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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Morton 709 Board Meeting - September 5th, 2023**

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**bryan.l.groth@gmail.com Bryan Groth**

Friday, September 8, 2023 at 11:17:51 AM Central Daylight Time

To: amanda.leman@mcusd709.org, thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org, diane.krall@mcusd709.org, jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org, timothy.braker@mcusd709.org, david.cross@mcusd709.org Cross, David, andrew.roth@mcusd709.org

Morton 709 Board Members,

The audience participation portion of Tuesday's board meeting was unsettling for my family on so many levels. I'm not sure where to start. For now, I will ask each of you five questions:

1. Do you personally endorse or condemn the hatred, bigotry, shaming, and proselytizing on full display in the room Tuesday evening. This would include the laughing and heckling by a person I believe to be the superintendent's adult son.
2. Are you personally willing to protect an educator that uses a work email address to subscribe to HATE or EXTREMIST groups as designated by the Southern Poverty Law Center and Anti-Defamation League?
3. Can you personally assure me that LGBTQ youth and their allies, like my son, are safe in Morton 709 schools and protected from bigotry, hatred, shaming, negative bias, discrimination and retaliation?
4. Are each of you prepared to make structural changes to increase awareness and understanding of marginalized groups at the Elementary, Junior High, and Senior High levels in an effort to reduce the hatred and bigotry within the schools and our community.
5. Will each of you publicly condemn the slanderous statement against my minor son made by the presenter wearing the militia-style shirt?

I would ask all of you to respond individually.

Respectfully,

Bryan Groth  
309-696-4922

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**timothy.braker@mcusd709.org Braker, Timothy**

Friday, September 8, 2023 at 3:39:07 PM Central Daylight Time

To: amanda.leman@mcusd709.org Amanda Leman, david.cross@mcusd709.org David Cross, diane.krall@mcusd709.org Krall, Diane, jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org Jerry Rudd, thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org Thomas Neeley, andrew.roth@mcusd709.org Andrew Roth, craig.smock@mcusd709.org Craig Smock

Good afternoon

I would suggest we have one reply from the board.

I will have Dr Smock and group assist. Let one of know if you have thoughts

Tim

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bryan Groth** <bryan.l.groth@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Sep 8, 2023, 11:18 AM

Subject: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] Morton 709 Board Meeting - September 5th, 2023

To: &lt;amanda.leman@mcusd709.org&gt;, &lt;thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org&gt;, &lt;diane.krall@mcusd709.org&gt;, &lt;jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org&gt;, &lt;timothy.braker@mcusd709.org&gt;, Cross, David &lt;david.cross@mcusd709.org&gt;, &lt;andrew.roth@mcusd709.org&gt;

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Respectfully,

Bryan Groth  
309-696-4922

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**craig.smock@mcusd709.org Smock, Craig**

Monday, September 11, 2023 at 7:47:51 AM Central Daylight Time

To: timothy.braker@mcusd709.org Braker, Timothy

Cc: amanda.leman@mcusd709.org Amanda Leman, david.cross@mcusd709.org David Cross, diane.krall@mcusd709.org Krall, Diane, jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org Jerry Rudd, thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org Thomas Neeley, andrew.roth@mcusd709.org Andrew Roth

Please call me with any questions.

I'll be working on a draft.

Craig

On Fri, Sep 8, 2023 at 3:39 PM Braker, Timothy <timothy.braker@mcusd709.org> wrote:

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I will have Dr Smock and group assist. Let one of know if you have thoughts

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Bryan Groth** <bryan.l.groth@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Sep 8, 2023, 11:18 AM

Subject: [EXTERNAL EMAIL] Morton 709 Board Meeting - September 5th, 2023

To: <amanda.leman@mcusd709.org>, <thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org>, <diane.krall@mcusd709.org>, <jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org>, <timothy.braker@mcusd709.org>, Cross, David <david.cross@mcusd709.org>, <andrew.roth@mcusd709.org>

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Respectfully,

Bryan Groth  
309-696-4922

Dr. Craig Smock  
Superintendent  
Morton C.U.S.D. 709



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**timothy.braker@mcusd709.org Braker, Timothy**

Saturday, September 16, 2023 at 11:11:57 AM Central Daylight Time

To: bryan.l.groth@gmail.com Bryan Groth

Cc: amanda.leman@mcusd709.org, thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org, diane.krall@mcusd709.org, jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org, david.cross@mcusd709.org Cross, David, andrew.roth@mcusd709.org

Mr. Groth,

I am sending this email on behalf of the Board of Education in response to your questions.

