

Highline Public Schools | School Board Meeting - November 16, 2022

Good morning. Good morning? Good evening, all. Hope you guys are doing well. Thank you for joining us this evening for our regular board meeting. If I can have you all stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance.

I Pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

[AUDIO OUT]

Thank you. Roll call, please.

Director Van?

Here.

Director Howell?

Here.

Director Alvarez?

Here.

Director Hagos?

Here.

Director Garcia?

Director Garcia has an excused absence this evening. And to the left is Dr. Duran. With that said, do we have any changes or additions to tonight's agenda. I have none. We have none. OK. We're going to move on to recognitions.

OK, I think that's me. Do you want me to start?

You go first one. Yep.

OK. I get the privilege of reading a proclamation for American Education Week. And whereas public schools are the backbone of our democracy, providing young people with the tools they need to maintain our nation's precious values of freedom, civility, and equality. And whereas by equipping young Americans with both practical skills and broader intellectual abilities, schools give them hope for and access to a productive future.

And whereas education employees, be they substitute educators, custodians, teachers, bus drivers, librarians, clerical workers, or food service professionals, work tirelessly to serve our children and communities with care and professionalism. And whereas schools encourage community, bringing together adults and children, educators and volunteers, business leaders and elected officials in a common enterprise.

Now, therefore, the board and superintendent of Highline Public Schools do hereby proclaim that the week of November 13 to 19, 2022 is American Education Week. In Highline and further encourage all citizens to extend their commitment to public education and to the future of our children by supporting our communities' schools through the contributions of their time and energy. Thank you.

Thank you. We also have another special recognition tonight. And I'd like to ask Clysta Cole to go to the podium, please. And we will-- and Holly Ferguson, if you'll join them there. And I have a recognition that I'll be reading. And I think we're going to have a few slides here after I do this recognition. This recognition recognizing Clysta Cole for her efforts championing Evitan's Law, a new law in Washington State allowing school districts to offer posthumous diplomas for certain eligible students.

Whereas Evitan Cole was a student in Highline Public Schools. And whereas Evitan passed away prior to completing his high school graduation requirements. And whereas Ms. Cole reached out to Highline Public Schools to request a posthumous diploma for Evitan, only to be informed that Washington State does not authorize posthumous diplomas. And whereas Ms. Cole took it upon herself to draft and champion a bill in the state legislature to allow school districts to grant posthumous diplomas for eligible students.

And whereas the legislature recognized the importance of this bill and passed Senate Bill 5498, known as Evitan's Law during the 2022 legislative session. And Governor Inslee signed the bill into law on March 30th, 2022. Whereas Evitan met the requirements for a posthumous diploma. And his family is entitled to receive the diploma. Now, therefore, the Highline School Board and myself recognize Ms. Clysta Cole for her efforts in the passage of this important legislation and were presented with Evitan's diploma honoris causa on November 16th, 2022. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

And thank you for being here tonight. And we have the microphone for you for comments. Thank you.

Thank you for having me. I'd like to reflect on your words and share my gratitude and appreciation for this. I would like to. And I'm trying really hard to do such a thing. But I find it really hard when I have lived through a truth of coming to Highline School District, which I know you were not here at that time, about three years ago, when I asked for an honorary diploma for my son. And I was told no because the law doesn't allow it. But the law doesn't say it doesn't allow it either.

I took that. And I said fine. And I was OK with that. However, when I received my son's high school transcript, it read that he had over five high school credits to graduate. And I recognized that there was a school missing from the ninth grade. When the correction was brought to Highline School District and his new transcript was updated, he had 2.38 high school credits to graduate, 2.38 high school credits till he was able to graduate.

He was 19 years old. He was in his sixth year of high school. He was a student with disabilities and IEP, failed by the state of Washington. And I want that to be accurately recognized, that the state of Washington failed him as a student, failed to give him a proper education. And that truth, I sit with because my son never knew. He never knew that he was so close to graduating.

And he wanted so much to graduate. That meant the world to him. It meant the world to me. It meant the world to every student and every parent as we come across the graduation year and we go in the stores and we see the cakes and the balloons and the celebrations and we decorate. It is a milestone that we wait for from the time our children are born. And we anticipate every moment that they are going to grow and be encouraged and become somebody in this world, that we don't know who they are, but we know that they're going to be somebody.

The unfortunate thing is that my son was murdered. His life was cut short. He never got an opportunity to graduate. I was told when the law changes, we will give you his diploma, even though he was failed. It was called a clerical error, which I know if I was to ask my daughter, who is a high school senior, if she would accept that as a clerical error. I guarantee you, she will say no. That wouldn't be good enough for her.

The thing about this law is it ensures the districts do not get to pick and choose who gets a diploma anymore. And I say that because there was a young man whose family was issued a posthumous diploma in his graduating year that never made it to high school. He was in middle school when he was gunned down. And his family received his honorary diploma. And I was told that I couldn't have one, even though my state failed my son.

I did this not only for my son and my family, but I did it for all other families that I know come after me. I thank you for having me here. It's really been hard. Really hard. Thank you.

And thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

And this moment is sacred to us as a community. And the fact that Evitan was part of our Highline family was no accident. And we must honor him as family, as relatives. Clysta is a warrior, where all of us has fought at that state level, been told no, and then gone back. But we want to honor Evitan. We have a native graduate honoring that we host yearly. And tonight is for Evitan.

And we would gift him an eagle feather if he was incarnate. He's here. And I'd like you to accept this, Clysta, from my heart, from our native family leaders who are in this space who know how hard it is to get our kiddos graduated and just support them, get them up in the morning, and a drum that's been gifted by one of our beloved native family leader's families, the Surebecks, who are Standing Rock. And then there are some gifts that are going to be coming as well. But thank you. Thank you so much for your bravery and for testifying today.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm going to move on to our scheduled communications portion right here. We're going to put up some quick rules around our public testimony. So I'm going to call everybody up here one by one. And we'll get started. First up, Amy Wilson. OK, no-- or Katie Wilson. So sorry. Katie Wilson.

Hello, members of the Highland School Board and everyone here. It's very well attended. My name is Katie Wilson. And I'm the General Secretary of the Transit Riders Union. And over the past year, I've been the campaign coordinator for a campaign called Raise the Wage Tukwila, which collected signatures this spring to put a ballot initiative on the ballot this fall to raise Tukwila's wage, basically up to the level of SeaTac and Seattle, the two cities in Washington that have established higher minimum wages.

And that measure passed this November at the ballot with 82% support, so pretty overwhelming. And I just wanted to talk a little bit about this because I think that the issues that Tukwila residents and Tukwila workers face are shared by people all around King County and especially South King County. And we would love to see Burien and other cities that are part of the Highline district follow and also raise their minimum wages.

So we built a broad coalition. We're really proud to have the support of not just the Tukwila Education Association but also the Highline Education Association in this campaign. And I think that obviously people who work in the school system, educators, know firsthand how poverty and economic insecurity hurt families and really impact children's education.

Several times during the campaign, we had the opportunity to talk to 12th grade civics classes, civic students, at the Foster High School. Many of the students that we talked to there were working minimum wage jobs themselves at South Center Mall. Many of their parents were making not much more than minimum wage. And we heard from them, just like we heard from so many people as we knocked on doors in Tukwila over the course of this year, about getting huge rent increases. I think people around King County have been getting \$200, \$300, and \$400 a month rent increases this year.

And so we were just really heartened by the level of support that we found in Tukwila for raising the minimum wage. And another surprising thing about the campaign is that we really didn't face opposition. We expected there was going to be a really big no campaign funded by big business. That's kind of what always happens when you do campaigns like this. But it was nothing, nothing at all.

And so I think that really should tell us all around the County that this is a good moment to do this. Public support is really high. And it's just kind of a no-brainer that the cost of living in King County is so high at this point that the statewide minimum wage is just not enough. So with this victory, the minimum wage in Tukwila in the middle of next year is going to rise to about \$19 an hour, which is around the same level that SeaTac and Seattle will be next year.

And so again, we would just love to support similar efforts in other cities, including Burien. And we hope that we can work with all of you and with the Highline Schools to help make this happen. So I'll end right there. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Emily Acquino.

Hi. My name is Emily Aquino. I use she/her pronouns. And I'm a teacher at Evergreen High school. And so I first want to say how thrilled I am that the bond passed. Evergreen staff and students have had this sense of inferiority for a long time. And deep down, we know that we're worthy. But it feels really good to have that be recognized and affirmed by our community. So thank you.

