

NORTH THURSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Community Conversations
Meeting the Needs of Individual Students in our Latinx Community
Tuesday, January 12, 2021
5:30 p.m.
Remote Attendance

School Board President, Gretchen Maliska welcomed the attendees to the district's Community Conversation: Meeting the Needs of Individual Students in our Latinx Community. This Community Conversation ties into our Strategic Plan: Goal 4: Continuous Growth – All Students, All Subjects. This is our big picture map within our district on how to best serve our students. During COVID, many issues have been presented, but tonight our intention is to focus on our Latinx Community. We are hopeful that you will share your ideas, experiences, and recommendations to help our district better serve our Latinx and Spanish speaking students. We also have representatives from our community programs with us tonight so we can identify opportunities to bridge gaps between the work of our district and our community resources to better support our families and students. Our intent tonight is to listen deeply as we participate in a community café conversation which will be led by some of our parents and community leaders. To start this conversation, we will share some of our district data and hear from some of our panel members and then engage in breakout conversations. Our Board of Directors are here tonight to listen inside of your breakout rooms: Graeme Sackrison, Mel Hartley, Dave Newkirk and Chuck Namit. We will work side-by-side with our two leaders:

- Amber Huffstickler: a community member who serves on the district Equity Advisory Team, she is also facilitating our new Parent Leadership Team through an organization called, *Supporting Partnerships in Education and Beyond* and she served as co-chair on our Multicultural Action Council.
- Claudia Rodriguez: A Mexican immigrant, former ELL student, US Army Veteran and mom. Her son Zyon graduated from RRHS and is a sophomore at SMU. Her son Noah attends Aspire MS. She has been an NTPS volunteer and the volunteer coordinator at Meadows. Claudia has a B.A. in Elementary Education is currently a graduate student at SMU earning her Masters in English and English Language Learning. She serves as a substitute teacher and interpreter for the district and is part of our new parent leadership team. Claudia is committed to providing equitable access in education and advocating for native language retention for all students.

Gretchen continued, we also have many of our parent leaders here to help facilitate and gather your thoughts in our breakout sessions. I am so grateful you have taken time out of your day, your schedule and your full life, especially in COVID times. Thank you for being here!

She turned the conversation over to Amber and Claudia.

Amber Huffstickler welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining. She shared that there would be English to Spanish consecutive interpretation during the meeting. So, she and Claudia would both be hosting the meeting. Claudia stated that during the event, the hosts would not tolerate disrespectful or disruptive behavior that would take away from the conversations. Hosts have the right to remove anyone who doesn't comply.

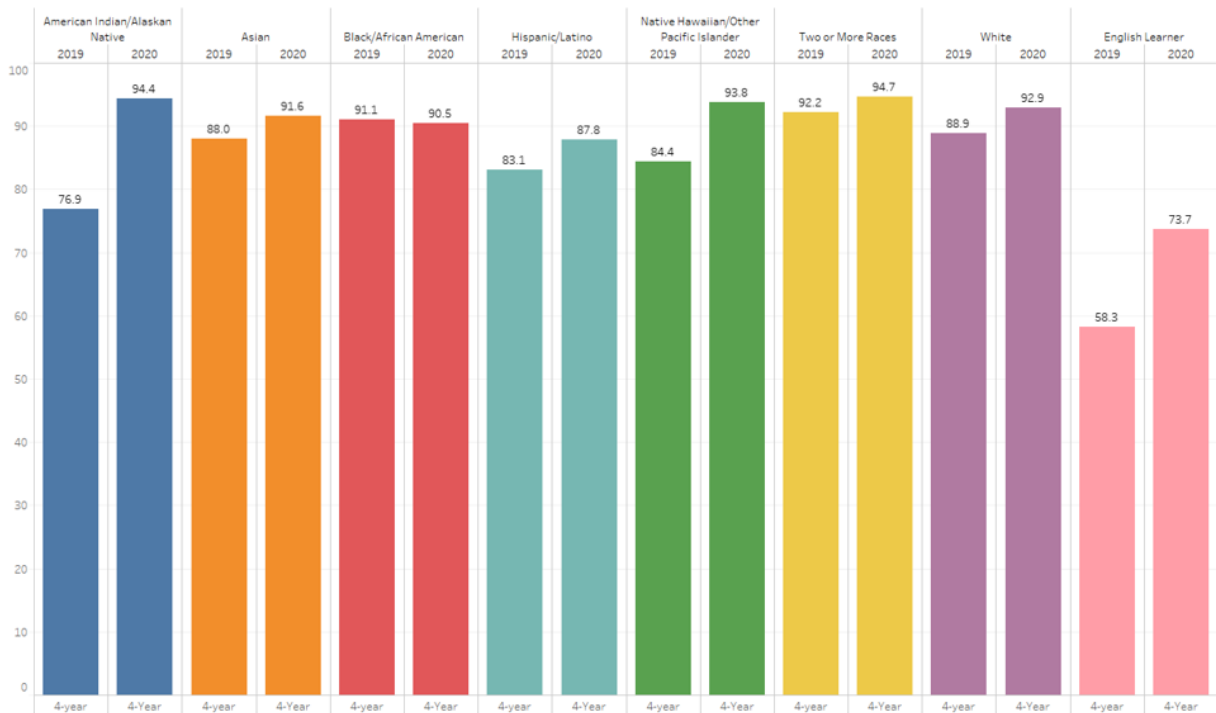
Amber shared that tonight the focus would be on Latinx identifying and Spanish speaking students, but when we focus on any group of students it benefits all students. This is just one of many conversations that we are having about equity.