The Board has opted to respond as a whole, and not individually. As you may know, individual board members hold no power, acting alone.

The Board of Education is not responsible for any words spoken, nor the tones, attitudes, or decorum of the public in the boardroom. I did address interruptions to the speakers, on two occasions. Apart from extreme profanity, the Board is not to disrupt speakers during the time for audience participation. That evening, there were certainly several disruptions from many people on all sides of the issues. The Board certainly does not condone any disrespectful behavior nor attempts to stop others from speaking. The freedom of speech allows for all types of speech, even if it is inflammatory or offends others in the room. Unfortunately, there is also no guarantee that people will withhold their reactions to what is said, nor that the speech will be suitable for children to hear.

Although, according to our policies, employees are allowed to use work email for personal use, it is the Board's intent to recommend and advise employees to use their own private email account for personal use.

With respect to "hate group designations," the Board is not aware of any group to which Mr. Saunders subscribes that would commonly be considered a "hate group." Some organizations may feel that beliefs contrary to theirs constitutes hate or extremism. The bottom line is that the Board expects all people to be treated with respect and dignity, and we will deal with any situation where that expectation for conduct is not met.

We have policies and practices in place intended to prevent and stop mistreatment, bullying, and other types of harassment. But, we are not in 100% control of what students might say or do on any given day. Certainly, there are consequences for violators that we will enact based on our policies. That said, students do have the right to free speech and the freedom of religion.

In fact, students' freedoms are greater than that of school employees. And, under those rights, students may engage in conversations that are contrary to your views or your child's views. If those conversations are civil and welcome, as an exchange of ideas, then there is no harassment, even though there is disagreement. A student who communicates one belief should reasonably expect that another student might counter that belief, because both students have the freedom to passionately, but respectfully, express agreement or disagreement with one another.

If disagreement on sensitive topics is troubling for a student, that student can obviously avoid this type of confrontation and disagreement simply by not engaging in controversial conversations with other students. Once a student expresses a desire to stop a conversation, it can be considered harassment if other students continue the argument. This is the case whether students are discussing favorite baseball teams, movies, or other more serious matters. No matter the topic, passions can elevate to the point where the conversation should stop as it is disrupting the school environment for one or both students.

We believe that we already have the policies and practices in place to address bullying, discrimination, and harassment. These policies pertain to all groups and ages equally. We would encourage anyone who feels that this is happening to them, regardless of their age, identity, or beliefs, to report it immediately to a school authority. We will be reminding people of these policies and how to report incidents of harassment so that it can be addressed as soon as possible.

Again, unless the comments are extremely profane, the Board has no authority to limit a person's speech nor make any determinations about whether or not statements are "slanderous." That is a legal, fact-based determination that is best made by a court of law, and not our Board.

Sincerely,

Tim Braker, Board President

On Fri, Sep 8, 2023 at 11:18AM Bryan Groth <bryan.l.groth@gmail.com> wrote:  
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Bryan Groth  
309-696-4922

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**bryan.l.groth@gmail.com Bryan Groth**

Saturday, September 16, 2023 at 10:14:15 PM Central Daylight Time

To: timothy.braker@mcusd709.org Braker, Timothy

Cc: amanda.leman@mcusd709.org, thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org, diane.krall@mcusd709.org, jerry.rudd@mcusd709.org, david.cross@mcusd709.org Cross, David, andrew.roth@mcusd709.org

Morton 709 Board Members,

Thank you for your response. I will have additional comments and questions for all of you at a later date, but I will start with this. Obviously none of you have done your homework on the groups revealed in Michael Saunders' email and ignorance is not an excuse. I'll make it easy for you. I suggest you review the following presentation. The hate groups in the presentation were all contained within Mr. Saunders' March 2023 inbox.

