

Highline Public Schools | School Board Meeting - January 24, 2024

So, welcome, everyone.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

Welcome to our regular scheduled board meeting. And with that, I will ask for everyone to stand.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

We're going to do the Pledge of Allegiance.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

So, roll call, por favor.

Director Tidholm?

Present.

Director Hagos?

Here.

Director Van?

Here.

Director Petrini?

Here.

Director Alvarez?

Here. So, and the gentleman to my left is our superintendent, Dr. Duran. And with that, we're going to be now-- I was going to say, assigning. But I believe-- well, assigning roles to our liaisons-- or appointments to our liaisons committees. And with that, our first one is our Capital Facilities Advisory Committee. And I believe you all have those positions at your hand. They were printed out, so thank you, Adriana, for that.

And so, wanted to see who is interested. Currently, we have Director Van and Director Hagos assigned to the Capital Facilities Advisory Committee. So are there anyone interested in being in those roles?

I've done it for the past year, and I really value the multiple stakeholder input that we receive from these committee meetings. And I'm happy to take it on for this year as well.

OK. Anyone else?

I would like to second that. If we can stay on as partners on that, that would be great--

OK.

--if you guys are OK with that.

All right. Is everybody OK with that? All right. So do we need to vote on that? Or are we just assign-- so, now, so Director Van and Director Hagos will stay on the Capital Facilities Advisory Committee. Our next one is the Capital Oversight. Director Van and myself have been attending, mostly Director Van. [LAUGHS] So anybody interested in attending or being the liaison on the Capital Oversight Committee?

I have an interest.

OK, Director Tidholm, I have to learn to pronounce your name. [LAUGHS] Anybody else? Director Van, are you still considering staying on that?

Yeah. I would love to. I think it is so important, just to look at all of our capital projects and making sure that they're on time and on budget. So, as well, be a secondary for this appointment.

Perfect. So Director Van will stay on, and Director Tidholm will join him. So, thank you for that. Our next one is the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association. It was myself and Director Garcia. I'm actually-- well, interest in that, anybody else that's interested in joining that committee?

I have an interest.

OK, Director Tidholm. Any others?

Are you staying on?

If nobody else would like to stay on, I'd like to stay on. Because I'd like to now start meeting with Phil because we have him caught up. So I'd like to stay on. All right. So is it all right, then, if myself and Director Tidholm stay on that? Yes? Director Van, are you OK with that?

Yeah.

OK, Tidholm and Director Van-- Director Van will not be on that. Director Tidholm [LAUGHS] and myself will be on that. And the Highline Schools Foundation, so we will definitely need someone else. Director Howell was attending as liaison on that. And there's only was one. I recommend that there's two. That way, if one can attend, the other one can support. And then it's fun to be together in places. So anyone is interested in the Schools Foundation?

I have an interest in that one.

OK. Thank you, Director Petrini. Anybody else would like to join her?

I will support the roll if nobody else wants it. If Joe wants it, you're welcome to have it, though.

That would be fine?

You would be fine with what?

I would be fine being a part of the Highline Schools Foundation.

All right. So then [LAUGHS] we'll give it to Director Van and Director Petrini, will be on the Highline Schools Foundation. And the next one is our Highline Forum. And Director Van and Director Hagos were the liaisons to that. Are you-- I should-- guess should start, are you still interested in staying on that, before I open it up to see if others are interested.

I'm happy to stay on it.

OK. Director Van?

I will not be able to do this one.

OK. So then who would like to join Director Hagos on the Highline Forum?

I'm happy to support the role.

I could be a possible second on that one.

OK.

Director Petrini is welcome to have it.

[LAUGHTER]

I guess you're already signed up for two, huh? OK.

OK. So who is staying, then? Who is going to be on it?

Me.

One, and the next one?

Is that the thing where we both need to attend, or we can support each other in--

It would be up to both of you. You both can attend, or you can switch off. That would be something you guys would need to discuss.

OK.

So, then, Director Petrini and Director Hagos--

Yes.

--on the Highline Forum? OK. And then our next one is the legislative com-- or legislative role. Director Van, you've done an amazing job. Would you like to continue and have someone join you? Or how do you want to do that?

At this time, I would like to step down and give other opportunities for other directors to partake and participate.

And I think this one, based on the role, I believe it's only one because they attend other-- or can two--

Two.