Amber read the district land acknowledgement, stating that before we begin, she wished to acknowledge that North Thurston Public Schools resides in the traditional lands of the Nisqually people. The Nisqually have lived on and cared for this land and these waterways since time immemorial. We make this acknowledgement to open a space

of recognition, inclusion, and respect for our sovereign tribal partners and all indigenous students, families, and staff in our community.

Amber clarified that when we say equity, what we are talking about is each of us getting what we need to survive or succeed. That means access to opportunity, networks, resources and supports based on where we are and where we want to go. Amber shared that Sarah Rich would present some student data to plant some seeds for conversation about how to best support all of our students and specifically tonight how to support our Latinx students.

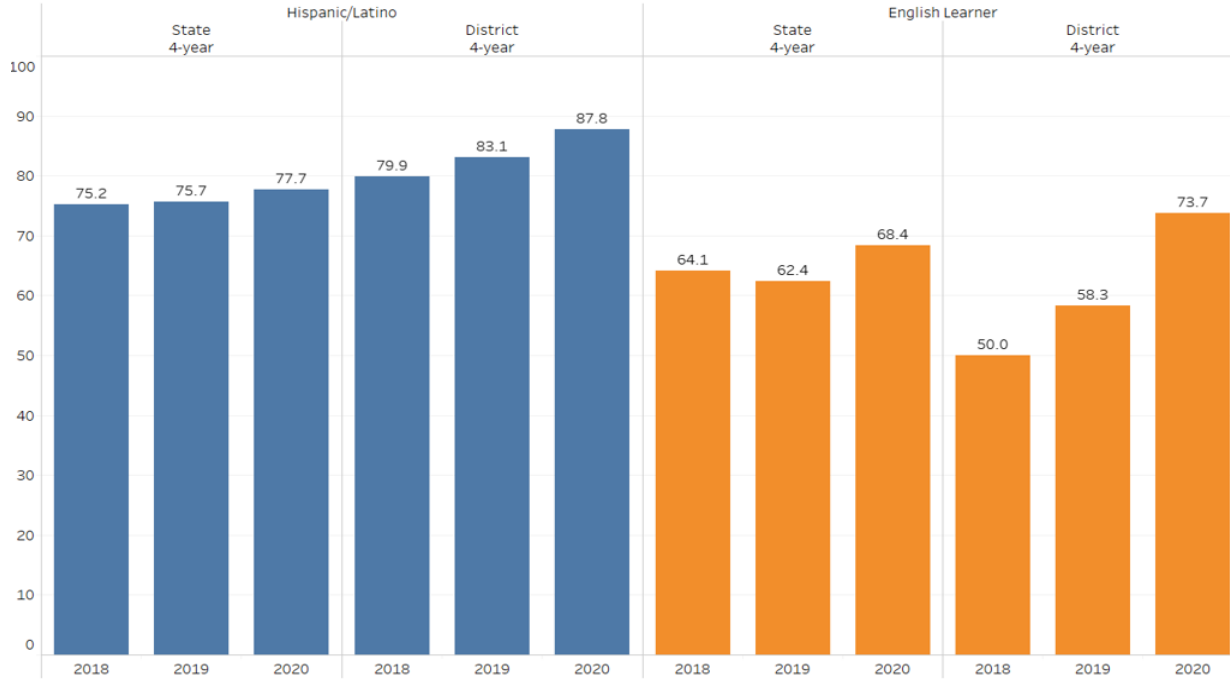
NTPS 4-Year Grad Rates, Classes of 2019 and 2020



