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***“Excellence in Education Since 1876”***

**4612 Dehesa Road  
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**Telephone (619) 444-2161 / Fax (619) 486-1266**

**Superintendent**  
Bradley Johnson

**Assistant Superintendent**  
**Business Services**  
Francesca Martinez

August 22, 2025

**Via Email & Hand Delivery**  
“Lizzie Bly,” Author and Editor  
East of 52  
6977 Navajo Rd Unit #652  
San Diego, CA 92119  
editor@eastof52.com

**Re: Demand for Retraction and Correction of Defamatory Article**

Dear “Ms. Bly:”

I’m writing on behalf of Dehesa School District in response to your articles published on [www.eastof52.com](http://www.eastof52.com).

This series of articles contains false statements about Dehesa School District, its Superintendent Bradley Johnson, Board of Trustees, and its affiliated charter schools that were published with malice and reckless disregard for the truth. These false statements about fraudulent and/or criminal conduct are harmful to the District and the Superintendent’s reputation and undermine public confidence. Without regard for the truth, you have created a false narrative that reports that the District is engaged in unlawful practices and attendance fraud and is acting illegally in regards to fiscal operations and governance. Your reporting has cheated the public of presentation of a fair and full reporting of the facts that can be found in public records. Please see attached records, which we request that you review and add to your publication to assist in achieving fair and accurate reporting.

In addition, below is an outline of the defamatory material that we request you retract and/or clarify with the materials attached so that the falsehoods and reporting of criminal and/or fraudulent conduct are removed.

**ARTICLE: Method Musical Chairs: How Dehesa's Enrollment Shuffle Fueled ADA Funding, Charter Growth, and Audit Flags**

- **QUOTE: "Resident Students Were Displaced"**
  - **FACT:** There are no facts to support this false statement which was made with reckless disregard for the truth. Every resident student has a legal right to attend Dehesa's school and the District serves all eligible students who enroll in the school. Dehesa has never been "over capacity" and has not turned away any resident students that were legally entitled to enroll.
- **QUOTE: "Johnson, who oversees the Dehesa School District, earns at least a \$253,000 annual salary before tax-including benefits, generous healthcare package, and reportedly a "Me Too" clause (no ... not that #Me Too-the kind where every time someone else at the school gets a raise, he does too. MEE TOO! AKA what I call the Entitlement Clause-a provision that ensures his salary not only matches others' raises, but stays ahead of them. It's less "me too" and more "me first.")." "**
  - **FACT:** The Superintendent's contract is a publicly-available record and it does not contain a "Me Too" clause. Moreover, it reflects that his salary is \$245,000. Please see attached. The underlined portion above should be retracted as it is false and was published maliciously, or at a minimum, with reckless disregard for the truth.
- **QUOTE: "and Children were going to school with no record of daily, or weekly attendance"**
  - **FACT:** This is false. There is nothing in the audit that supports the false statement that no records of daily attendance were being reported.
- **QUOTE: "Families were told that this model would offer complete flexibility: students could attend in person, stay home, or do a mix of both. Fridays were designated as "Flex Fridays," with online only learning for all students. As long as students logged in or submitted assignments, they would be counted for funding purposes-even if they never stepped foot on campus that day. However, the audit later flagged this arrangement as noncompliant with state law, citing lack of approval and failure to meet instructional minute requirements." "**
  - **FACT:** Nowhere in the audit did it state that Dehesa failed to meet instructional minute requirements. In fact, the audit reflects that Dehesa complied with state instructional minute requirements. [See, Audit p. 75.] The author purposefully misrepresents the plain text of the audit that reads Dehesa was "compliant."