Two can still attend. So who would like to now be a liaison for the Legislative Committee?

I would.

I have an interest. Ah.

[LAUGHTER]

Do you have any interest? All right. So, perfect, so Director Petrini and Director Tidholm, you are both now assigned to the Legislative Committee. I know you will have tons and tons of stuff to read, so thank you for taking that on. Appreciate it. [LAUGHS] We would love just a little summary, please, just a little one. That would be great. And with that, I have a question. I would say it's for Aaron. Normally, we, in the past, have had a Wellness Committee. And it's not on this. Is there-- we don't have one anymore or as they--

Dr. [INAUDIBLE], can you address that, please? Thank you.

Oh, OK. I was giving it to the wrong person. Sorry, Dr. [INAUDIBLE]

[LAUGHS] No, I'm happy to speak to that. We very much still do have a Wellness Committee, just moving forward with staff at this point and don't have board representation.

OK. Well, let us know when you do because I think there's interest in that as well.

Thank you.

Thank you, with that. And so, with that, thank you, everyone, for your new positions. Just to recap, Director Van and Director Hagos are staying on the Capital Facilities Committee. The Capital Oversight will be Director Van and Director Tidholm. The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association will be Director Alvarez and Director Tidholm; Highline Schools Foundation, Director Petrini and Director Van; Highline Forum, Director Hagos, Director Petrini. And the Legislative committee is-- or liaison is Director Petrini and Director Tidholm. Did that all sound right? All right.

Sounds good.

Thank you. And with that, with nothing else being said, we are now moving for any calls or changes for-- or additions to our board meeting agenda for this evening.

I have none.

Seeing and hearing none, all in favor, say, aye. , No, wait, just a second. Do we need to vote? Oh, it's just approved that way? OK. So then we move on. So recognition-- so I'll pass it on to Dr. Duran.

Well, I'm going to hand it off to Lita O'Donnell, who's going to be introducing one of our community partners that has been doing amazing work for us. So, Lita, welcome.

Thank you, superintendent Duran, President Alvarez and board directors. I am really excited tonight that we are going to be recognizing Latino Civic Alliance. Latino Civic Alliance has been serving the Highline community for the last 16 years. Their mission is to promote advocacy, civic engagement by encouraging social responsibility and public service through collaboration with community partners.

We are fortunate to have LCA as a partner. They offer a variety of programs for students and families in Highline, including their ACHIEVE, Parent Engagement, I Am Jaguar and Building Future Industry Leader programs. Tonight, we will hear about some of these programs and their impact from parents-- Maribel [? Esquibel ?] Torres, Fernando [? Morenda ?] [? Bautista; ?] and student, Jocelyn Hernandez Retana; and LCA staff members, Maria and Angel. And I would like to invite Maribel and Fernando up to share their experience as parents. Thank you.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

Hi. Good evening, everyone.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

Good evening. Just before we begin, good evening, everybody.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

We came to give our testimony for the Latino Civic Alliance that has impacted us greatly.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

We have three children. The youngest one came out a little bit rebellious.

[LAUGHTER]

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And so, through the recommendation from one of my wife's friends, they connected us with Latino Civic.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

They help people in different ways and in different forms. They also help partners, which interested me.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And so that's how we started getting involved in going to the meetings in which they have experts which help us with various things, including helping us, as partners, as well as helping us with our children, who we, as parents, sometimes we think we know a lot. But we don't necessarily know everything.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And so we kept attending these meetings and-- with those experts, which helped us to not only better ourselves, but better ourselves for our children and us, as a partnership.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

So we're very happy, and we keep learning. That's what I wanted to say.

Yeah.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

I just want to give thanks to this program because it really helps our kids.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

It helps them with their homework and the program after school.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And that's very helpful because sometimes we don't know how to explain their homework.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And we're very thankful, and we're going to continue going to and assisting this program because it helped us a lot.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And we wanted to give them thanks for giving them-- giving us that help.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

And that's everything.

Muchas gracias.

Thank you very much.

Muchas gracias.

[APPLAUSE]

And now I'd like to invite Jocelyn up.

First, I want to thank you for having the opportunity to talk about how amazing of a program ACHIEVE is and the opportunities this program has given me. My name is Jocelyn Victoria Hernandez Retana. And I'm a ninth grader from Highland High School. ACHIEVE has helped me find a community where other Latino students are also looking for a community to connect with. I have made so many connections with Latino students and families with the events ACHIEVE has created.