I'm here to talk about race and identity work and why I'm grateful that it's a priority at Highline Public Schools. In addition to teaching at Evergreen, I am also a product of the Highline Public Schools. I went to Parkside, Midway, Pacific Middle School, and I graduated from Mariner High School. And when I think back about my education, I'm just so grateful that the teachers that I had at Mariner exposed me to ideas and cultures beyond my own.

I read literature from around the world, Mishima, Solzhenitsyn, Achebe, Morrison, and yes, also Shakespeare. Having this exposure to different cultures around the world helped me become a more critical thinker and an empathetic person. Now as a language arts teacher, I think a lot about the metaphor of windows and mirrors. How am I offering my students windows? How am I exposing them to stories and experiences that are different than their own and giving them tools to talk about difference with understanding?

But how am I also offering the mirrors? How do I give my students opportunities to see themselves in the texts and read stories by authors who look like them, who have similar socioeconomic backgrounds to them, and who share their gender experiences? We have a true and rich diversity here at Highline. In my classes, I have students who are Vietnamese, Comey, Hmong, Filipino, Ethiopian, Somali, African-American, white, Native American, Mexican, Honduran, Hawaiian, Chamorro. And those are just some of the racial and ethnic identities.

I have trans students, non-binary students, male identifying students, and female identifying students. I have allistic students and autistic students and students with ADHD and students with PTSD. I have students who are atheists, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists. And so as students of literature, one of the things we talk about in my classes is intersectionality, which is a framework for thinking critically about how the parts of our identity overlap and shape our experience and shape our access or lack of access to power.

I feel so grateful that I have such diverse students and that they are so able and willing to talk about challenging concepts and to build community with each other across difference. As a white, middle class, cisgendered teacher in the room, I'm grateful that I'm able to talk about my positionality in a way that's honest and authentic, and as a result, to be able to build relationships. We build trust with students by acknowledging inequities and systemic racism and committing to change. Listening to our students and protecting them is central to our job as educators.

So today, I talked to some of my students. And I asked if any of them would like to share their perspectives here tonight. And two of my students in my University of Washington in the school literature class offered some things to say.

So the first student is Ethan Barrett. He's also a student [? PSSE. ?] And he said, "I have felt so supported by my school listening to me when I said I wanted to go by a different name. Even when peers disrespected me, I was protected. If I didn't have that support, I would not be safe. My friends would not be safe. It might be a small percentage of people, but that would be a lot of kids who would be distressed."

My other student, Soong Ty, said, "It's really important I'm represented in the curriculum because I need some sense of security. The violence young women face scares me. I need to know that teachers know I'm here and they care about what is happening in the world," end quote.

The identity work we do is critical for the safety of our students and the health of our community. So ultimately, I do want to say, we are so grateful for the new building. But I am even more grateful that I work in a district where instruction on race and identity is supported and integral to the work we do. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Next up. Kristin Plischke. I apologize if I butchered your last name.

Good evening, Dr. Duran and members of the Highline School Board and all in attendance. Thank you for this opportunity to speak tonight. Hello. My name is Kristin. I use she/her pronouns. And I'm a teacher at Evergreen as well. And I love my job. And my students are the ones that get me out of bed every morning. I am not a morning person.

When you walk into our classroom, you'll see safe space and unafraid educator signs on the bulletin board, colorful twinkle lights, and warm lamps, student artwork on the walls. You'll be invited to take a seat in the circle, where we connect at the beginning of every class with a land acknowledgment. Because you'll be there as our guest, we'll have a round of introductions, salutation name and pronouns. You might notice a progress pride flag, along with more signs indicating that all people are welcome and respected in our classroom.

Students will take turns sharing their intention, what learning they will focus on during the class period. And I will address my class saying, ladies and gentlemen and nonbinary friends, or maybe just friends or folks. In all of my classes, I have had one cisgender student ironically say they went by pronouns that did not correspond with their birth sex. He told the class that he didn't understand why we shared pronouns at all and thought the practice was stupid.

This might sound contentious. And I suppose it could have been. Instead, it was a powerful moment, not because his classmates and I coerced him to go along with the practice against his will, not because he was shamed for not enthusiastically embracing the LGBTQIA population norms because of some moral obligation. The conversation focused on the message that one doesn't have to fully understand or buy into or agree with those who use pronouns that do not correspond with their birth sex to honor a person's identity by using their chosen pronouns.

Being inclusive has not resulted in a surge of students suddenly jumping on this mythical queer bandwagon. Inclusivity, even these very simple practices are really non-negotiable for me as a teacher and as a mom with a nonbinary child. Queer students experience more violence, bullying, harassment, teasing, and physical assault than their straight peers. In one year, 86% experienced harassment at school, 61% felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, and 33% skipped a day of school in the past month due to feeling unsafe.

Between 10% and 20% of straight teens engaged in self harming behaviors compared to 38% to 53% of queer teens. 29% attempted suicide at least once in one year compared to 6% of heterosexual youth. 28% of queer youth have experienced homelessness or housing instability with higher rates among transgender and nonbinary youth.

It doesn't have to be like this. According to the APA and the US Department of Education, when Bush Junior was in office, LGBT students stand to benefit from school policies that counteract bullying and harassment, support the coming out process, and reaffirm the dignity and rights of students, of all students. There is so much hate and hurt, fear and frustration in the world today. Adults who spend their days with other adults are often pessimistic about the future. I am optimistic because I have the profound and humbling privilege of working with young people, our future innovators and problem solvers, critical thinkers, and diplomats, and our co-conspirators.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up is Renee Agatsuma.

Hi, everybody. My name is Renee Agatsuma. And I am also a teacher at Evergreen High School. Very excited that we are going to get a new building. I won't have possible sewage coming into the room. But I am also an Asian-American woman. And I am a science teacher. You might notice I have this "Not Your Model Minority" sweatshirt because that was something that was put on us by white folks after the Japanese-American people were coming out of internment. My family was interned. I went and visited the site where they were interned this summer.

But I wanted to talk about science education. And I really am grateful to be part of a district that allows us to teach the truth in science and to talk about real issues. My students, I want them to be scientifically literate, meaning that they are informed decision makers, they are critical thinkers, they are collaborative. Because no science is done by just one person.

No matter what people tell you or the names that we memorize, like Watson and Crick, they did not do things alone. They just got the credit for it. That's a power dynamic. And I talk to my students about that kind of thing, who gets the credit, who does not, why is that. A lot of it has to do with patriarchy, sexism, racism involved in our society.

So one of the things that's really important to me that we have been doing as a district is bringing into issues of justice into our science curriculum because science actually touches on everything. And one of the things that is really important is sometimes people think science is a value neutral. It doesn't say anything about politics. That's not true.

So scientists were the ones here who backed eugenics in the United States. It started here. And then it was taken up by Hitler. So they brought in their racism and then backed it up with their science. They looked at what they wanted to find, and they said this is scientific evidence that certain people are superior. So we talk about that.

We talk about biological sex and how chromosomes do not determine biological sex. We talked about-- which is an HHMI curriculum standard. It's part of thinking really critically about science. So you have XX, XY, that doesn't mean that you're going to have a penis or a vagina. You can have internal testes and an outside vagina. This is people who are born intersex. So biological sex, XX, XY is a spectrum.

Actually one in 20. So this is something that we talk about in our curriculum in the mitosis and differentiation unit because it actually has to do with how genes are turned on and proteins are made. And it's a lot more complicated than a simple biology might make you say.

And we also talk about environmental racism. And we look at evidence. And we talk about what happened in Flint and other places. And we look at the periodicity of the periodic table. And why was it that the lead got into the water? That actually has to do with periodic trends. That's the standard. We talk about the drug war. So I have been honored that Highline has allowed me to teach a University of Washington class neurobiology and drug addiction.

And when I talked to the University of Washington, they were very excited about me bringing in and talking about racism involved in the drug war. And I talked to the students about that. The drug war has always been racist. And we look at actual evidence. And so to summarize, I just want to thank you for allowing us to teach real issues and supporting educators in teaching real science and teaching the complications of it. Thank you.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

So I just want to do a quick point of order, please. So just do a quick point of order. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a board meeting. I am just going to ask our audience to please refrain from any outburst. The people that did sign up signed up for a reason. So we're going to give them the space to do that. Please be respectful of their time as they will be of view. And that's my ask of you, please. Next up, Heather Kurtenbach.

Good evening. Man, this time last year, I was at the White House introducing the President for the signing of the Infrastructure Bill. And I was not even near as nervous as I am now, so kind of weird.

[LAUGHTER]

So my name is Heather Kurtenbach. I'm a business agent and political director for Ironworkers Local 86, right up the road in Tukwila. First, I want to congratulate you all on the successful passage of your recent school bonds. Very exciting. So I'm here tonight on behalf of over 20,000 construction workers and their families across the region and the 19 affiliate unions in the Seattle King County building trades to thank the Highline Schools' administration for working with the building trades to bring a community workforce agreement to you soon for consideration.

