receive FAPE or make academic progress in our independent study full inclusion GE program" because CAVA "is not an appropriate environment for the student." CAVA administration and CAVA School Psychologists have stated that "an alternative placement will be found" for these students, yet for many of these students, no action has been taken to find an alternative placement. Some students have been waiting multiple years to have an alternative placement implemented. There are some students aging out (reaching their 21st birthday) who have obtained less than 50 credits after more than 5 years of attendance.

Finally CAVA SPED teachers are not being given an appropriate opportunity to provide educational services due to high quantities of administrative responsibilities, GE teaching responsibilities, lack of appropriate administrative support, and large caseloads that exceed 35 students per teacher. In many cases teachers are required to process more than 100 IEP's annually.

We believe all CAVA SPED students deserve to have the services written into their IEP's fully implemented. These children have physical, academic, and emotional needs that are not being appropriately met. We brought all of these concerns to the attention of CAVA administration and K-12, yet no action has been taken. As a result, CAVA teachers are now in the process of filing complaints with the California Department of Education.

### **CAVA Teachers Are Not Given Sufficient Time to Teach**

CAVA teachers are concerned about our decreased ability as professional educators to spend time working with students in support of their learning and academic success. Over the past two years, CAVA administration has assigned CAVA teachers an ever-growing list of clerical duties. These duties, which range from monitoring enrollment paperwork to investigating and verifying student attendance, are typically handled by front office clerical staff at traditional brick and mortar schools. Yet at CAVA, teachers are expected to handle all manner of clerical paperwork, which prevents teachers from teaching and, in turn, prevents our students from learning.

This issue is especially concerning when you consider the fact that student performance at CAVA is subpar across the board. CAVA's average Growth Academic Performance Index (API) score for the 2012-13 school year was 690, a hundred points below the state average of 790.<sup>1</sup> Instead of cutting corners to maximize the bottom line, CAVA and K-12 should spend the necessary resources to hire more staff, which would ensure that CAVA teachers have time to teach our students and not simply fill out legal paperwork. Again, we have brought these concerns to the attention of our administration and K-12, yet no action has been taken to address the situation.

### **California Taxpayer Resources Being Sent Out of State to K-12 Headquarters**

Lastly, our belief that CAVA needs to spend more on staff is rooted in the fact that currently, K-12 diverts tens of millions in public resources out of California each year. According to CAVA's year-end financial reports, in 2012-13, CAVA received \$94 million in public revenue from the state of California. Of that \$94 million, \$50 million was sent out of state to K-12 in the form of payments for "Management Fees," "Leased Equipment" and "Instructional Materials and Technology."<sup>2</sup> Instead of sending more than half of our school's public funding out of state, CAVA and K-12 should commit to investing those resources in the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

As you proceed with your consideration of K-12's application to open a new virtual school in North Carolina, we urge you to carefully consider the experience of CAVA teachers in California. We

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Education, Student Accountability Report Cards (SARC) for each CAVA location. 2012-13 is the most recent year for which data is available.

<sup>2</sup> 2012-13 Year-End Financial Reports for CAVA.

hope you take precautions and act accordingly to protect the interests of students and taxpayers in North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Cara Bryant, CAVA Teacher Training Specialist  
Ellen Davidson, CAVA High School Math Teacher  
Danielle Hodge, CAVA Special Education Teacher  
Mark Holtebeck, CAVA Special Education Teacher  
Katie Hooper, CAVA K8 Teacher  
Maggie Pulley, CAVA K8 Teacher  
Debbie Scoltock, CAVA High School Math Teacher  
James Sheldon, CAVA Special Education Teacher  
Jen Shilen, CAVA High School History Teacher  
Shelby Sullivan, CAVA High School Technology/Business Teacher  
Sarah Vigrass, CAVA K8 Teacher  
Kelly Walters, CAVA Intervention Teacher