- Students participating in independent study programs generate ADA whether or not they step foot on the campus that day; ADA funding is based on a time-value accounting of completed student work. Please consult your counsel on this point. Public funds support enrollment and, once enrolled, programs of various kinds support students. “This arrangement” was not flagged in the audit as “noncompliant with state law.” [See, Audit attached.] The author purposefully, or with reckless disregard, reports enrollment fraud, where none exists. [The original Audit and the revised Audit are public records and are attached for your review and in support of fair and accurate reporting.]
- **QUOTE: “These students operated under independent study contracts but were reportedly affiliated with other virtual charters like Cabrillo Point Academy and Pacific Coast Academy. Still, it appears their ADA was attributed to Dehesa.”**
  - **FACT:** Students enrolled in SoCal Scholars Academy were and are Dehesa students and thus ADA was attributed to Dehesa. Students attending separate local educational agencies (“LEAs”), like Cabrillo Point Academy and Pacific Coast Academy, claim ADA attributed to their respective charter schools. The author did not conduct due diligence and, instead, falsely reports enrollment fraud with no supporting evidence whatsoever. Dehesa did not reap any ADA funding for students while they were enrolled in other LEAs. Students can only be enrolled in one LEA at any given time, so there is no double dipping as falsely reported. Dehesa never received ADA funding for students who were not enrolled in Dehesa
- **QUOTE: “Falsified attendance records: Students were marked as independent study despite attending in person.”**
  - **FACT:** This statement reports that students being identified as enrolled in independent study programs cannot attend in-person classes. This is a false conclusion. Students are allowed to be on independent study and attend in person. Independent study does not mean students have to remain remote one hundred percent of the time. This statement reports legal acts as constituting attendance fraud. This statement is purposefully false and defamatory to the District and Superintendent Bradley Johnson who is referenced as the head of District leadership and involved with enrollment.
- **QUOTE: “\$950K in questioned ADA: The district misreported in-person students as independent study, inflating attendance-based funding.”**
  - **FACT:** The District did not misreport in-person students as independent study nor did they inflate attendance-based funding. Students are allowed to participate

in independent study and attend in person. This misleads the public into believing leadership is guilty of major financial misconduct and such statement is defamatory to the District and Superintendent Bradley Johnson, who is referenced as the head of District leadership and involved with enrollment.

- **QUOTE: \$171K in ratio-based ADA overclaims: Dehesa knowingly exceeded teacher-student ratios and claimed the funding anyway.”**
  - **FACT:** The District did not knowingly exceed independent study ratios. This calculation was completed after the unaudited actuals were completed.
- **QUOTE: “Multiple sources confirmed that internal administrative decisions allowed these programs (local and remote enrollment) to operate under Dehesa's banner without clear authorization and approval from the county and state, resulting in inflated attendance numbers and enhanced state funding.”**
  - **FACT:** The District operated all programs within legal parameters and secured all required approvals and authorizations for its programs. All ADA calculations for students participating in independent study met legal requirements. To report fraudulent practices claiming “inflated attendance numbers” is reckless. The audit does not support this assertion. The District is not operating illegal programs.
- **QUOTE: “Some sources interpret Dehesa's absorption of Method Schools and Method Sports Academy students as a strategic rescue maneuver-one that allowed a failing charter and its unrecognized spinoff to operate under Dehesa's umbrella while Dehesa reaped ADA for both local and remote students.”**
  - **FACT:** Dehesa did not reap any ADA for students while they attended Method Schools and Method Sports Academy. Students attending separate LEAs, like Method Schools and Method Sports Academy, have their own ADA attributed to their respective schools. The author falsely reports enrollment fraud with no evidence. Students can only be enrolled in one LEA at any given time so there is no double dipping as falsely reported. Dehesa never received ADA for students who were not enrolled in Dehesa.
- **QUOTE: “But in Dehesa, the inverse occurred: charter programs were prioritized, and resident students were displaced to asynchronous education.”**
  - **FACT:** This is false. Dehesa did not “displace” any resident students due to the addition of a new program. No students were prohibited from attending in-class instruction. There are no facts to support this false statement which was made

with reckless disregard for the truth. Every resident student has a legal right to attend Dehesa's school and the District serves all eligible students who enroll. Dehesa has never been "over capacity" and has not turned away any resident students that were legally entitled to enroll. No students were ever prohibited from attending in-class instruction. No students were required to enroll in asynchronous education programs.