Sarah Rich, Executive Director of Student Achievement shared that the district monitors a lot of data to assure that equitable opportunities are being presented for all, and where the district is not yet achieving equity, it provides the opportunity to use data to check progress. She selected a small number of data points to share this evening to demonstrate how the district is meeting the needs of Hispanic, Latinx, and English Learning students. It's important to know that while we are talking about numbers, we know that individual students make up every statistic we share, and we work with them individually to help support their success. The slide shared presents graduation rate data.

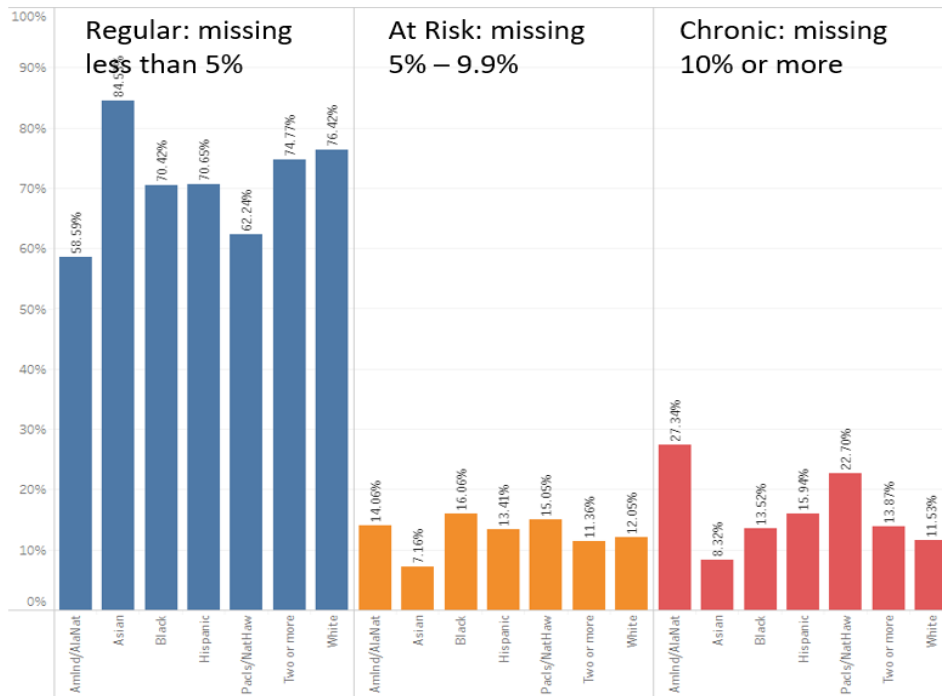
Graduation rate data is an important goal in our strategic plan: Goal 5 outcome b: increased graduation rate for all student groups. You can see in the light blue bars that in the Class of 2020, 87.8% of students who identify as Hispanic/Latinx graduated in 4 years. Also, for the class of 2020, 73.7 percent of English Learners graduated in 4 years, as shown in pink. English Learners are one group that we monitor very closely, and our goal is a 95 percent graduation rate. As a district we really stress the importance of continuing to work with students beyond their four-year graduation date until they reach 21 so we can assure they reach graduation.

Closer Look at Hispanic/Latino and English Learner Graduation Rates



Sarah then shared a slide comparing the NTPS Hispanic/Latinx and English Learner Graduation Rates as compared to the state rates. District rates are 10 points higher compared to rates statewide. For English Learners, the district is currently higher than the state rate, but in the previous two years the district rate was lower than the state average for English Learners.