ACHIEVE isn't just an after school program for me. It's a community that strives to help families and students and make others feel like they belong and are appreciated. And they create projects for us to do and always-- and it feels like they're always there for when you need to have a conversation or just have a laugh. Every time, after school, I have an excitement to go to ACHIEVE and see what projects they have planned and what events are coming up.

I think the reason I keep coming back to ACHIEVE is because I feel like it's a second home, and it's not just a program. It's a place where I can express myself. It's a place where I can laugh and have a talk with an adult or a student. Lastly, I want to thank Andrew, who has introduced me to so many opportunities and has helped me, as a student, grow and as well as a person, grow and become the person I want to be. He has supported me and helped me so much. And I think many other students can agree he has helped them.

I can say so much more about how amazing ACHIEVE is, but I would need an hour to talk about it. [LAUGHS] But, overall, thank you for letting me talk about how amazing ACHIEVE is and how it has supported so many other Latino students.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you. Now that you've got to hear from parents who are in the Parent Engagement Program and our student who's in the ACHIEVE program, I want to invite Angel up, who helps us with the ACHIEVE program, and Maria, who helps us with the Parent Engagement pieces.

Good evening. Before most, I would really like to say thank you for the [INAUDIBLE] recognition. It is an honor and privilege to be here in front of you to speak. So my name is Angel Jarquin. I the program coordinator and lead instructor for the ACHIEVE program. ACHIEVE is a social-emotional culturally relevant youth after school program that supports Latino's student-based, under current circumstances, goals and needs.

The way that we do this is through artwork and self expression. We want students to use what we discuss in a group, and the activities that we do, and apply it every day into their life, inside and outside of school. This consists of working closely with administrators and staff in the schools that we serve to make sure that the students are receiving the best possible support.

Along with student support, we support the families of the students that we are serving by doing one-on-one weekly check-ins and hosting monthly educational workshops in partnership with the district. Our last three workshops this year have consisted of parent involvement in how to be involved, understanding graduation requirements, navigating through ParentVUE and ParentSquare. We are currently serving three high schools-- Mount Rainier High School, Highline High school, Tyee High School-- and two middle schools-- Glacier Middle School and Sylvester Middle school.

A goal and priority that my team and myself have every year to be successful is to make sure that we create a culturally relevant environment where everyone feels safe and has a community where they feel welcome and able to be themselves. In doing this, it gives us, as instructors, a better understanding of what a student needs and knowing what approach we can take when we are supporting them. This can be supporting students in search for a job, an apprenticeship certification program, through our Building Future Industry Leaders Program-- where they receive job coaching, mentoring, and essential and trade skills training-- or supporting students in searching for mental health services for themselves and their family.

Everything that we do in the Achieve program with the youth, we do with intention-- intention to make sure that students feel supported and successful. I would like to wrap this up by thanking my Achieve team, the LC Leadership, Lolita and Rosa for making this possible. Thank you.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

Good afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge and thank the district and their staff for the recognition. My name is Maria Tolosa. I'm a parent coach with the DISCOVERY "I AM JAGUAR" Program from Latino Civic Alliance. The DISCOVERY I AM program Jaguar is a nonviolent conflict resolution communication program that teaches our youth and families the tools that address conflict and de-escalation from using aggression and violence.

Youth learn techniques to have better effective healthy, successful outcomes at home with educators, peers, and at school. The program partners with community-based behavioral health providers and services. Parents acquire communication parenting tools allowing them to establish mutual dialogue and be involved in their children and create balanced, healthy relationships; learn challenging their children by experiencing to offer that effective coping skills and open communication with parents. Parents support groups to share live experience support one each other to build stronger community network.

The "I AM JAGUAR" program for youth and family offers proactive communication techniques and builds strong families that make Latino communities thrive. Thank you so much.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

So if it's OK, we would like to take a picture with all of you.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

So join me, please.

OK, actually, this podium is [AUDIO OUT]. Go ahead.

What do you like to--

No, go ahead.

3, 2, 1, smile.

[APPLAUSE]

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

So thank you, everyone, for being here tonight and for doing the good work. And with that, we move to scheduled communications. On behalf of the Board, we'd like to thank you for coming and speaking this evening. Our Norms and Rules are posted on the screens. Please be mindful that you're here to speak to the Board and that there may be students here or watching that are paying attention to your words.