We want to call the board's attention to this exciting legacy program that will help create economic opportunity for thousands of working people, particularly women, people of color, veterans, and those otherwise historically disadvantaged from the community. Really briefly, what a CWA does is it helps bring new entrants into the construction field through registered apprenticeships and training that will help bring more inclusion of women, people of color, veterans, and others who are disadvantaged into construction.

I, myself, am not a high school graduate. I have a criminal history. And I have benefited greatly from these types of community workforce agreements NPLAs. College was never an option for me. I couldn't even make it through high school. So I'm really grateful for my local and for having the opportunity to work on projects like building the new schools that Highline is going to be building. Let me see here. Where did I go?

So there are so many stories beyond my own. Lives have truly been transformed because of these programs, like mine. And I know that students in the Highline School District, although we all want them to go on and do great things in college and whatever, but college isn't for every kid. And I just wanted to echo that you can make a good living joining the trades as well.

So let me see here. And I'm not going to take up a bunch more time. I feel like I've gotten my point across. But we believe strongly that job sites, especially job sites around this area, King County, should reflect the community through our strong training programs and partnerships. The building trades are building the next generation of construction workers through our apprenticeship programs and in our local communities.

So I went through a registered apprenticeship. And I'm really grateful that I was able to do that. And I'm also the first female business agent that my local Union has ever had. And I'm one of two in the country right now for the Ironworkers International. So trying to shatter those glass ceilings, right? There was a time when I was out on those job sites welding beams and tying rebar. I'm grateful that I've gotten to where I am and I'm on staff now. But I'm all about bringing folks in and helping them have a better life. So thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Sarah Moore.

Hi. My name is Sarah Moore. I use she/her or they/them pronouns. And I'm a resident of Burien and the parent of a Highline High School graduate. And having seen Highline High School being rebuilt, I am so happy to congratulate all of you on the bond to have that happen to more schools. When students enter a school and the architecture tells them they're welcome, they feel welcome. They're more ready to learn. So congratulations on that.

I'm here today-- I'm a board member of Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden. And I want to talk to educators about trying to work on partnerships with the Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden. It is a local treasure. It's a small organization that was built on land that had been condemned by the airport and hosts gardens of local gardeners whose gardens were condemned by the airport and were move there by volunteers.

The Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden is looking for partnerships with students who are interested in work learning partnerships of any kind. And if you're interested, the email for them is, I wrote it down because it's long, highlinegardenfoundation@gmail.com. And it is a place to learn both biology and life sciences but also history. A great deal of local history is embedded in some of the garden spaces there.

I also currently work at the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. Obviously, gardens are part of who I am. And I want to reach out to any educators who have school gardens already and are looking for taking them to the next level. The Master Gardener Program is volunteer run. So matching a volunteer to a garden would depend on availability of volunteer people. But they are able to come and consult with schools about how to make those spaces more educational and how to talk about soil and microclimate and climate change, water conservation, keeping our waterways clean, genetic diversity, and pollinator health. So any of those things, if they're of interest to you, another email, this one's slightly shorter, would be king.mg@wsu.edu. Thank you.

Thank you, Councilmember,

[APPLAUSE]

Next up, Jeb Binns.

There we go. Good evening. Good evening, Dr. Duran, members of the school board, distinguished guests. How are y'all doing? I appreciate the garden comment. I was able to give my business card. We have some beautiful gardens built at the New Highline High School, which are in need of a master gardener. So shoot me an email. That'd be great. All righty.

I am Jeb Binns. My pronouns are he/him. I'm a parent. I'm a high school teacher. I'm a community member. And I'm an NEA Director for the state of Washington. And I am absolutely proud to be part of a community that passes bonds and levees. And I'm really excited that we did it on the first time because it took three for Highland High school.

I want to appreciate all of the work that went into that success. And I also wanted to make a very big and a very public thank you to a unsung bond hero. This person arguably worked more hours on this bond than any other person with a full time job. This person knocked on hundreds of doors, at least 50 with me, organized scores of phone and text banks, rallied scores and scores of educators to doorbell and to text and to phone, and worked tirelessly to secure the critical Martin Luther King Labor Council endorsement. This unsung bond hero is none other than Dr. Sandra Hunt, the President of the Highline Education Association.

[APPLAUSE]

We went to a wonderful event down on the Cove. And I was just waiting to be able to stand up and applaud and didn't get the chance. So you got it now. And we're recorded, so you can play it back again and again and again and again. Switching topics, this one's not quite as rosy. Switching topics is standards based grading.

As we take our first stumbling steps towards this change, your teachers deserve a technology tool that is up to the task. This current iteration of synergy is not it. Please help us. This rollout is rough. And it's perhaps the roughest rollout in my 21 years in the district. I urge you to dig in and figure out why. The system is inadvertently creating high stakes environments for testing every four to five weeks for students, where all of their work doesn't affect their grade, but a single outcome on a single day does. Please look in. Appreciate it. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Richelle Monahan.

Jeb, this is a little high. There we go. Thank you. Members of the board, Dr. Duran, my name is Richelle Monahan. I go by she/her pronouns. I'm a fourth grade teacher at North Hill Elementary, the mother of a 10th grader here in Highline, and a 22-year veteran of the Highland School district.

I'm here tonight to speak in support of our focus as a district on social emotional learning and instruction on race and identity. I have personally seen our students grow and thrive from being seen and celebrated for all that they are and all they will become. I wish you could have seen the faces of my kids light up when they heard the announcement that they would have the opportunity to teach the school about their culture. We are a school that values all of our students' backgrounds and identities. Students want to be known. And when they are known, we can meet their needs in meaningful ways.

I want to speak to you as a parent now. I am the proud mom of a trans child. They are caring, quick witted, and talented. This work is personal to me. SEL and IRI are difference makers. They are the difference between a child being engaged and being checked out, staying in school and dropping out, living and dying. I have seen firsthand the pain trans kids experience, social isolation, bullying, and rejection. It turns out coming out is not a "fast track" to the top of the pecking order, as I heard at the last board meeting. I'm hard pressed to think of a more absurd statement to be honest.

SEL and IRI are incredibly important. They are the salve for the infection of homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and racism that still pervade our schools. A student last year in my child's class laughed at them when they introduced themselves and their pronouns. The origin of this bigotry is no mystery to me. I heard the same laughter at the last board meeting as a speaker mocked the use of pronouns.

I want to share a few statistics with you tonight. 89% of trans students have thought about suicide. 40% have attempted suicide. We know that using chosen names and pronouns reduce the risk of suicide. So if my choices are reducing the risk of suicide or inadvertently giving a kid the idea that maybe they can choose their gender, I'm going to choose reducing suicide.

There's a woman named Kristina Olson, I believe. She's a UW grad. And she's a professor at Princeton. She's done some work on this. She's known for her work in gender studies. And you know what she found? She found in her 20 year longitudinal study, she's 10 years in, that when kids are supported by their school communities, by their families, they actually have similar depression rates to their peers.

So we know that the depression and the suicidality, the anxiety that we're seeing in kids, nonbinary kids, trans kids, that's not because they're nonbinary and because they're trans. That's because they're not being supported. That's because there are people in our society that are making them feel like that's not OK. And I want you to know that that's not OK with me. I want to see these kids feel supported. I want them to be loved. I want to give them every chance to be who they want to be.

And I'll tell you a minute about my child, my child who I love and adore and takes up every bit of space in my heart, that child is going to a new high school soon, in a few days, because despite the wonderful, caring teachers at Mount Rainier, the social isolation was too much. So off they go to a new school. And I can only pray and hope that there are adults there that care about this as much as I do and are there to help them grow and become everything they can be. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Benjamin Folgers.

Now it's too short. Good evening, esteemed board-- I've always wanted to use the word esteemed in a speech-- and Dr. Duran. My name is Benjamin Folgers. And I am the ELA Department Chair and current 10th grade teacher at Mount Rainier. I'm also a proud member and delegate to the MLK Labor Council. I come here today to say one thing-- well, many things, but one of them is that we need to-- first off, thank you-- but that we also need to do more to support all of our students and especially our queer youth.

This is my ninth year as a teacher, though it often feels like my 20th because of COVID and a list of other factors. But prior to teaching, I had the privilege to work at an emergency youth shelter in Chicago, located one block away from Wrigley Field. Go Sox, though. I'm not a North Sider. It served primarily Black and Brown youth aged 18 to 21. Most of those youth were also queer, trans, and some nonbinary baddies.