Attendance Rate Quarter 1, School Year 2021



The last slide presented included Attendance Data. Sarah shared that the district monitors the attendance rate because it is a good reflection of how connected our students feel to the school community and also because we know there is a strong correlation between attendance and achievement. This is also guided by our strategic plan, Goal 2 outcome b - increased percentage of regular school attenders. This slide shows attendance during Quarter 1, this fall, which was during COVID remote learning. Students count as attending if they participate in instruction either in a “live” session or by logging in later in the day; submitting assignments, or communicating with their teacher. Our goal is that 75% of students are “regular” attenders, meaning they miss less than 5% of school. You can see in this slide that almost 71% of our Hispanic/Latinx students are regular attenders. While it is not shown on this slide, another piece of data is that 67% of our English Learners had regular attendance compared to 75% of non-English Learners.

Amber thanked Sarah for the information and introduced the panelists for the evening. She explained that the panelists would be responding to the data and sharing their experience with equity.

Panelists:

- Martha Arana, NTPS Parent Leader
- Julio Rios, Executive Director of CIELO
- Gaby Arellano-Villegas, NTPS Student
- Wendy Cooper, NTPS Teacher
- Kate Frazier, NTPS Director of Equity and Languages

Martha Arana shared that she has four students in the district and is a part of the parent’s leadership team. Tonight, as a panelist, she talked about the graduation rate. She shared that the gap may be being caused by discipline. She shared that it is her belief that Latinx students are disciplined differently than their classmates. Latinx students have a higher rate of discipline and that the discipline is more harsh than other students. That will affect students because they will get suspended if they do something small in class, they can be taken out of class which means they are missing classes. If they get suspended, they are also missing classes - they are missing opportunities, and it also keeps affecting them because they will see the difference - that they are not treated the same. That also will contribute to them feeling not welcome at the school or not included. She shared that she felt that the discipline could be part of why there is a gap in the graduation rates too. Martha shared that another factor she believes is important is the lack of representation. There are hardly any minority teachers in schools, so she feels that students do not feel well represented. A majority of the curriculum taught in schools is not for them. The curriculum is not thinking about Latinx students or about minorities. Also, how they get evaluated – how they are evaluated could be different depending on the teacher. There could be some bias in positions. Students need to feel welcome and represented and that they belong in school. If they see more teachers that they can feel a connection to that will help in their academics too.

Julio Rios spoke to graduation rates and absentee rates for the students. He shared that his experience may be limited. As an immigrant he arrived in the United States around twenty months ago. He is able to speak both as someone who is experiencing what it is like to come from another country and arrive to a different environment – and also as a leader of an organization that is working to build three aspects that are our theory of change, a theory to achieve a better community which is building up the community for Latinos, giving them tools to find self-efficiency in order for them to achieve leadership in the community. One aspect that is important to CIELO is to model cultural humility, that is not assuming anything from anyone and spending the time to get to know that individual. Not because we are Latinos, we are going to assume that we know and understand what our journey is. So, whenever we are talking about graduation rates and we are talking about being absent from school – we need to be able to spend time with the individuals and know their families. One of the things that we have been able to learn is that for Latinos time is not money, time is a relationship. We need to learn to understand this so we can get the trust of families so that we can understand - what are the dynamics going on in the families that are producing the results that to us, are numbers - which is graduation rates and also absentee rates. Relating these two items to what we already know are the obstacles. He expressed appreciation for what Ms. Martha said, all of them are a little bit aggravated as we started living in the pandemic. The obstacles that families were

already living with were just exacerbated. Whenever parents and families already have to navigate a school system, as a leader in CIELO, he shared that his organization has to support those families and relearn the system that they were living on. Sometimes, the meaning of going to school is not the same because families are living in survival mode and school really doesn't mean a lot when you are trying to make ends meet. You as a student are not only focused on your education, but you are also focused on the survival of your own family. So just resonating with what was said, representation is so important so those voices can be heard and understood. It's not only translation it means being able to meet those individuals where they are at so that they can be understood.