In addition, the Board will not be able to respond directly to you about your testimony during this meeting. Thank you, again, for coming and speaking. And with that, our first speaker is Joseph Lipp.

Good evening, board members and everybody else present. I understand that they're going to start a girls softball team for middle school girls. I asked Riley Gaines to be here tonight, but as you know she's busy all over the world being the spokesperson for people and Title IX, which originally set up to protect women's rights in getting into sports.

I was a swimmer when I was growing up. And I surely didn't put in the time that she did, hundreds of thousands of hours, to swim in an event to have her number one finish perpetrated by a man masquerading as a woman. That man, in his finishing point in men's sports, was 110 national-wise, and he comes and disrespects these girls.

Someone spoke two weeks ago on the Board about respect. If you're going to start a girls softball league, make sure it's girls. We have enough division in this country, and to take away their respect and their hours of training and playing in sports by letting a young man who can't make it in men's sports come and take away their fun should be ashamed.

Thank you.

Our next speaker is Alex Merrick.

Many years ago, I swore an oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I take that oath seriously as I lived and worked for four years in a country with an authoritarian government where news was heavily censored. The most important part of our Constitution is the Bill of Rights, especially the First Amendment, which includes freedom of speech and the press.

In the election campaign just ended, certain parties attacked others as being associated with book banners. In your time in office as directors, you will hear complaints of book banning. Since it is an effective hot-button issue, it will be deployed again in the next election cycle. A definition is in order. School book ban is defined as, quote, any action taken where access to a book is restricted or diminished, unquote.

If a book in a school library is challenged, removed for analysis, then returned to circulation, that earns it a place in the list of banned books. One team of investigators took a list of over a dozen allegedly banned books looked in the school library and found every one of them on the shelves. There's a famous children's book in middle school libraries which contains cartoons of a child putting their mouth on the genitals of another child.

Do books like this belong in middle school libraries? If your answer is no, the activists say you are in favor of book banning. If your answer is yes, it grieves me that you are in such a position of responsibility. In our own time but in other countries, people have been executed for distributing Bibles. In this context, I find it offensive that temporary or limited restrictions are conflated with book banning.

I believe that in our lifetime, we will see genuine book banning here in our neighborhood. I hope you will join me in fighting that. However, last sentence, in our present time and place when you hear or read accusations of book banning, please-- [AUDIO OUT]

Green.

Hello, Board, this is my first time at a school board meeting, and thank you so much for your time and energy to our schools. I'm here to just-- first of all, my name is Darla Green. I am a Burien resident, just so you know. I'm here to express my concern about two items. I'm asking you-- and I know you can't address it here. But I'm asking you, Highline School District Board, to have some input about the homeless encampment located two blocks from Highline High School.

This encampment is two blocks. I grew up on this street. There's a turnaround up there that the kids always hang out in, just as an FYI. This is so close to impressionable teenagers. Coupled with a low barrier of this encampment, it puts all of our children at risk. And I want to make sure that you know that there is documented open-air drug activity. There's been a homicide associated with that encampment and other nefarious behavior. Please put our children's safety as your top priority by addressing this with Burien.

Secondly, I'd like to address the topic of SRO, Security Resource Officers. I think it is in our children's best interest to not only employ an armed SRO in every school but most definitely at Highline High School. Just this year alone, the activity at Highline High School has been off the charts. And I know you know it, but it's in the community, too.

Our parents are getting emails about suicides, about crime. And by not addressing the security aspect of it, and not addressing the encampment, is doing our children a huge disservice. Thank you so much for your time.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

And with that, our next speaker Patricia Bailey.

Good evening. Highline Schools rightly value cultural competency, which calls for respecting the diversity of students and staff, as seen in policy 2133. There is no better way to teach cultural competency than to observe the universal wisdom to treat others as you would like to be treated. This easily instills an attitude of respect for others.

Teachers need not delve into sexual identity issues but simply teach children to regard others as themselves, deserving of respect. In addition, differences of opinion should be embraced and discussed. There should be no assumption of disrespect just because of disagreements. All students like adults, need to learn to agree to disagree and let others have their own beliefs.

Up until very recently, virtually all people agreed, along with science and religion, on two fundamental truths-- sex is binary and sex is immutable. When a school begins to teach views that differ from these universal understandings, community members and parents become understandably upset and often leave the public schools. That is why the beliefs of Highline School Board procedure 3211 should be publicly aired and discussed in a shared forum.

