

Dear PRINCIPAL,

My name is XXXXXXXXX, and I have met you a couple of times. I have two daughters who are students at HIGH SCHOOL NAME. One is XXX, ~~a grade level~~; the other, XXXX, is a freshman.

As you know, DAUGHTER 2 is doing a modified learning plan which has been great, so far! We are so grateful to have been given these options so that she can continue to complete her freshman year. TEACHER NAME has been just wonderful in helping to connect with DAUGHTER 2 and to arrange for the different plans. And, DAUGHTER 2 was very lucky to have been assigned TEACHER NAME, a tutor who seems just ideal. He is smart and laid-back and makes learning more interesting for DAUGHTER 2, as well as making her feel comfortable. She is enjoying her time with him each morning at the Fletcher Free Library. She is also doing Ms. X Spanish class independently, and taking two classes with VtVLC. COUNSELOR NAME probably told you that the reason DAUGHTER 2 is no longer in school is due to a severe bout with anxiety and depression.

We heard about and have been to visit the Big Picture program in South Burlington. DAUGHTER 2 felt so much relief at seeing students there who seem very similar to her. She said that she felt more comfortable during the two hours in that environment than she ever did at HIGH SCHOOL NAME in the first six months of this school year.

At HIGH SCHOOL NAME, she feels like she is so different from her peers, and that she is being judged because she is different. She has been asking me to support a change for years, but I always urged her to keep going to the regular public schools we have in TOWN NAME, because I think that they provide high quality education and exposure to great diversity, as well as to caring and committed staff. I believed she could push onward and thrive despite her discomfort, and overcome it; that she would be stronger for it, more able to deal with "the real world" later. But none of us thought she would be in the place where she is now, truly unhappy and wondering why she is here. Things just went from bad to worse, socially more than anything, as freshman year progressed. She had been getting mostly A's and academically has never had any issues, other than her discomfort with speaking aloud or being in the spotlight. Her teachers know she is a strong, motivated student who enjoys doing well. For now, though, school has really become a big trigger, and in her current state of mind, she is unable to see a bright future, especially if she returns to a "normal" schedule at HIGH SCHOOL NAME.

I am writing to you to appeal for help and/or advice in getting her into the Big Picture South Burlington. She submitted an application for school choice but made it to 9th on the waiting list, which is really nowhere, as far as I understand it.

I feel that the Big Picture program would be an excellent program for DAUGHTER 2, to keep her in school and interested and engaged. I truly believe it would be of huge benefit to her mental, emotional and physical health, and I (and her father) would not want her to shift to home schooling or all virtual

learning, for the "wrong" reason (not wanting direct contact with people); we would like her to be among people, out in the community, learning with others and being involved in service projects, as well as developing her skills - life skills, social skills, and coping skills.

As a TOWN NAME family for the last 18 years, we have watched our own and many other kids growing up. More than a few that I know are now taking part in alternative learning plans. It saddens me to see what is happening with both of my daughters and some of their friends, but I am optimistic that with the right help and resources available (though sometimes difficult to find and obtain), these kids can grow up to be successful - satisfied, happy, well-adjusted, community-minded and productive - in life.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

HIGH SCHOOL NAME Parent