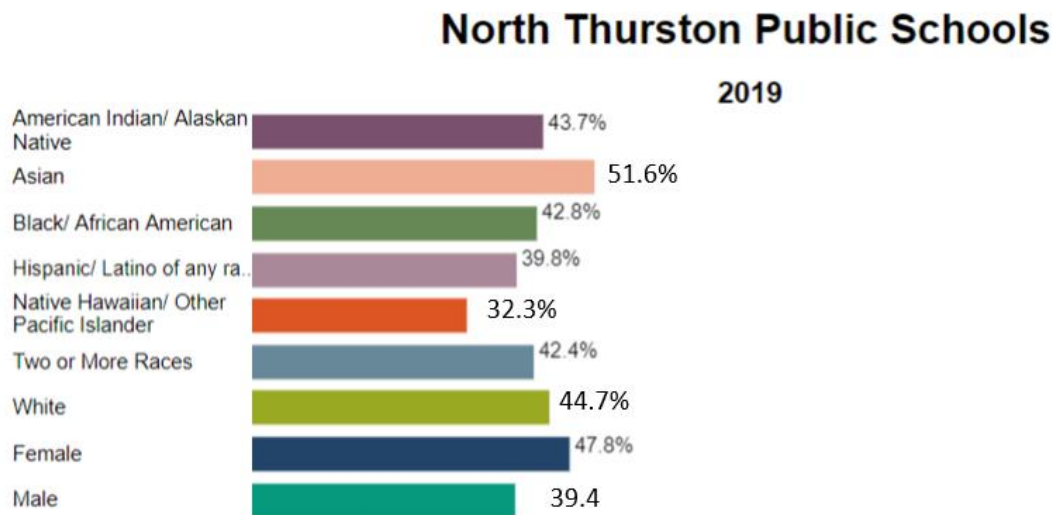
Gaby Arellano-Villegas shared that she is currently a Junior at River Ridge High School and mixed Hispanic. She spoke to the attendance rates, sharing that in her family her dad works early in the morning so attendance might be a problem for many Hispanics due to both parents leaving for work early in the morning and having to get their siblings ready for school as well. Regarding the graduation rates, she noticed that last year the graduation rates went up a lot and that was due to COVID and also there was no state testing last year, so she wanted to acknowledge that.

Wendy Cooper is an ELL teacher at Lacey Elementary and Olympic View Elementary. She focused on the graduation rates for ELL students. While happy to see the graduation rates going up there are some things to see in there because of COVID. She wondered how good the data was going to be once we get back to something regular. When she looks at the data it is important to monitor closely the outcomes especially with the long-term ELL students. As a district, we could start as early as elementary school. Some students become long-term ELL students and keep going in the system and it seems never ending. She shared that she feels the district as a whole has a lot of resources available to parents, however she feels that the parents do not know how to reach out to those services, and they do not know how to use those services. She shared that she spends a great amount of her time explaining to the parents where to go and how to reach out to all of those services. She shared that the services are there, but just translating something doesn't make it good. With translation on the website - even though it is in their language they don't understand what it means. It's important to make relationships with parents. Parents can be very timid, they don't speak the language, they feel like they aren't going to fit in. They are afraid and don't even know what to ask because they don't know what is available to them. Wendy shared that she feels it is very important to make a better effort to reach out to the parents to make them feel that they can come to us. She would also like to see more dedicated ELL counselors who are closely monitoring those students and making sure the students are taking the classes that they need and not just waiting until the last year. It is really important. Wendy clarified that by dedicated counselor she doesn't just want the students given a list but explaining the different options that those students have, to pursue higher education after high school. It is vital in the Latinx community because most parents don't know about that.

Kate Frazier, Director of Equity and World Languages spoke to the data point for Dual Credit for Students. She explained that dual credit allowed for high school students to earn high school credit and college credit at the same time. She shared that when you look at the data across the board with all of the student groups, we show lower participation in comparison with the state, and it is significantly lower with our English Language Learners who are accessing dual credit options. She shared that the district has been having conversations about how to increase access, how to increase courses, how to increase enrollment. She shared that she is wondering about communication as a district and what we can do differently to ensure that students and families know about this opportunity - she also is wondering about students who are here tonight who have been enrolled in dual credit courses, what their experiences have been if they have taken one in the past or currently. She would like to see continued collaboration moving forward to increase participation.

Dual Credit School Year 18-19

What percent of high school students completed a dual credit course, by student demographics?



There are programs that allow students to earn credit for their high school diploma and college at the same time. The programs are called Dual Credit programs. The Dual Credit rate is the percent of students completing at least one of these classes. This includes, Running Start, CTE Dual Credit (formerly Tech Prep), College in High School, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Cambridge International. Students can enroll in more than one type of dual credit course.