Procedure 3211 maintains that sex is arbitrarily assigned at birth, that there are more than two genders, and that one can change one's sex, among other uncommon beliefs. The Highline School District needs to conduct a community meeting where these issues can be openly and civilly discussed. Differing views from parents and community members should be heard and respected

Thank you.

Thank you. That concludes our scheduled communications

[APPLAUSE]

And with that, we move to our superintendent's update. So back to you Dr. Duran.

Thank you, Director Alvarez. So I'd like to just start by taking a moment to recognize two members of the Highline community that recently passed away. Valley View principal, Kym Nelson, passed away on January 10. Kym was a passionate leader with deep love and commitment to our youngest learners and their families. Her advocacy for high-quality preschool education had a significant impact throughout our Highline community.

Kym was recognized as a 2010 Outstanding Administrator by the Highline Schools Foundation, and under her leadership, Valley View became a regional model for early learning. Our hearts go out to Kym's family and loved ones, especially to her wife and two young sons. Former Highline School Board Director Tom Slattery passed away on January 22 after battling lung disease. Tom served four terms on Highline School Board, from 1990 to 2006.

Tom lived in White Center and was a tireless advocate for his community. He was a champion of racial equity and high-quality education for all children. We are grateful for Tom's legacy of contributions at Highline. Our thoughts are with Tom's wife, Pat, their three sons and their families.

I also want to acknowledge that we have lost two students in the past month. Regardless of the circumstances, any loss of young life is tragic. These young men were part of our Highline community. Their families are part of our Highline community, and we share their grief. I would just like to ask everyone in the room to please join me for a moment of silence to recognize the passing of these four members of our Highline community.

Thank you. We have continued having our staff meetings in our school, and we are number 30. So grateful to our partnership association, Jeb, Dr. [? Rodney ?] and members of cabinet. We are learning a great deal. Recently, we were at McMicken, which is one of our pilot schools for inclusive education. It's just wonderful to see the connections and bonds they have there as well as Mount Rainier High School where we heard from staff in their need and encouragement to have more guidance, direction to support our multi-language learners. It was a really positive meeting and really grateful for the time that we're getting out there in our schools and meeting with our school staffs.

And now I'd like to introduce the President of the Highline Education Association, Jeb Binns, to share a few thoughts with us. Welcome, Jeb. Great to have you here tonight.

Can never quite get it right, but now, there you go. Good evening. My name is Jeb Binns. I'm the President of the Highline Education Association. Thank you, President Alvarez, Board directors, Superintendent, appreciate and happy to be here. I guess it's going to start.

We've got our new committee liaisons. So I have to keep going this way and this way because my legislative friends are now on the ends, and so I'm going to do this and eventually get a headache. But we'll get it figured out. So there's a couple of pieces of legislation that I'd love for you to watch and support in your role, and especially help to push [INAUDIBLE] in this way. And there's a couple of them that are out there.

One of them is Senate Bill 5956 and House Bill-- and its companion bill 2251, which is around ensuring local levies that their enrichment is passed. So our communities have passed local levies very graciously, myself included, to go through to make sure that our schools are fully funded. We also want to make sure that those levies are fully leveraged, and these two pieces of legislation working together as they go through in Olympia will help that happen.

We, unfortunately, need to tap our levy funds to take care of our basic needs of funding and helping fully fund special education services. In fact, we spend something in the neighborhood of \$14 million with the levies to make sure we do this. The state needs to recognize that they need to fully fund education and make sure that special education is part of basic education. But until they do that, we are focused on spending levy dollars to help do that.

So if you can help this one out, I think we've talked about the fact that it's zero cost to the state. And it would be very helpful for us to take care of the generosity of our community to do that. I'd like to thank CFO Jackie Bryan for her testimony on these bills a few weeks ago.

The second one that the Highline Education Association is passionate about are House Bills 2103 and Senate Bill 5955. And this is about mitigating harm and improving equity in large port districts. So as you know, essentially, for lack of a better term, our school district is sort of the landing zone for SeaTac Airport. Planes take off and land over our community, and the pollution that comes from airports and large areas are directly impacting our families who live here through carcinogens, toxins, and things.