**ARTICLE: Adjacent, Apparently: How Dehesa's Definition Could Cost Taxpayers Millions**

- **QUOTE: "So to claim-via ocean, island, or imagination-that San Diego and Los Angeles counties are immediately adjacent isn't just false. It appears to be a deliberate distortion designed to manipulate ADA (Average Daily Attendance) numbers and funnel public funds through Dehesa under the guise of online independent study charter school networks, very suggestive of old patterns."**
  - **FACT:** This statement is false and made with reckless disregard for the truth. Dehesa, through its Superintendent, requested an opinion from an independent auditor, Wilkinson, Hadley, King & Co., whether or not it could enroll and collect independent study apportionment for students that resided in Los Angeles County. [See, publicly available letter that you had in your possession when the article was written.] The independent auditor replied that this was authorized. Specifically, she stated, "In performing our audit procedures, we would consider the two counties adjacent and as such would not identify any students enrolled from Los Angeles County as unallowable for purposes of reporting ADA." [See attached response which you also had in your possession.] To report that this practice amounted to fraud is reckless. Dehesa's receipt of ADA funding for a student participating in the independent study program who resides within Los Angeles County is not illegal. If it was not serving the student, that would be a different scenario. All practices have been reviewed and verified in accordance with applicable legal requirements and independent auditor standards. Please review the Education Code sections cited by the auditor for full and accurate reporting.
- **QUOTE: "This is an example of kind of reasoning Johnson is using to justify enrolling thousands of out-of-county students.."**
  - **FACT:** This rationale is not being used for thousands of out-of-county students. Publicly available data prior to June 30, 2025 is available that illustrates Dehesa's enrollment, which the author did not bother to reference. Dehesa has enrolled and served 51 out of county students.

- **QUOTE: “More telling, as of the writing of this article, Johnson does not appear on the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing website, suggesting he lacks the REQUIRED qualifications per Ed Code to even serve as a superintendent.”**
  - **FACT:** The San Diego County Office of Education waived this requirement pursuant to Education Code section 35029. This waiver is referenced in Superintendent Johnson’s Board approved contract at paragraph 13. [See attached.] The contract was agendized and Board approved at a public meeting. [[https://dehesasd.net/files/page/824/August\\_28\\_2024\\_Board\\_Agenda\\_3\\_.pdf](https://dehesasd.net/files/page/824/August_28_2024_Board_Agenda_3_.pdf)] In addition, the San Diego County Office of Education completed and filed a form for a temporary certificate under CTC code SC1A referencing Education Code section 35029. This is also a publicly available document. A copy is attached for your ease of reference.
- **QUOTE: “But in Dehesa, the inverse occurred: charter programs were prioritized, and resident students were displaced to asynchronous education.”**
  - **FACT:** This is false. Dehesa did not “displace” any resident students due to the addition of a new program. No students were prohibited from attending in-class instruction. Independent student can be synchronous. There are no facts to support this false statement which was made with reckless disregard for the truth. Every resident student has a legal right to attend Dehesa’s school and the District serves all eligible students who enroll in the school. Dehesa has never been “over capacity” and has not turned away any resident students that were legally entitled to enroll. No students were ever prohibited from attending in-class instruction. No students were required to enroll in asynchronous education programs.

**ARTICLE: To the Dehesa School Board Members**

- **QUOTE: “Also, he was not granted an official waiver or emergency permit by the CTC.”**
  - **FACT:** This is a false statement that is asserted maliciously or, at a minimum, with reckless disregard for the truth. In addition to the local governing board waiving the “required” credential under Education Code section 35029, the San Diego County Office of Education completed and filed a form for a temporary certificate under CTC code SC1A referencing Education Code section 35029. [Please see response above and public records attached.]

**ARTICLE: Superintendent In One-School District Paid \$2,522 Per Student Without Required Credential**

- **QUOTE:** The article title “**Superintendent In One-School District Paid \$2,522 Per Student Without Required Credential**”
  - **FACT:** This is false. Dehesa served closed to 400 students at the time of this article, and the pay per student is inaccurate. This information is publicly available at [<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/files/enrcensus.asp>].
- **QUOTE:** “**A Tiny School District In Rural East San Diego County Is Paying A \$252,000 Salary To A Superintendent Overseeing Fewer Than 100 Students.**”
  - **FACT:** This is false. The Superintendent’s salary is \$245,000 and the district served just under 400 students in 2024-2025. This information is publicly available at [[https://dehesasd.net/files/page/824/August\\_28\\_\\_2024\\_Board\\_Agenda\\_\\_3\\_.pdf](https://dehesasd.net/files/page/824/August_28__2024_Board_Agenda__3_.pdf)].
- **QUOTE:** “**That means every hiring decision, contract approval, and financial action taken by the district runs through a closed loop of family control.**”
  - **FACT:** Every hiring decision, contract approval and financial action taken by the District is made publicly in accordance with the Brown Act This statement is made with reckless disregard for the truth.