They were on the streets because they did not feel safe in their homes. Their families kicked them out. They didn't feel safe at school. And that shelter is lovingly called The Crib because it was like another home to them because they felt supported. They had adults there, like myself, that loved and cared for them and made it known that they were welcomed and loved.

But many of those kids also face struggles with their mental health because they were not receiving the support that they needed at their school. And we've heard a multitude of statistics here. And I'll share some more because statistics are never enough. Last year, 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide. 14% attempted suicide in the last year. Nearly one in five transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide. 36% of LGBTQ youth reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed due to either their sexual orientation or their gender identity.

I was shocked then. When I heard that, or rather read the transcript because I couldn't bear to really hear it, but when I read in the transcript that one participant mentioned that identifying as transgender or nonbinary was just the next fad in a long popularity contest, I just don't understand how you can know these data points and say that. How could you want to elect yourself into this harassment?

One positive aspect out of what our school and our district does is that when LGBTQ youth who found their schools to be affirming of their identities also reported lower rates of attempting suicide. And this figure is again reflected when those same youth live in a community that is supportive and accepting of them. And that community extends beyond the walls of their school and extends to their neighbors, which is all of you here. You have that difference.

I bring these facts forward because our students deserve more. And I ask that our board goes further. I ask that we enshrine this welcoming and this support for our LGBTQ and queer students into your board policies, into your equity symposiums. Everything that we need to do to support our queer kids is what we need to do to be supportive of them and to show them that they're loved.

Simply distributing, amongst all of our staff, safe space stickers to let students know, hey, you can come in here and you are welcome here, we will respect you, is enough. Maybe not. We can ensure that our curriculum also reflects the diverse faces in our classrooms, including our queer students. I have much more to say, but I have eight seconds left, four. So for the four, three, two, one, I just want to say thank you, and have a great night.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Katarina Schmidt. Katarina Schmidt?

Hi. My name is Katie Rica. I don't like public speaking. But I just feel like this is important. I'm a fourth grade teacher at Gregory Heights. I live two blocks down the street from there. And it is my pleasure to serve the families of Highline. I always say I get to work for my students and families, and I have the best bosses in the world.

My close friends who are not teachers always like to tell me how bad things are out there and how the world is going down the tubes. And I have to disagree with them. Because if our students are any indication of what is to come, then our future is in good hands. Students become more kind, more resilient, more thoughtful, and more impressive every year despite a pandemic. I can't believe that the world is ending if our children are getting better.

So to those people who are right now imagining a classroom full of white, straight, middle class students, that's not who's in our classrooms. And that's not who's filling me with hope for our future. More than 50% of our students and the families in my community that I live in are BIPOC. And that number is ever increasing in our schools and in the United States. In every community, there are LGBTQ students, students of all religions, incomes, and differing needs and abilities. And it is my pleasure and my duty to serve them all.

My job is to make sure that every student in my classroom feels comfortable enough to learn, regardless of their identity. But let me be clear. My job is not to make children comfortable. It is to push them, to challenge them, and make sure they grow, to empower all voices, especially those that have not been able to find their voice. To do this, my classroom needs to reflect the identity of my community, not mine. The voices that should be loudest are those that represent our communities, not mine, not yours, theirs.

So I am here speaking and trembling on behalf of the families who have not had a voice or are tired of using theirs to tell you that their children are extraordinary, are valuable, and are powerful. They are worth having a classroom, a curriculum, resources, and a teacher that reflects their identities. Is that work easy? No.

The system is breaking under the massive weight of change, inequity, underfunding, and burnout. My colleagues, especially my colleagues of color, keep leaving because someone else's voice is too loud or too negative or too violent or is just asking too much. But are the kids the problem? No. They're the best part of my job and they're what keeps me going.

So I want everyone to think about, is your voice the loudest? And if it is, does it represent the people in your community? Or does it serve your own interests? Is it helping our students? Or is it doing more harm? My students, fourth graders, know how to work together and be respectful to everyone, regardless of differing beliefs. I think we can do that, too. And my student, Dodwin, would like you all to know that they're also very cute and wonderful. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Michael Ross.

Good evening. My name is Michael Stein Ross. I'm a teacher at Maritime High School and a parent. I guess when it's-- I get emotional when people start yelling at other people. It's all right. I got three minutes to work through this. Don't worry. Imagine how our students feel. "Last week, we received a report involving graffiti containing homophobically abusive language in one of our student bathrooms. This was an attack on our GSA Alliance Group. The impact of this hateful action is disheartening and unacceptable.

At Maritime High School, we strive to create a positive school culture with the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging. We encourage all of our scholars to be their authentic selves. And we work to ensure that they feel connected to the learning environment. All learners deserve to be seen, to be heard, to be valued, and to be deeply understood.

There's no such thing as fitting in here at Maritime High School. You already belong just as you are. We welcome all sexual orientations and genders. We stand committed to speaking out against any harm or hatred. And I will tirelessly proclaim that he has no home here at Maritime High School." Those are the words of our principal, who sent a letter to families and students. And I just want to say I'm proud to work in a place that has leadership like that. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Next up, Sandra Locklear.

Let's see. Check, one, two. Good evening, all. Thank you for your service. I'm an alum of Highline High school and have teacher Ken Meyers to Thank for instilling critical thinking skills in me and my peers and for encouraging me to go to college. So that's why I served for 22 years as a music educator here in our Highline School district with all the student diversity that applies then and now.

Tonight, I'll be speaking on problems inherent in a particular aspect of Highlands health and sex education curriculum, that of gender identity. It's been stated by one of your board members that transgenderism isn't being taught in our schools. That's not true. Highline is teaching that boys can actually become girls and vice versa.

Blurring the lines between sex and gender was confirmed to me personally by one of my piano students, who came to his lesson one day very upset. He told me that his teacher had just read a book to his class called *I Am Jazz*, a story based upon a real life boy who decided to, quote, "become a girl." I took my students concern to heart, and I read the book myself.

Wow. *I Am Jazz* teaches that only by claiming to be the other sex can a child escape oppressive sexist stereotyping. It presents the unscientific notion that there is a "girl brain" and a boy body, as if that were scientific fact. It suggests that boys playing on the girls' sports teams is a liberating thing, yet renders invisible the feelings and concerns of girls. And rather than being the picture of health and self-realization that the story of Jazz tries to portray, completely missing is the harrowing realities of medical transition, including the complications and extreme pain of removing Jazz's private parts.

Nothing is written about the dangerous side effects of the use of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and the surgical mutilation of minors, all causing serious health problems, like disruption of brain development, increased risk of heart attack and stroke, infertility, bone density loss, et cetera, nada, not a word. The book *I Am Jazz* was shocking for an aware kid like my elementary piano student, and for good reason.

In adult words, *I Am Jazz* promotes psychology over biology. It promotes thoughts and feelings over biological sex and subjective reality over objective reality. We're all living through the societal mayhem resulting from the misogynistic redefinition of the word woman. Being a girl or woman is not an identity. Girls and women are females with double X chromosomes.

And here, board, is just a few reasons why you should consider the specter of liability. The US Department of Education received a record number of over 200,000 public comments against Biden's threat to dismantle Title IX. 20 states sued the Biden administration on its executive orders for "gender identity" to override "sex" in language and law. Individual lawsuits are cropping up in America as families grapple with the irreversible failures of so-called "gender affirmation." The suicide rate for kids that have medically transitioned is higher than not.

1,000 British families have sued the Tavistock industry for its profitable gender affirming medical malpractice. And Oct 24, Britain's National Health Service ended its gender affirming care model for youth in England. It eliminated the "gender clinic" and did away with "affirmation" in favor of more humane treatment options for our children.

Can the Highline School District please avoid itself the embarrassment of having to account for these failures, too? Classroom materials espousing gender supremacy don't belong in our district, confusing kids and steering them toward the brutal gender affirming child mill is totally unacceptable. Our kids deserve better, a lot better. Thank you all for your time.

[APPLAUSE]

Next up, Amanda Stanley.

Hello, everybody. Can you hear me? There we go. All right. My name is Amanda Stanley, she/her pronouns. I'm a math and computer science teacher at Highline High School. And I proudly support all my students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or gender identities. However, I'm not here to talk about that today. I'm here to speak about a sewage smell issue that has gone unresolved at Highline High School.

Not long after the start of the school year, we began experiencing some foul sewer smells in the Southeast wing of the school. These sewer smells are unpleasant and sickening to students and staff. Many students are highly sensitive to the odor and as a result have difficulty making progress on their coursework or focusing because they're feeling sick from the smell.

