



Tigard-Tualatin School District 23J  
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## **Tigard-Tualatin School Board Statement of Support - 1/8/2024**

The Tigard-Tualatin School Board of Directors is writing this letter to express our strong support for Superintendent Dr. Sue Rieke-Smith and to commend her outstanding leadership and dedication to this district and community. As parents, teachers, school board members, and community members, we have witnessed first-hand the positive impact Dr. Rieke-Smith has had on our educational community.

We want to first acknowledge that this has been an incredibly difficult and divisive season for our school district and our community. In the past 5 years, we have lived through a pandemic, and now are seeing the impacts of the pandemic in our homes and schools in the form of behavioral dysregulation and trauma. This is not unique to TTSD, and sadly, neither is the way in which Dr. Rieke-Smith has been targeted for a larger political agenda. Public discourse should be guided by respectful engagement, factual information, and a commitment to understanding diverse perspectives. Resorting to defamation tactics not only perpetuates a culture of misinformation but also hinders the constructive exchange of ideas necessary for the progress of our district, and the ability to find solutions to the concerns that teachers, parents, and students express.

To be clear, the superintendent serves at the pleasure of the board. It is the board's policy work, strategic plan, evaluation, and recommendations that guide and direct the superintendent. While we absolutely honor the individual experiences of our families and denounce school violence of any kind, irresponsible reporting from individuals and the media regarding constant threats of school shootings and fights is completely, and factually, false. We have been diligent in our work and creation of policy while much of this has been happening, but we will no longer stay silent while the character, integrity, reputation, and leadership of Dr. Rieke-Smith is being slandered.

Dr. Rieke-Smith has consistently demonstrated a commitment to fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment. She has worked tirelessly to engage with various constituents, including parents, teachers, and community members, to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and considered in decision-making processes. The tradition of community engagement began with the Student Success Act, and has continued with the district budget, strategic plan, facilities planning, and policy work.

Moreover, Dr. Rieke-Smith has shown exceptional fiscal responsibility by effectively managing the district's resources, despite lack of funding from the state level. She has successfully navigated bonds, budget challenges, and collective bargaining while maintaining a focus on academic excellence and student well-being. Even with the challenges of post-pandemic learning, our district saw multiple schools hitting and exceeding the 5% and 8% increases in math and reading.

As a district we should count ourselves lucky to have a leader that is uniquely positioned to advocate for public education at the state and national level. This year, in addition to her role as Superintendent, she is serving as the president of the Oregon Association of School Executives (OASE); she serves on the governing board of American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the national school superintendents association; she serves on the Oregon Educators Benefit Board, which is the group responsible for the benefits offered to all of our teachers; she serves on the Governor's Educator Advancement Council representing Oregon superintendents; and she is regularly invited to testify publicly at the state and federal level.

In spite of this work, and in addition to real threats of violence, we have watched, read, and listened to more disrespectful, hate-driven, misogynistic comments and actions directed at our Superintendent than anyone could imagine. And we have watched, read, and listened to Dr. Rieke-Smith respond with unmatched strength, clarity, diplomacy, and truth. As a community, we will never see eye-to-eye on every issue, and no leader will be perfect. But we all care deeply about our children. As a Board, our charge is to serve and care for our children, and Dr. Rieke-Smith cares *deeply* for our children. It is essential for us to uphold the values of tolerance, inclusivity, and open-mindedness, fostering an environment where diverse opinions can coexist and contribute to the betterment of our community.

Sincerely,

TTSD Board of Directors

Approved 1/08/2024 by:  
Board Chair Tristan Irvin  
Board Vice Chair David Jaimes  
Director Kristen Miles  
Director Jill Zurschmeide

\*Director Crystal Weston not in attendance