Amber shared that the group would break out into small-group conversations. The questions for discussion were posted in the chat and there would be a bilingual facilitator available in each of the breakout rooms for participants to answer in Spanish or English. There would be 5-6 people per group, and they will have 10-12 minutes for their discussions. The questions for discussion were:

1. What stands out from the data that was presented and what the panelists shared?
2. What stories would you share to add texture to the data?
3. Feel free to share other questions you may have.

Amber shared that in the small groups there would be board members or cabinet members that would be listening, but not participating in the conversation. Breakout facilitators would take notes to share back to the district for review following the meeting.

The meeting returned to the full group following the breakout groups and welcomed the student panelists.

Student Panelists were provided a prompt for discussion: If you had \$1,000,000 to invest in your school so that every student could achieve their personal and academic goals, how would you spend it and why?

Student panelists:

- Rigoberto Vara-Martinez
- Gaby Arellano-Villegas
- Sinai Flores
- Jose Torres-Caire
- Alex Hinojoza
- Ulisses Hinojoza

Sinai Flores, a Junior at North Thurston High School shared that she would try to save some of the money for school events so that it could include all students - not just Juniors and Seniors but all students of all different ethnicities. She would also use some of the money for programs for students who need help with English, ELL students to help them learn how to speak English in a more intimate way, like a one on one so that they can really grasp the stuff. Sometimes in a class its really hard with all of the students. She would also provide additional interpreters. In her school there are two or three teachers who are ELL, but that is really difficult considering how many students there are. They can't really teach all of the students at the same time. She would like to see one English speaking teacher in the class and one interpreter that speaks the language of origin of the student.

Alex Hinojoza, a Sophomore at Timberline High School shared that he would also like to have more interpreters because he had a friend last year who didn't speak much English. Alex had to help his friend with instructions in class and it made it hard to pay attention to what the teacher was teaching. He would also like some of the money to be used for school supplies because some families don't have a lot of money and students could have better supplies for school. He'd like to have some of the money for transportation because some of the bus routes don't go near their houses and with parents leaving early for work it would be safer for students.

Jose Torres-Caire, a Senior at North Thurston High School would invest the money by giving all of the students in the school high speed internet. For a family of four with a sister on her Chromebook, a mom on her phone, and a little brother watching Netflix that could be the reason why you have a bad connection. When every member of the family is on the internet you can get logged off of a meeting or have an uploading problem.

Rigoberto Vara-Martinez, a Freshman at River Ridge High School shared that with the money he would invest in families who have kids with mental problems and in some families where students have problems with their families. Half of the money would go for student scholarships.

Gaby Arellano-Villegas, a Junior at River Ridge High School shared that a million dollars isn't really anything, but if she had that money, she would give each student a full four-year scholarship to attend a school of their choice in any state. Many students and families can't afford to go to college due to the cost of tuition and supplies – also sometimes if it's a college that's far due to dorm or housing.

Ulisses Hinojoza, an eight grader at Komachin Middle School said that if he had a million dollars the first thing he would do would be to open school events for students in need and provide school supplies, food, and clothes. He would also increase bus routes noting that he has friends that live pretty far and can't afford to move schools so they take public busses to go to school and that's not safe for all of them because there are people who could harm them. Other things he would do with the money would be to get tutors for people who don't really understand – people who speak Spanish or other languages. He has multiple friends that he helps because they don't know how to reach out to get help. He would also help students with special needs, he feels like people put a title on them and think that they can't reach far but he has a friend that he plays with – he plays games with him and he is really, really good. He can't really talk much but he is really good at games. People really underestimate people with disabilities.

Amber expressed that she wished she could listen to the students all night and thanked them for their participation. She then handed the meeting over to Gretchen Maliska to close the conversation.

Gretchen thanked everyone for bringing their expertise and experiences to engage in such a constructive and open exchange. She shared that by being here today you've played a significant role in working through an open and inclusive process to improve our district. Gretchen explained the NTPS Board of Directors has a work session scheduled for Thursday, January 21 to process all of what was shared tonight, and will make a determination in the next few months guiding the Superintendent and her Cabinet to develop tools to help overcome some of the identified challenges.

Finally, she shared a special thanks to Amber and Claudia and all of the panelists for their leadership and creation in tonight's agenda, expressing on behalf of the Board, we are grateful for this opportunity to walk alongside all of you.

The meeting ended at 7:05 pm.