Teachers have resorted to using air fresheners that they have purchased with their own money. We have had plumbers come out to resolve the issue. Then it returns within just a few days. This makes it evident that this is a systemic issue with the building. Our building administrators have requested plumbers and sent multiple emails to facilities and capital projects to chase a solution for this issue, yet emails remain unanswered. And the issue remains unresolved. Highline High School needs a resolution for this problem yesterday. It is impacting the students, staff, and our learning environment in a very negative way. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Veronica Fairchild.

Hello. I'm Veronica Fairchild. I'm the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Coordinator at Mount Rainier High School. The aim of the IB program's middle years and diploma is to develop young people who recognize their common humanity with fellow citizens in their local, national, and global communities. There are 10 learner profiles that we strive to help students internalize in order to achieve this goal, thinker, inquirer, knowledgeable, balanced, reflective, risk taker, communicator, open minded, caring, and principled.

An IB student and teacher who is principled acts with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. Our students represent many identities. And they all need to be acknowledged, respected, and celebrated. As an educator, I show respect for my students by using the pronoun they have chosen for themselves, including references to a variety of ethnicities, religious backgrounds, and sexual orientations in my visual and written examples, and acknowledging the achievements of all groups while making an effort to showcase traditionally marginalized groups, such as LGBTQ+ and BIPOC, because marginalization is neither fair nor just.

The unknown is scary. As an IB school, we teach literature from all over the world. We make opportunities for students to engage with many perspectives. We provide space for critical thinking and reflection. The more our students engage with, think critically, and reflect on cultures, traditions, and perspectives different than their own, the less scary the world will be, the easier it will be for them to recognize the common humanity. Giving respect is not a zero sum game. Protecting another's dignity and rights does not diminish one's own. IB curriculum, creating a better and more peaceful world. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Tamara Vandenberg.

Actually, I'm reading a letter from a concerned parent. She couldn't be here tonight, so she asked me to read this. The LGBTQIA flag that stands in many of Highline's elementary classrooms is nothing more than a political statement about sex. Why is it OK for teachers and staff to display these flags in my children's classrooms? What is the statement provided by staff if my child asks them, what is that flag for, and what does it represent? Our staff members freely introducing sexual concepts to my children without my consent and with no regard to leaving that discussion to the family.

My children have come home and have asked me what these rainbow flags represent and what it means, especially since one of their teachers has a flag hanging. Their lanyard is in the flag. And their desk is covered with the symbolism. Which so much expression, they were curious. I've explained it represents men marrying men, women marrying women, along with men changing into women.

I struggle with understanding why you all consistently dismiss the validity of this point. Why do staff members believe that introducing sex to children as young as possible is good? Why do you endure to sexualize our children and make them ripe for pedophilia? You dismiss parents' concerns. It is simple. Please respect everyone in your classroom. Everyone pays for tax. And everyone in your school and classroom does not need to know and see your views on sex.

It appears to me that teachers and staff are pushing the sexualization of our children. You push sex into the minds of our elementary students earlier and earlier. Are you looking to be a welcome place for pedophilia? And that's going to be the next place they'll be, encouraging children into those relationships. A reminder to all teachers and staff, displaying porn, whether a drawing of sex or anything related, displayed to children under 18 is against the law. Most people in the general public are arrested for it.

I came to a clear understanding on how much you disregard and disdain parents in your recent talking sessions. There is no opportunity to discuss hardships and trials that occurred in the district. You ask for only successes. You dismiss parents, the real concerns about what was happening in their students classroom. You said, well, we're not in a discussion here. And you ask parents about the concerns of one asked parent about introducing sex. And you said that's not to be discussed. Another parent asked about not being notified of a child failing. And that was not to be discussed. You discussed other things, but not those things.

Most of you have children. How would you feel if you were told that the school can keep secrets from you about your child, that you do not have the first say in the education of your student, that you have no say as to when sex is introduced to your child? The majority of parents ferociously love and want the best for their children. You do not know our kids best. You will never know our kids best.

Respect the parents. Allow the parents voice. Stop dismissing every parent's voice that does not agree with your teacher's Union. The teachers are not the parents of our children. Did you know that in 1915, a book was written by DH Lawrence called *The Rainbow*. This features a lesbian affair between a student and a school teacher. To be clear for those who are unclear, this is pedophilia. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Andrea O'Farrell.

I recorded myself because I get emotional. Oh, please, can you start it again? I'd like to start out by saying my favorite podcast is called *Crazytown*. It's from the Post Carbon Institute. In season four, "Watershed Moments," they start every episode with the carbon dioxide concentration at the time in history they're discussing. We are now at 415 parts per million. For reference, 350.org, the climate activism group, reasoned that 350 parts per million would be a good place to stop the rise.

It seems to me, we're living in Crazytown. Corporate power has accumulated in the hands of the few. Income inequality is the highest in human history. We have mass extinctions, extreme weather events, political unrest, pandemics. We are living in a time of transition, when one world is ending and another is emerging. And it's chaotic. Our fossil fueled world is ending. And we must create a new one.

To quote Susan Phillips, executive Director of Climate Generation, "How will we overcome all of this dissonance to craft together a non-extractive economy? How will we, together, make a just transition away from fossil fuels to save the only home we have? What does solidarity look like for those of us living in the country most responsible for rising temperatures? Where can we bring joy and celebration to our movement?"

Our whole way of life is fundamentally going to change. People all over the world are realizing this. They're coming together to envision how to make the future more equitable, safer, healthier for all because the alternative is a nightmare. Young people need to understand what's going on. They need to be given the opportunity to shape the future. Getting started seems to be the hardest part.

When I got in touch with someone in the social and emotional learning department after training as a volunteer for Storm Fest, I wanted to talk with her about *The Work That Reconnects*, developed by Joanna Macy. It uses a spiral of practices, having gratitude, honoring our pain, seeing with new eyes, and going forth. She referred me to a science teacher.

It's not about the science. The science is clear. It's warming. It's us. We're sure. It's bad. But we can fix it. I realize this is hard for people to fathom, but we've got to be talking about it. I was told at Shorewood Elementary that I can't start an active health club as a volunteer because the insurance won't cover it. I tried making an appointment with the principal of Evergreen High School to talk about forming a club there. No response. I brought a letter with a bio and an article I'd written. No response.

I want to talk about the problem. I want to empower students to have active hope by learning and doing. Worldwide, a mind shift is happening. I want to help it along. The gist of what I hear and read from activists like Bill McKibben, Vandana Shiva, and others is that governments are not stepping up to the task at nearly the level needed, that while we still need to put pressure on them, we need to be working at a local level to bring our efforts back home.

An example of this here in the Highline School district would be to sign the Community Workforce Agreement to hire local pre-apprenticeship and Union workers, to provide opportunities here in the community. We need to strengthen community because we're going to need to depend on each other in the tough days ahead.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

The next step, Alex Myrick.

Parents entrust their precious children to the schools for several hours a day for about 180 days per year. This is a huge responsibility, which means you, the superintendent and board, have a huge job. Since no one is perfect, it follows that mistakes will be made. The big questions are, how serious are these mistakes, and will action be taken to correct them as far as is possible?

When the school district makes a mistake with students, it automatically moves on to the next group of students, often repeating those mistakes. It is the parents who are left to pick up the pieces. Public school boards were created to reflect the values of their community and to defend and represent the people, providing a bridge between the policymakers and taxpaying stakeholders.

You have a big job educating over 17,000 students. But each of those students has someone much more invested in them than you are. They need to be respected and informed. That's why I'm concerned about board policy 3211. In regard to student changing their gender identity, it specifies the child will decide if the parents will be told. It goes on to direct staff how to conceal those changes from parents.

The section on confidentiality refers to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act to justify this deception. But FPA plainly states that parents have a right to know of a child's request to go by a different name or to be treated as a different gender. If you don't have a court order revoking their rights, they must be honored.

The same board policy number contains several definitions. The first one is assigned sex at birth, defined as the sex a person was given at birth. Can we please get back to the science? No one has their sex given or assigned at birth. Sex is determined at fertilization. Most of you know this.

Most of you who don't know me. If you're skeptical, please don't dismiss me or forget it. Please just fact check me. You have several biology teachers on staff, on salary in the district. I have no idea where they stand on the transgender movement. But if you ask them, I am sure they will confirm that sex is determined at fertilization, not assigned at birth.

Why is this important? I am not merely being pedantic here. The author of this phrase invented it in order to prepare us for the concept that sex can be reassigned after birth. This is also a fallacy. A person suffering from gender dysphoria or someone who has been persuaded that they are transsexual can take cross-sex hormones with their own injurious side effects and even undergo surgery. The overlooked problem is that 6,500 genes are differentially expressed between males and females. Every cell of our bodies is encoded with XX or XY. The most of these unfortunate individuals can do is impersonate the opposite sex.

