

Public Comments
August 10, 2020 Board Meeting

TELEVISED COMMENT

- Sandrine Wandji, nsandrine@hotmail.com

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Inclusion / Equity

- **Andrea Knott**, Parent and PTSA Member, andreaknott@hotmail.com
 - **Kim Miller**, kmiller0594@gmail.com
 - **Mandie Mauldin Nash**, mandienash@gmail.com
 - **Kimberly Dare**, kimberly.dare@azimuth-grp.com
 - **Renee Codgell Lewis**, rcogdellewis@gmail.com
 - **Julie Nelson**, julie.nel@frontier.com
 - **Mara Fetters**, marafetters@hotmail.com
 - **Mako Guest**, mako@makoandsimon.com
 - **Colleen Rutherford**, Parent, crutherford@gmail.com
 - **Allison Sherrill**, allisonamandasherrill@gmail.com
 - **Laurie Boyd**, laurie91@gmail.com
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- **Allison Sherrill**, allisonamandasherrill@gmail.com
 - **Joy Randall**, joyous1118@gmail.com
 - **Laurie Boyd**, laurie91@gmail.com
 - **Abby Hu**, abbyhappyhu@outlook.com
 - **Aditi Goyal**, goyal.aditi03@gmail.com
 - **Crystal Visperas**, cvisperas@lwsd.org
 - **Diana Williams**, diana.d.williams@hotmail.com
 - **Deanna W**, deannawoo@gmail.com

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- **Allison Sherrill**, allisonamandasherrill@gmail.com
- **Laurie Boyd**, laurie91@gmail.com

I am urgently seeking a response to the parents' of Black LWSD students demand for action to ensure a safe return to school and an equitable education for Black students. The demands addressing four critical areas, was submitted on June 22nd (*July 23rd - Dare, Lewis*), and have not received a public response from the board.

1. Transparency & Accountability
2. Professional Development & Accountability
3. Equitable Recruiting, Retention, and Inclusion
4. Curriculum Reform

Given the current racial tensions in our nation and local community, it is imperative to every student's education and safety for you to respond. Black and Brown students are legally entitled to an equitable, viable, accessible and appropriate education.

- **Allison Sherrill**, allisonamandasherrill@gmail.com
In addition, I want to say that the retention of the "Rebels" mascot at Juanita high school until recently signals a deep problem in this district. It is incredible that a name most prominently associated with soldiers fighting for a racist regime aiming to split the United States would be kept for so long, especially when Confederate symbols were incorporated into the logo for a period in the '80s, removing all plausible deniability about the meaning of this term. I grew up in Charlotte, NC, and as a young person I assumed that progressive places outside my region would not engage in the kind of racism that I routinely observed there. Changing this mascot is a good step, but **much** deeper systemic changes are needed to ensure that black and brown students get the education they are entitled to in the environment they deserve, and to ensure that white students do not unthinkingly take on attitudes that seem unremarkable to them but in fact perpetuate inequality for their classmates.

- **Joy Randall**, joyous1118@gmail.com

I recently attended a teach-in organized by young BIPOC *{Black Indigenous People of Color}* women who had graduated from LWSD. They shared stories of overt and covert racism they experienced in our own schools they attended. I felt a naiveness as I listened, thinking that our open-minded, progressive area would not have situations like that happen. We must truly open our eyes and make the changes that the reckoning of our country is doing, should be doing, to break the grip of White supremacy in society, particularly in our school systems.

Recently Superintendent Holmen met with Black parents to address their concerns of the lack of urgency to implement these demands:

1. Transparency and Accountability
2. Professional Development and Accountability
3. Equitable Recruiting
4. Curriculum Reform

I as well have not received any response to my last letters to you and also to Mr. Holmen about enriching the curriculum with Black/Indigenous history, authors, leaders, a commitment to providing antiracism training to all staff/teachers in the district, adopt a social justice framework in teaching all subjects, and additional budget/support with a position on the cabinet for Equity Director, Gloria Henderson.

You may hear and agree that this is not the time to make these changes since we are in a pandemic and only doing online teaching. Please do not accept that narrative and instead take this time and opportunity to make the necessary changes now.

There is a tremendous amount of resources available to begin. Here is just one, WA State Ethnic Studies Now. A group of anti-racist, Ethnic Studies educator activists who came together to support the implementation of Ethnic Studies Statewide. They provide training as well. <https://waethnicstudies.com/organize/>

I wish to hear a response to this letter.

- **Laurie Boyd**, laurie91@gmail.com

We would like to see action by the Lake Washington School District to be a leader in this area and a role model for other districts in our state and country to follow.

Thank you for your direct and swift action to acknowledge these families, their concerns and to work with all families, especially families of color, in our district toward an actionable plan to help ensure equity for all.

- **Abby Hu**, abbyhappyhu@outlook.com

My name is Abby Hu and I am a rising senior attending Eastlake High School.

When I look at the meeting agenda and see no mentions of a race and equity discussion, I become disappointed, yet not surprised. Meeting after meeting, I hope and expect to see something about race or equity on the agenda, yet there is none.

Just because some incidences of LWSD students saying the “n-word” on public media that has been shared over 1,000 times has been “forgotten”, does not mean you can ignore that this kind of upsetting behavior exists on LWSD grounds as well, not just outside of school. These students represent Lake Washington School District and it is a disgusting look on your part.

Again, I anticipate to see the following questions answered at future meetings:

How will LWSD diversify their admins and staff?

How will LWSD hire more counselors of various backgrounds? All counselors at Eastlake HS are white, heterosexual, cisgender individuals.

