

Tim Neary

Horizon Science Academy Teacher. 2009-2011

President Terhar and Members of the State Board of Education of Ohio:

I was hired by the Gulen-affiliated Horizon Science Academy in Dayton where I taught from 2009-2011. Teaching jobs were very hard to get during that time and I was happy to get hired after one brief interview – even though I was making just \$25,000/year and teaching six classes.

Early on, there were lots of red flags: It was a “science academy” with no science labs. Turkish teachers didn’t do much teaching but made a lot more than the American teachers. Racism and sexism were common. There was no professionalism toward women. It was almost gross how they’d talk to women. They’d tell them to not talk or cut them off in midpoint. Over time, some teachers had their insurance cancelled for no reason and occasionally there were lapses in pay. School officials blamed the state for the paycheck problems. Asking questions could get you fired, especially if you were a woman. The majority of the people fired were women.

Racism was an issue, too. Black kids would be disciplined more severely than Turkish kids for the same or similar infractions. If there was a fight in school, they’d take out the black kids but the Turks got to stay.

School administrators clearly lied about attendance. I never had a full class and they’d say the school had 97% attendance rate. I guess that was an easy one to fudge. There was no oversight at all.

Even though standardized tests are supposed to be taken, then locked in a secure place, that did not always occur – if ever. All of the tests would go into one room, with an administrator behind a locked door. Nobody else got to see what was going on.

I was well liked and left on my accord, and I had a good relationship with both the Turkish and American employees. That wasn’t the case with all of the teachers.

The American teachers worked very hard. We liked what we did and we cared about the students. Some of the Turkish teachers could barely speak English, but some of the worst Turkish teachers got promoted. Ali Ozer was one of them. They made him the director. His wife, Derha, was hired as a guidance counselor. I don’t know how much counseling she did but she brought her kids to work and ran a sort of day care at the school. The American teachers would be frustrated because they were paying for child care on \$28,000 a year and she was making more than \$40,000 and getting free daycare service.

We were especially frustrated during testing week. They promised the kids all sort of things – including laptops – if they passed all five parts of the test. There were posters on the walls telling the students what prizes they'd receive if they succeeded. We showed them research saying that kind of inducement wasn't effective but that didn't matter. What mattered was appearances. Even worse, they didn't come through with half of the promises they made.

I am happy to answer any questions.