Johns Hopkins Hospital pioneered sex change surgery. They demonstrated that it brought no important benefits. They discontinued the treatment. It has been brought up that support is very important in the transgender population. What country do you think of as the most supportive of the LGBTQ population? How about Sweden? They did a study, a longitudinal study, which I'm partial to, and found that for 30 years post-op, transsexuals have a completed suicide rate 19 times that of the general population. Please change the policy, and change the curriculum. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, Patricia Bailey. Good evening, Highline School board members. IRI, a look-alike program to critical race theory, is present in Highline School district. Many people believe CRT is a study of the history of slavery, discrimination, racism, and the struggle for civil rights. Most people would agree these are needed studies in American history classes. However, CRT is the belief the United States is irredeemably racist and must be dismantled, including our founding documents.

CRT separates students into the privileged oppressor class and victim underclass based on skin color. The so-called reformers would have students of color believe they are permanently disadvantaged by the white supremacist power structures in this country. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of informed parents of all ethnicities in this country oppose CRT as being divisive and damaging to children.

Let's see how critical race theory holds up under scrutiny by looking at our United States governors over the past 20 years. The governor of Washington State was Gary Locke, a Chinese-American. The governor of New Mexico was Bill Richardson, a Mexican-American. The governor of Massachusetts was Deval Patrick, an African-American.

The governor of Louisiana was Bobby Jindal, an Indian-American from India. The governor of New York was David Paterson, an African-American. The governor of New Mexico was Susana Martinez, a Mexican-American. The governor of South Carolina was Nikki Haley, an Indian-American from India. The governor of Hawaii was David Ige, a Japanese Okinawa American. The governor of New Mexico is Michelle Lujan Grisham, a Native American. The governor of Oklahoma is Kevin Stitt, a Native American.

So far, we have shown CRT reformers are deceivers. And we haven't even gotten to the legions of mayors, representatives, and senators of color in this country. But let's look at others we recognize as people of color and are presumably hopelessly stifled in their potential due to the color of their skin. Russell Wilson, Whitney Houston, Bill Cosby, Sonia Sotomayor, Whoopi Goldberg, Stevie Wonder, Jimmy Hendrix, Bruce Lee, Denzel Washington, Oscar de La Renta, Morgan Freeman, Michael Skakel, Condoleezza Rice, Muhammad Ali, Michael Jackson, Kanye West, Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama. We could go on and on.

It is essential the CRT so-called reformers with their poisonous deceptions not be given any role in teaching our teachers. Those who seek to deceive children to believe they will never be able to achieve, contribute, and excel because there will always be some privileged pale person standing in their way is toxic to students. We want our children nourished in a supportive, cooperative, optimistic worldview, where they see one another as allies across all races, not adversaries as these enemies of children the CRT reformers would try to urge children to believe. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Next up, James Payne. Good evening, James Payne with two at North Hill Elementary. Your public records section is still broken. And until we start seeing quick results, I'll continue to bring this to your attention. Washington Public Records Act, or PRA, is clear. It's a strongly worded mandate for the disclosure of public records. According to the Supreme Court, our Supreme Court, the purpose of the PRA is, quote, "nothing less than the preservation of the most central tenets of representative government, namely the sovereignty of the people and the accountability to the people by public officials and institutions," end quote.

Additionally, the Court stressed that the language of the PRA must be interpreted by you in a manner that furthers this goal of ensuring that the public remains informed so that the citizens can maintain control over their government. Board, I recommend that you make certain that your superintendent and his staff are assiduously adhering to the law in general and in particular, the PRA. Remember, it's the citizens and parents who are sovereign and primary stakeholders here, not the district. These are our public records, not yours.

Now, along the same lines of preserving citizens sovereignty and your accountability to the people of Highline, according to the proposed legislative priorities agenda, you want to lobby Olympia to, quote, "allow increased diversification of school boards." OK, that sounds good. But as I've told you, what sounds good is not necessarily so. And this is one of those examples. So-called "increased diversification" is Orwellian newspeak, semblance and trickery.

Last year, President Garcia said the following when justifying this so-called diversity amendment, "For Highline to better serve our diverse community, we support legislation and initiatives to simplify the qualifications necessary to serve on school boards and to broaden the eligible candidate pool by eliminating the citizenship requirement." OK, board, that is not diversification. That is disenfranchisement of legal citizen voters, a horrible and unconstitutional idea. In this proposed legislative agenda, Highline will lobby Olympia for non-citizens to make decisions on behalf of our lawful, citizen children.

Board, this idea is totally reprehensible and deserves absolute derision. Non-citizens simply do not have standing to legislate for US citizens and to allocate our tax dollars. Encouraging non-citizens to participate in our political process is incredibly foolish, illegal, and contravenes our country's long held constitutional requirement of citizenship to hold political office and allocate public resources, for damn good reason.

As a citizen of this country who's actually risked his life to defend it, I find this obscene and disrespectful. US citizenship has real meaning, rights, and responsibilities. And you're attempting to steal our civil rights with this. Highline does not have a compelling government interest to broaden illegal alien voting rights. You do, however, have a compelling interest and a sworn duty to maintain the integrity of your legal constituents voting franchise.

Look, my previous Supreme Court citation aptly applies here as well. Rejecting this clause is nothing less than preserving the most central tenets of representative government, namely the sovereignty of the citizens and the accountability of the people by you.

Thank you.

You've got to get rid of this. You've got to get rid of this, folks.

Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

And last up, Katie Kressley. Dear Highline school board-- [INAUDIBLE]?

There we go. Dear Highline school board and Dr. Duran. Thank you for allowing so many of us to speak tonight. It's been a long 20 person rally. And that's what makes our community stronger. Everybody has an opportunity to be heard and be respected. Tonight, I wish to discuss parenthood, something that we all can agree on, and not just parental rights or preferences but parenthood.

We all know what this is. It's the lifelong bond between a parent and their child, just like Ms. Clysta Cole tonight and her son Evitan. It's a lifelong bond, and even after life, between a parent and their child. And it is something that we all share. Even those of us who are not parents had parents, guardians, or other family members who took care of us. Regardless, nothing can take away parenthood.

Unlike parental rights, parenthood does not end at 18 or 14 or 12 years old. We need a sense of security for families, students, and the parents. In fact, parenthood is such a fundamental right, the Constitution didn't bother to bring it up. There's nothing in writing that guarantees parents have rights because they didn't want to waste the ink and paper. Why waste it on the obvious? Parents are the primary stakeholders in their children's education and upbringing.

Sadly, these parental responsibilities and rights are being slowly eroded. In November 2005, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which is basically found for Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and Hawaii, they found in *Fields v. Palmdale School District* that the Meier Pierce right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children does not exist beyond the threshold of this school door. The court continued, "We conclude the parents are possessed of no constitutional right to prevent the public schools from providing information on the subject of sexuality to their students in any form or manner they select."

Parents have been stripped of their inalienable rights as parents to raise their children with a value system they choose. That means transgender, nonbinary, straight, white, Black, anything LGBTQ you can imagine, everybody, every parent, any religion that they choose. Here in Highland tonight, you heard a lot of this, teachers who think that parents have a right to know their little boy wants to be a girl may be punished if they happen to let it slip that the parents know.

Why is this? Perhaps the NEA, the National Educators Association, tweet from a couple of days ago gives us a clue. "Educators love their students and know better than anyone what they need to learn and to thrive." The NEA says they know, their educators know, that they know better than anyone, and that includes parents. Really?

This is why I was so relieved to hear that you, at the General Assembly of the WSSDA last month, added this permanent position to their governments supporting parents and family members, "Parents and families are important stakeholders in their child's education. Studies clearly show parents and family that are involved and engaged has a significant impact. Schools should reduce barriers to parent and family participation to improve connections, collaboration, partnership, and transparency." This is a big relief. I like it. Perhaps at the next WSSDA meeting you can tell them that maybe parents are the most important stakeholders in their child's education and upbringing.

Finally, I recommend you use some of those ESSER funds for tutoring. I think it would be a great thing. And at the next board meeting, I propose that you make sure that Director Van gets to be the president because he's already had two years as vice president.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

And that was our last speaker. I would like to thank the community for coming out and speaking with us tonight and sharing your thoughts. Unfortunately, the board will not be able to respond to you specifically. But we do have your contact information with that. All right. Let's move on to number four, our superintendent's update.

Yes. I'd like to invite our labor partner Sandy Hunt, President of the Highline Education Association, to share a few words with us. Welcome, Sandy.

We're getting a new order of stuff around here. So thank you board members, as always. Your dedication and perseverance is something I personally celebrate every time I stand up here. I hope you feel the love. Dr. Duran, we welcome you into our community and to the active participation of members of the community across the spectrum that love our students dearly.