How will LWSD protect BIPOC {*Black Indigenous People of Color*} and LGBTQIA+ {*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pansexual, Transgender, Genderqueer, Queer, Intersexed, Agender, Asexual and Ally community*} students?

How will LWSD reprimand unacceptable behavior? And no, telling a student “Don’t say that again” is equivalent to a light slap on the wrist - it does nothing, it does not teach them anything.

I would like to thank Eastlake High School’s principal, Mr. Bede for reaching out to me, after the last board meeting, to schedule a meeting to discuss race and equity specific to Eastlake, as well as solutions and ideas. It means a lot.

To the all-white District Board, do better to amplify BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ voices, listen to what we have to say, and address the problems that exist in LWSD.

Get comfortable feeling uncomfortable.

I am calling on Lake Washington School District to collectively do better.

- **Aditi Goyal**, goyal.aditi03@gmail.com

My name is Aditi Goyal and I am a rising junior at Eastlake High School.

More than a third of students at our school are BIPOC *{Black Indigenous People of Color}*, and yet only 12% of EHS staff are BIPOC, and none of them are administrators or counselors.

All the counselors at Eastlake are white, and despite their efforts, are not be able to understand cultural differences and racism which impacts BIPOC students. Topics such as mental health, grades, sexuality, and familial pressure are handled differently in many BIPOC families, all of which greatly impact students. How can counselors help students if a third of us cannot find someone to relate to?

Events like the AP information night, handled by administrators, displayed how little understanding is present for BIPOC students. One of the three example students was taking several AP classes, playing tennis, and playing an instrument, along with other commitments. Though the other two students were leading more balanced lives, and Mr. Apple warned against taking too many advanced classes, I heard numerous BIPOC families using that one student as an example, telling their children to participate in four or more AP classes, saying that the administration didn't understand them. Many immigrant families highly value education and may prioritize grades over mental wellness. Despite feeble warnings against taking too many AP classes, using an overworked example student was counterintuitive, and sent the wrong message to all families, but especially to those who already value education more highly than other cultures. If anything, the contrast between the examples and the words of the administration proved to families that Eastlake faculty is out of touch with the cultures at their school.

We need to know- how will Eastlake improve their resources for BIPOC students, and will this change be reflected in the diversity of the staff?

- **Crystal Visperas**, cvisperas@lwsd.org

My name is Crystal Visperas (pronounced Vis-pear-us) and I am a 14th year teacher and 2nd year teacher in the district.

I want to call your attention to the LWSO website. LWSO's Commitment to Racial Equity has not been updated since June 1st. The latest date for any resources on your website is June 10th. As we already know, anti-bias and anti-racism is a life-long and continual journey. As Dr. Ibram Kendi reiterates, we can be anti-racist one minute and an oppressor the next.

I respectfully urge you to ask yourselves why is it August 10th and more visual and verbal support for BIPOC *{Black Indigenous People of Color}* has not been shown to the community?

Why do I, person of color, need to remind white people again to do the work and boldly share the learnings of your anti-bias and anti-racist work with the community?

We need to see that the school board members and the school district believe in ACTIVE equity and social justice measures and values and that you are absolutely committed to infusing those measures and values in this challenging and necessary uphill battle.

Silence is the oppressor's tool, and if this matters to you, and you, school board, want to support and defend your communities, staff, parents and students of color, please revamp and update your opportunity and equity statement and resources. And this update needs to be a weekly or more frequent basis as there is always something new to learn and share.

We need to see you talking about the work of anti-racism, being uncomfortable and recognizing your privilege as an all-white school board council, engaging with BIPOC communities and again, proclaiming that Black Lives Matter.

- **Diana Williams**, diana.d.williams@hotmail.com

I am mother of 3 Blacks sons, 2 of which have attended LWSD school for the past 13 years.

On June 10th, I became aware of an e-mail sent to my son's high school community from its principal acknowledging systemic racism, and that Black students' expression of not feeling safe. This acknowledgment, and the inequities in education made apparent through key statistics, and my personal experience, would lead me to the conclusion that the LWSD has a state of emergency as it relates to the approximately 700 students in the LWSD.

The doors of LWSD schools closed in March to keep students, teachers, and staff safe. For 6 weeks instruction was not delivered, in part due to concerns to equitable access to education of marginalized students. The school district has resorted to extraordinary measures to ensure the safe return and equitable access of its students in light of the pandemic.

The LWSD Board's response to inequitable access to education by Black students, a racially based education, and the safety of Black students has been nominal at best.

We are in the midst of a global health crisis. AND the deaths of Ahmed Aubrey, Breanna Taylor and George Floyd have increased racial tensions to heights which we have not seen in 30 years.

Whether my sons are remote or in-person, the LWSD district cannot ensure their safety under current policies, practices, and overall conditions. As a parent I want a plan from

the school board, district and each school of what they are doing to immediately address implicit bias and systemic racism.

One June 22nd, FABSE {*Family Alliance of Black Student Excellence*} submitted a letter with demands in four crucial areas to address, systemic racism and implicit bias

1. Transparency & Accountability
2. Professional Development & Accountability
3. Equitable Recruiting, Retention, and Inclusion
4. Curriculum Reform

- **Deanna W, deannawoo@gmail.com**

It is imperative to each student's safety and education that the board publicly acknowledge and respond before the 1st day of school.

I am wondering what is being done to support anti-racism in our schools and education.

I know priority is safety & health during this pandemic. But now would also be the time to update curriculum in the areas of social injustice.

Thanks for all you do and for the hard work that you and the LWSD staff & board have been doing, especially in this unprecedented time. Crazy, for sure.