

PUBLIC COMMENT – REGULAR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING -DECEMBER 15, 2020

Question/Comment:

Hello, my name is Rebecca Calhoun and I am a parent of a seventh grader at Palos South Middle School this school year. I would like to comment on the reopening plan for Palos 118 this school during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to specifically comment on the unwavering courage and dedication of the teachers and staff members educating during this truly unprecedented time. At the end of summer there were many social media posts, messages, and even rallies portraying what educators and clinicians should be doing as the school year began. While this is not new in the field of public education, I know that it was especially hard for school staff members to receive these comments in any and all formats. As everyone has made unfathomable sacrifices during this time, staff members were faced with finding childcare, putting loved ones at risk, and possibly walking away from a career that is already rooted in compassion, empathy, and sacrifice. From my experience as a parent in 118, I know none of these choices and decisions were made lightly or without having my child's wellbeing at the forefront.

With that being said, I want to express my abundance of gratitude to the Board of Education and staff members of 118. To the school board, I appreciate you taking the first month of school to execute a plan that allowed parents to make an informed decision on in person/remote learning, teachers to prepare the best they could, and setting up custodial systems to keep all people safe. To the teachers, principals, paraprofessional staff, and clinicians you are truly the heroes and the ultimate masters of change. Please know that your ability to create a digital adaptation of a curriculum on the fly, deciphering elementary student's emails while balancing those of their parents, establishing the power of a bitmoji, smiling through a mask, and providing support in person and afar does not go unnoticed.

In particular at Palos South, one morning, my son had forgotten his self-certification form. Because having two in-person educators as parents, sometimes a self-certification falls through the cracks. That day, he was met by compassion by Mr. Buvala who assured him and myself that we are getting through this together. Also, there was Mrs. Hanley who gave my son second chances on submitting assignments, because executive functioning skills and adolescence never truly mix well. Continually, Mrs. Swan consistently checking in making sure my son feels safe and supported both social and emotionally. These are just a few examples of how teachers have gone above and beyond to make this 2020-2021 school year work, and these examples are no way limited to only Palos South. To all educators: I am beyond appreciative of your perseverance and have nothing but admiration for all that have had to pivot, sacrifice, and embrace change during this time.

Response:

Thank you for your comment.