This is Education Week. And I think I was asked to say a few words about that. I don't know if we're going to do a photo. I don't see Catherine here. Sometimes the teachers get up along with the other educators in the room to do that. But I was asked to share a little bit about American Education Week history. The NEA, the National Education Association, was one of the creators, along with the American Legion of the sponsoring American Education Week. And it came out of World War I. And the draftees they found were pre-literate, had not been-- 25% of them. And so in 1919, they began to seek ways to generate public support for education.

So the conventions of both the American Legion and the NEA subsequently adopted resolutions of support for a national effort to raise public awareness of the importance of education. In 1921, the NEA assembly in Des Moines, Iowa called for a designation of one week each year to spotlight education. And in its resolution, the NEA called for, quote, "an educational week observed in all communities annually for the purpose of informing the public of the accomplishments and needs of the public schools and to secure cooperation and support of the public in meeting those needs."

The observance of American Education Week occurred December 4th through 10th in 1921 as the American Legion NEA sponsors. And then they eventually-- oh, and then PTA became the sponsor. And then it eventually moved to the week prior to Thanksgiving. So Monday was Kick Off Week. And hopefully schools celebrated excellence in education by hosting kickoff events and activities.

Tuesday was Family Day. On this day, schools across the nation invite parents into classrooms to experience what the day is like for their children. Wednesday was Education Support Professionals Day. So I always like to remind folks to support our educational support professionals. And just talking with the Teamster leader today, she says the most important reason educational support professionals stay in the profession is they feel respected. And so I always ask people to reflect on, what did you do today to show respect for your ESP?

Thursday was Educator for a Day. I guess that's tomorrow. Community leaders are invited to experience the day as educators and the challenges of teaching and the needs of students, of course with the guidance of school employees. And my favorite day, Friday, is Substitute Educator Day. So for all of you heading back to classrooms, I really do encourage you to figure out a way to show that love for those substitute educators.

My personal goal is to get 40 more substitutes hired into Highline. So I have some materials I'm going to leave for you to hand out to the board for them to give out to their friends and family members who could-- even if they could substitute one day a week. We do have a hiring process to go through. That's very stringent. But we want to make sure that people know that we are looking for substitutes.

And for those of you heading back to your buildings, I do have signs to put out in front. I'm working with HR this week. And we're looking at trying to staff tables in those buildings that have the most openings that are being unfilled. So unfortunately, our teachers are losing their planning time sometimes multiple times a week in order to cover for substitute openings. And so a big push for us as a Union is to ensure that we have qualified, loving community members filling those positions when our teachers cannot be there. But congratulations to all educators in the room for Education Week. We honor and appreciate your service.

[APPLAUSE]

We're going to do a photo.

Yeah, if you'd like to take-- yeah.

I think we do. Our chief communication officer is here, Sandy.

Yay.

So educators and guests that came with our educators, please come up to the front. We'll take a quick photo. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And that concludes the superintendent's update.

Thank you, Dr. Duran. Moving on to school board reports, legislative reports. It looks like President Garcia is out. But on 10.1, if you guys please take a look at that for our intro item to look at our 2023 legislative agenda, that'd be great. We're going to move on to director's reports. I'm going to start with Director Hagos to my left.

I don't know if my voice is ready at the moment. I've been listening intently to all the folks in the room. And I'm really glad that you were all here tonight to share your opinions and your thoughts with us. Let's see. These past few weeks have been all about student led conferences and progress reports for our kids. And I just got to say, just this past Sunday, I met a father who has a kid at Tye. And he came from a different school district. And he said, quite frankly, this is the first time anyone has spoke and also not just spoke but found things for his son to do based off of his strengths.

It was very much a deficit based conversation in other districts. And it was rough for him and his son. His son was close to being a dropout. And for his son to be recognized for those strengths and given opportunities that match those strengths while also looking for strategies to fulfill and close the gaps around his deficits was powerful. This father was proud that his son is a Highline student.

And it just spoke volumes to the work that's being done across our school district, from our staff, from our teachers, all those behind the work from our district office folks who are putting in the efforts to identifying and clearly work through our Highline promise. I hear it from our families. And also, I had the privilege of participating-- well, no, I was an attendee at the Veterans Day event in Des Moines. And I got to also see our kids doing some leadership type work at that event. It was great.

We had an Eagle Scout who was leading his troop and got to do some work around presenting some information and then also bringing on veterans to share their stories about their lives and their experiences and the way that they served our country, as well as a girl who worked on perfecting her singing skills and talents to sing *The Star-Spangled Banner*.

And as I got the chance to speak with both of those kids, the girl had spoke so much about Maritime High School. It's the school she goes to. And she lit up. And she told me all these amazing things that she got to do. And right now, they're working on building a boat for the-- I think it's Burning Boat Festival that's happening on January 31st, I'd like to say. No, December 31.

But the point is she got the opportunity to do some hands-on experiences. And she spoke about the culture of the school and the sense of belonging she is experiencing within those walls. It is powerful. I've heard it from our kids. I've heard it from our families this past week about how proud they are that their kids are experiencing some things around our Highline promise. So I just wanted to share that really quickly.

Oh, and a part of our Highline promise is also the section where we talk about our kids should have the opportunity to be prepared for a future of their choosing. And I just want to state thank you to our veterans. You made that freedom and that choice available to all. So just a quick statement around that.

So I do want to talk a little bit about College Con. We had a great turnout for College Con. At Highline College, students and families attended interactive workshops on college and career options. They also got hands-on assistance with college applications and financial aid. This is a great resource for our students. And thanks to our secondary success in college and career readiness team for making this happen for our families every year. It was a great turnout, I hear.

Substitute Educators Day is this Friday, y'all. So substitute educators, they are lifesavers. And we want to take this opportunity to just say how much we appreciate our guests educators. They have an important role to play, keeping our students learning when their teachers have to be out sick or when teachers have an important professional learning opportunity.

We are always hiring guest teachers, as Dr. Sandy had mentioned earlier. She gave us cards to encourage that as well. So if you know someone who might be interested, please encourage them to reach out to our HR team. We love our substitute teachers. And we'd love to see more in our buildings. I think that was it. Thank you.

Thank you Dr. Director Hagos. Next up, Director Howell.

All right. Speaking of student led conferences, I attended my older daughter's student led conference last night at Sylvester Middle School. And I really appreciate the dedication of teachers who are staying late to make sure every student gets an opportunity to share their name, strength, and need in such a personalized way. My daughter was glowing. And it was really great to see how well supported she was by all of her teachers in helping to name what she's doing well. It's something I think, as a teacher, we need to do more of, is have students think about what they're proud of, especially around their learning.

So having said that, report cards will be coming next week. And you want to watch for those. Some students are really good at going to the mail around this time of year. And they're going to look a little different this year for elementary and some secondary schools. We've updated report cards to reflect standards based grading.

Standards based grading supports our commitment to knowing strengths and needs of students and provides a more equitable support to-- equitable approach to measuring student success. Teachers can develop more accurate and objective pictures of students' learning. Students are empowered to take ownership of their learning and their understanding of the content rather than just completion of assignments. And also, standards based grading gives students multiple ways and opportunities to demonstrate learning. So look for that. And if you have questions about standards based grading or what your student's report card looks like, I encourage you to talk to your student's teachers and/or administrator.

Schools of choice, remember that if you are interested in applying for a school of choice, the application process is open. There are many different options for students here in Highline. You don't just have to go to the neighborhood school to which you're assigned. It's part of our promise to know every student by name, strength, and need. So if you're interested in learning more, December 7th is an information night. And you will be getting details about that on Friday. And information for how to apply to any of the schools of choice is on the district website. The end.

Thank you, Director Howell. Director Alvarez.

I don't have much to add, but just a big thank you. Thank you to our community for passing our bond. People talk about feeling so prideful about their schools and their learning. And so I'm, again, just grateful for all the turnout and for passing the bond. That's it.

Thank you so much. I have a lot to report out tonight in regards to passing our bond with the most votes counted now, I believe at 98% counted. The approval rate for the bond is at 68.73%.

[APPLAUSE]

Yeah, applause. This is the highest approval rating for any Highland bond measure in at least three decades, and perhaps the highest one ever. Our records go back to 1986. And we've never seen such a high Yes vote on this. So thank you. But I want to just also reiterate what Jeb Binns said earlier, just a really big thank you to our HEA and Dr. Sandy Hunt, who spent their own time contacting voters and on weekends and evenings. So gratitude. Thank you so much for your help and your support in this.

[APPLAUSE]

[INAUDIBLE].