**ARTICLE: The Tale Of The Three Whites And The Two Phams - A One-School District. Five Board Members. Two Families. And A Growing Rebellion**

- **QUOTE:** “**This is the story of how Dehesa School District - a tiny, one-school district east of El Cajon - inflated its budget, lost its way, and now finds itself on the brink of financial collapse and a possible state takeover..**”
  - **FACT:** There is no evidence to support the statement that Dehesa inflated its budget. Nor is there any evidence to support the false statement that Dehesa is on the “brink of financial collapse and a possible state takeover.” The San Diego County Office of Education reviews Dehesa’s two interim financial reports every year, as well as Dehesa’s estimated actuals, budget, unaudited actuals and audit reports. Within at least the last five years no response has been received from the San Diego County Office of Education stating that Dehesa has inflated its budget or that it is in such financial condition that state takeover is possible or that it is on the brink of a financial collapse. Nor has any of the District’s audits included these statements. Responsible reporting would not have made this reckless

statement in disregard for available facts.

- **QUOTE: “A \$68,500 legal settlement payable is carried over from a prior year with no public explanation.”**
  - **FACT:** This is a false statement made with reckless disregard for the truth. This settlement was Board approved in 2021. Here is a link to the minutes where the Board reported out from closed session.  
(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18LIBPD5b5rameITSusUUrUusw5hyfQgL/view>)
  - The Settlement Agreement is also public record if the author had bothered to request it. [Please see attached.] Any and all settlements have been Board approved.
- **QUOTE: “As of July 2025, neither the 2023 nor 2024 audits are posted on the district's website or through public databases.”**
  - **FACT:** This is a false statement made with reckless disregard for the truth. Dehesa’s audit for 2022-2023 was posted on the 12/13/23 agenda. Dehesa’s audit for 2023-2024 was posted on the 4/9/25 agenda. Dehesa’s revised audit was posted on the 5/14/25 agenda.
    - **2022-2023 Original Audit**  
[[https://dehesasd.net/files/page/802/December\\_13\\_\\_2023\\_Agenda.pdf](https://dehesasd.net/files/page/802/December_13__2023_Agenda.pdf)]
    - **2023-2024 Original Audit**  
[[https://dehesasd.net/files/page/832/April\\_9\\_\\_2025\\_Board\\_Meeting\\_Agenda\\_\\_1\\_.pdf](https://dehesasd.net/files/page/832/April_9__2025_Board_Meeting_Agenda__1_.pdf)]
    - **2023-2024 Revised Audit**  
[[https://dehesasd.net/files/page/832/May\\_14\\_2025\\_Board\\_Meeting\\_Agenda\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](https://dehesasd.net/files/page/832/May_14_2025_Board_Meeting_Agenda__2_.pdf)]

These audits were agendized pursuant to the Brown Act and presented at public meetings.

- **QUOTE: “Additionally, board meeting agendas are posted - but the actual minutes and outcomes of votes are not available online. This undermines transparency and leaves the public unable to verify decisions made on their behalf.”**
  - **FACT:** This is false. All meeting minutes and outcomes of votes are available online and approved in subsequent board meetings. The public is able to verify decisions made at board meetings. This statement is made without regard for the truth. Please see [<https://dehesasd.net/District/Department/2-Governing-Board/111-Board-Agendas-Packets.html>]. Agendas can be viewed by year by using the navigation tool on the left side menu.



The following corrective steps must be taken within the next seven (7) calendar days in order to prevent further consideration and pursuit of legal action. Given the above, we demand that you:

1. Remove or correct the articles containing false and defamatory statements;
2. Publish a clear retraction and correction with equal prominence to the original articles;
3. Include the information provided in order to achieve fair and accurate reporting.
4. Provide written confirmation to Dehesa School District within the next seven (7) calendar days that these steps have been completed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bradley Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bradley Johnson  
Superintendent  
Dehesa School District

Attachments:

Independent Audit Report for year ending 6/30/24 signed 2/28/25

Independent Audit Report Revised for year ending 6/30/24 signed 5/6/25

Letter From Superintendent Seeking Guidance 3/2/23

Letter From Auditor Granting Approval 3/6/23

Superintendent Contract 8/28/24

SDCOE completed/filed Temporary Certificate per CTC code SC1A 11/7/24

Settlement Agreement 1/27/21