



Khalil Gibran International Academy

15K592

345 Dean Street

Brooklyn, NY 11217

Debbie Almontaser - Principal



August 10, 2007

Dear Chancellor Klein,

I am writing to inform you of my decision to resign as the Principal of the Khalil Gibran International Academy.

When we first spoke about an Arabic dual-language high school several years ago, I was deeply impressed with your leadership in seizing this historic opportunity. Your passion for rolling back disparities and your commitment to pursuing equity in education as today's most pressing civil rights issue is truly inspirational. I was so honored when you chose me to lead this effort. When the Deputy Mayor and Mayor affirmed their commitment to this historic Academy, I knew that the dream of many New Yorkers would soon be a reality.

The days that I have spent establishing the Academy have been some of the best of my life – I have never seen as talented a group of teachers and other staff as we assembled to lead this school. The vision of the many parents who dreamed of this Academy and fought for its creation is now a reality. Their sons and daughters will now have access to a first rate education in the finest tradition of the Department of Education.

As you know, I have spent the past two decades of my life building bridges among people of all faiths – particularly among Muslims and Jews. The community of tolerance, understanding and respect for people of different backgrounds is alive and well in New York City.

Unfortunately, a small group of highly misguided individuals has launched a relentless attack on me because of my religion. They have used my religion as the pretext to undermine the Academy and have taken my words out of context to distort my record and portray me as something that I am not. They have not succeeded, of course. The Academy will open as scheduled. They confused me for the larger movement in support of equity in education for all New Yorkers and they underestimated the Mayor's commitment.

With your unwavering support in the face of these unprecedented attacks, and the love of my family, they did not bother me. However, their intolerant and hateful tone has come to frighten some of the parents and incoming students. I have grown increasingly concerned that these few outsiders will disrupt the community of learning when the Academy opens its doors on September 4th.

Therefore, I have decided to step aside to give the Academy and its dedicated staff the full opportunity to flourish without these unwarranted attacks.

The small group of fear mongers who used hate and prejudice to try to derail the Academy are on the wrong side of history. New York is bigger than that; America is fairer than that.

Sincerely,

Debbie Almontaser

Principal Khalil Gibran International Academy

cc: Garth Harries

Dennis Walcott