You can replay that over and over as well. Football, Highline High school, congratulations to the football team. They won their game against Washougal last weekend, so they advance to the state playoffs. So when you see them, send them just a lot of love and support.

That said, I had the opportunity to join Dr. Duran at Chinook Middle School this last Thursday to partake in their Veterans Day assembly. Their leadership team put this whole presentation on. And it showcased fellow staff members, fellow parents and grandparents as veterans. And the way they presented it, it just showed how much they cared. And I just want to thank Chinook and their leadership team for the invitation.

And then last but not least, I was able to attend the Highline School's Foundation Auction last Thursday, where they raised over \$60,000 for our students. So a big round of applause for them. And thanks for all that showed up and participated.

[APPLAUSE]

All right. That is it for me. Moving on to our consent agenda. Do I have a motion to approve the consent agenda?

I make a motion we approve our consent agenda for tonight.

I second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye. Aye.

Aye. Thank you. All right. We have nothing removed from the consent agenda. Now we're going to move on to action items. 8.1, motion to approve new Evergreen High School replacement project. Any questions or comments?

I have just a quick question. I probably know the answer to this. And I probably do. But more so about just we see that Evergreen and Tyee are both on our action items for the approval of the replacement projects, but we don't see Pacific Middle School. Could you speak a little bit to that?

Yeah. Happy to speak to that. And great question. So this is the Ed Spec portion of approving the construction for both Evergreen and Tyee. Because we're starting with those two schools, just because of not having space to have two schools of kids at Olympic, we couldn't put Tyee and Pacific at Olympic at the same time. We want to move the Ed Spec approval portion of Pacific Middle School closer to the start of construction so that it is current with that timeline.

Thank you, Scott.

Yeah.

Thank you. Any other questions? OK. Can I have a motion?

I move that the Highline School Board approve the educational specifications for Evergreen High School replacement project.

I second that motion.

Roll call.

Director Hagos?

Yea.

Director Howell?

Yea.

Director Van?

Yea.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Action 8.2, motion to approve the new Tyee High School replacement project. Any questions or comments on that? I hear none. Can we have a motion, please?

I move that the Highline School Board approve the educational specifications for Tyee High School replacement project.

I second that motion.

Thank you. Roll call, please.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director Hagos?

Yea.

Director Howell?

Yea.

Director Van?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

All right. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Action item 8.3, new motion to approve Resolution 17-22, purchase and sell agreement for a 66 foot strip of land at Camp Moskowitz. Any questions or comments?

It's just exciting.

[LAUGHTER]

Thank you. Can I get a motion, please?

I move that the Highline School Board approve Resolution 17-22, purchase and sale agreement for the 66 foot strip of land in Camp Moskowitz.

I'll second that.

Roll call, please.

Director Van?

Yea.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director Hagos?

Yea.

Director Howell?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Action item 8.4, motion to approve annual Perkin's grant for CTE. Any questions or comments for this? As I see none, can I please have a motion?

I move that the Highline School Board approve 20-22-23 Perkin's grant and the 21-25 CTE four year planning, formerly known as district wide plan?

I second.

Roll call, please.

Director Howell?

Yea.

Director Van?

Yea.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director Hagos?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you very much. Now moving to item nine, intro and action items. This is a new one, new motion to approve Resolution number 1522 for recertification of debt service fund excess property tax. Any directors have any questions? I do have a question. So if that guy-- come on up. You're the next person on *The Price is Right*.

Becca, thank you so much for coming up here. This is on intro and action, just some really high level around this. Why is recertifying the district tax collection now? And what is the impact as a taxpayer? And why is this different from what we led to believe before the bond election?

Well, good evening, Director Van and Dr. Duran and board of directors. Thank you so much for that question. So every year, we have to certify our bonds and the levy collection in order to pay back those bonds. And so this is actually very exciting for me because for us to recertify means that we have passed this new bond in favor of it. So we are voting to affirm the vote of the people, which is in favor of the bond. So on October 19th, you voted to recertify the collection of the past bond. And in that meeting, you have also acknowledged that if this bond were to pass, you would need to recertify it. And so that's what we're doing tonight.

Thank you very much.

I just have one question. What would happen if we were to not approve this tonight?

Then that would mean that you are not affirming the vote of the people because the money needs to be sent to the County to start collecting on the moneys that will be charged to the people for the tax collection. So to not certify is to not affirm the vote of the people.

Thank you.

Thank you very much. Any other questions? Any follow up questions? Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

OK. Question is answered. Can I please get a motion?

I can move the motion. I move to approve Resolution number 15-22 for recertification of debt service fund excess property taxes in the amount of \$60,250,000.

I second.

Roll call, please.

Director Alvarez?

Yea.

Director Hagos?

Yea.

Director Howell?

Yea.

Director Van?

Yea.

This motion passes four to none.

Thank you very much. Now moving on to item number 10, intro items, 10.1, motion to approve 20-23 legislative agenda. And then 10.2 was removed. And we're going to add that back into future agenda once some things get solidified on that. 10.3 is motion to approve a non-annual match endorsement and limited certifications for 22-23. Intro item 10.4 is to motion to approve the annual readiness to learn partnerships. So if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Dr. Duran and cabinet. And we can get those questions answered. And then number 11, any items added to the consent agenda? I hear none. And then we're going to move on to unscheduled communications.

Did you hit 10.4?

Yeah.

Thank you.

All right. We're going to move on to our unscheduled communications. We're going to put the rules up there. First up is Tim.

Not at the podium yet. Hi. My name is Tim. I am a parent here in the Highline School District. I had one week of sex education when I was in high school. I have no idea what a state mandate looks like. I have no idea what sex education looks like for an elementary school kid. But it seems to be our perception now that it's a state mandate that we teach kindergartners, first graders, second graders, third, fourth, fifth about sex.

The lady that left earlier was actually referring to a situation that happened a couple of weeks ago where I asked superintendent Duran what sex education looks like for an elementary school kid. My concern is by bringing in sex education you are actually introducing sex to a child. We are the adults. We are the parents. We are the community. It's our job to protect our children.

Superintendent Duran was unable to answer my question of what sex education looks like for an elementary school kid. But he was very nice, and he passed on my information to the health sex education person that handles this. His name is Derek Severson. And I had a 35 minute conversation with him. Multiple times in that conversation, he stated it's a state mandate. They passed a bill.

He referred me to go to their website. You guys are going to want to hear this. This is what I found. "It is a special preparations beginning for this unit knowing your state and local guidelines. It is important morally and legally that you follow the guidelines established by the state superintendent and your district school board."

OK.

Listen, this is it.

Tim.

"Essentially--

Tim.

--in Washington--

Tim.

--the state superintendent--

Excuse me, sir.

--leaves decision--

Tim.

--about whatever to teach sexuality up to the--

Tim. Tim.

--local school board."

Thank you very much. Thank you.

If somebody is--

Thank you very much.

--getting sued--

Tim.

--it's not the state.

We can--

It's the school board.

I appreciate it.

I'm talking about bringing sex education--

Hey.

--to children.

Please.

Kill the mic.

Children.

Please stop. I'm going to--

Don't all you work for the school district?

Point of order, please. Thank you. Next up is Brandeis Trenholm.

Hello, everyone. I came here to talk about inclusion. But guess what? I am not going to talk about that because people need to hear the truth. Do you want to know what sex education looks like in my classroom? Do you want to know? Are you ready? OK. So I teach students about their bodies, about how to notice signs if you are not feeling well, and how to advocate for yourself if something is not going well in your body.

I also teach them how to feel loved and secure in all of their relationships and what loving and secure relationships should look like. That's what I teach. I also teach them about how to make friends and how friendships work because in fifth grade, they're going through a lot of changes emotionally, socially, and maturity as far as hormones go. And so a lot of the time, they're having a hard time making friends because everybody's changing and they're very self-conscious. And so I need to teach them that it's normal, and it's OK, and the friends you have right now, you might not continue to have, and that's OK.

I also teach them what is safe touch and what is not safe touch. It's a very important thing. I teach them the proper words for their body parts so that that way when a student comes in and says, my uncle touches my cookie, I know that it actually means a food and not any private parts so that we can help them if they are being touched inappropriately or if their uncle is just stealing their cookies.

I also teach my students about sex, as in the parts that they have and how to properly take care of them, keep things clean, things like that. And this could be what parents teach kids at home, but it might also not be. A lot of my students are very uncomfortable asking their parents questions. And so it feels a little bit easier to come and ask me because I have created that safe space with my students. And maybe some of those homes that they go home to are not as safe. That's what sex ed looks like in my classroom. Scary, isn't it?

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

All right. So that concludes our unscheduled communication. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

I make a motion we adjourn.

I second.

All in favor.

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Thank you, everybody.