I would assume that all of you are familiar with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) founded in 1913 and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) founded in 1971, but if you need additional information here are the links. I suggest you think very carefully before impugning these watch groups.

<https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/history>

<https://www.splcenter.org/what-we-do>

Bryan Groth  
309-696-4922

On Sat, Sep 16, 2023, 10:12 AM Braker, Timothy <timothy.braker@mcusd709.org> wrote:  
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Respectfully,

Bryan Groth  
309-696-4922

*This is a staff email account managed by Morton Community Unit School District 709. This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender.*

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**Attachments:**

**Saunders Emails.pdf** 866k





# Principal Saunders' Inbox – March 2023 Sample

World Congress of Families /

International Organization for the Family

Southern Poverty Law Center designates WCF as a HATE group

- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Formed by American Allan Carlson and Russian sociologists in 1995
- ✓ Anti-Muslim
- ✓ Connections to neo-Confederate, white nationalism, and pro-Russian
- ✓ Gay rights “do not advance human freedom and dignity but debase them”

National Organization for Marriage

Associated with WCF/IOF HATE Group

- ✓ Organized to fight legalization of same-sex marriage
- ✓ Opposes civil unions
- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Anti-reproductive rights
- ✓ Promote falsehoods about homosexuals being pedophiles

# Principal Saunders' Inbox – March 2023 Sample

## CitizenGo - HazteOír

### Southern Poverty Law Center featured CitizenGo in HATEWATCH

- ✓ Ultra-conservative organization headquartered in Spain
- ✓ Linked to Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeev
- ✓ Linked to El Yunque – alleged Mexican secret society and paramilitary org formed in the 50's
- ✓ Linked to World Congress of Families designated as a HATE group by SPLC
- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Anti-reproductive rights

## Candace Owens – Freethinker Daily / BLEXIT

### YouTube demonetized anti-trans videos for violation of HATE policies

- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Criticizes Black Lives Matter and NCAA
- ✓ Proclaims “white supremacy and white nationalism” are not harming Black America
- ✓ Stated “a straight, white male” is currently experiencing the same thing as Black America once experienced
- ✓ Anti-surrogacy - surrogate moms are “demonic”
- ✓ COVID conspiracist

# Principal Saunders' Inbox – March 2023 Sample

## Family Research Council / Ken Blackwell

### Southern Poverty Law Center designated FRC as a HATE Group

- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Pro aversion therapy
- ✓ Propagates pedophilia and grooming myths
- ✓ Against hate-crime legislation
- ✓ Against anti-bullying programs

## Illinois Family Action / Illinois Family Institute

### Southern Poverty Law Center designated IFI as a HATE Group

- ✓ Calls for repeal of non-discrimination laws against gays
- ✓ Organized to fight legalization of same-sex marriage and civil unions
- ✓ Promotes gay shaming and falsehoods about grooming and pedophilia
- ✓ Compares homosexuality to Nazism
- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Anti-reproductive rights

# Principal Saunders' Inbox – March 2023 Sample

## Turning Point USA

Anti-Defamation League designated TPUSA as a EXTREMISM Group

- ✓ Christian nationalism
- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Antisemitism and anti-Muslim, race-baiting
- ✓ Fights against diversity, equity and inclusion
- ✓ Election denialism
- ✓ Far-right conspiracy theories

## LifeSiteNews

Canadian Anti-Hate Network designated LSN as a HATE Organization

- ✓ Anti-reproductive health rights
- ✓ Anti-LGBTQ+
- ✓ Supports gay aversion therapy
- ✓ Antisemitism and anti-Muslim
- ✓ Support for white nationalist
- ✓ Embraced QAnon
- ✓ Election denialism and calls to join Jan 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection
- ✓ Permanently banned from Facebook and YouTube for Covid-19 misinformation