That doesn't mean that we don't like to have a vibrant port and we don't want to have the ability to get to different locations. However, we need to make sure that we support our communities that are out there. So this pieces of legislation require that the port mitigate harm caused by large port districts, as opposed to currently, which is, we really like you to do that. Well, you know, unless we require you to do it, we can really like you to do quite a bit. So if you can help shepherd those things to go through there, that would be wonderful. It would help protect the health of our students and our staff and our community and all the folks that are around here.

Outside of our legislative work, I just want to appreciate a few things. Number one, number 30, it's been really enjoyable to go through and spend time with Dr. Duran and Dr. [? Reinig, ?] amongst other cabinet members. We've learned of the shared experiences that we've had during this and has really been quite fabulous.

I want to thank the superintendent for his words in the last School Board Meeting-- resonated with our members, and it was really exciting to be able to go through and say we have a champion for our district. And so we appreciate the work here. I'd also like to thank the Board for your bold and brave policies that help support educators and help support our community, help support our students. We greatly appreciate you for that.

Because I'm in an appreciation mode, I'd also like to thank and appreciate the relationship with human resources partners, and especially today, I'm going to take the time to give a shout out to executive Director Christina Larsen, who we meet with with the Association weekly. And we work creatively to come up with solutions that help our members and our system and our district. And I just appreciate the work we do on a daily basis.

I really appreciate the fact that you started this with recognizing the loss to our community. I actually have written in my notes that our hearts go out to the folks at Valley View and at Highline High School. And we think of their families in this time. Thank you very much. Have a good evening.

Thank you, Jeb. I appreciate that. So we have tonight Director Alvarez. Thank you.

Thank you Dr. Duran, and thank you, Jeb. And with that, we move to legislative reports.

The legislative reports, we are actually on the Hill, like what Jeb just said. If we can support and listen and also go down to the Hill and speak on behalf of them, that would be great. I look forward to working alongside you guys, just to fill you in where we're at and our local partners with other districts as the leg rep. That's it.

Thank you so much for that. And now we go into director reports. So let's see, I'll start with Director Tidholm.

Yes, I had the privilege last week of attending and speaking at Sylvester Middle School's assembly to honor Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and legacy. I was inspired by the students and staff who spoke and planned the event, as well as the Sylvester's band performance, particularly some of the students in leadership who collaborated with me and made sure it was seamless. We heard from the students about Mae Jemison being the first African American woman in space.

They talked about Black hair and what it means to be an ally to Black people. Joe Bourgeois, the former math teacher and now re-engagement specialist, performed lyrics he wrote to spotlight MLK, and encouraged students to "get your education and be free at last." And it was quite catchy. It took everything in me not to get up and start dancing.

Overall, a great experience. I'm really proud of the kids. They also performed some spoken word, a number of them, that they had written themselves, which was beautiful and incredibly vulnerable. And that's all that I have.

Thank you, Director Tidholm. With that, Director Hagos.

Just a quick note about girls flag football. Our first girls flag football games kicked off on Saturday at Highline Memorial Stadium. I'm really excited to see that we've received a grant that was about \$16,000, which was really nice, from our NFL and Seahawks, books for uniforms and equipments to start this additional girls sports opportunity. In Highline, I know that Seahawks even sent their Blue Thunder Drumline to introduce the games with a flourish on Saturday and to celebrate with us.

So the three schools that kicked off this field of these team this year was Evergreen, Highline, and Mount Rainier. Tyee is up next year. So good stuff.

Thank you, Director Hagos. Director Petrini.

Yeah, I wanted to share, we had our quarterly Board retreat this past Saturday, which was kind of fun to get to know each other a little bit better and learn about our names, what they mean, as our promise is to learn our students by their name, strength, and need. And I think that was really enjoyable to have that dialogue and learn about the history. And then, just in collaborating more about how we can better communicate with each other, with our constituents, how we can be better listeners and community partners with our parents, our teachers, and our students.

So I felt like the dialogue was really meaningful to me. And as a new Board member, just understanding procedures and policies so much better, I feel like will help me serve our community so much better. So I was grateful for that. Second, just wanted to also extend my condolences to Kym Nelson's family, as well, as I was with her on that day that she passed away. So it was very humbling to know that. She looked happy and healthy, and so I hope her day was a fantastic one. And just was really humbled to hear those news.

And lastly, on a much lighter note, just a thank you to our amazing custodians of facilities crew that helped when we had ice and temperatures drop. Just so grateful that they're helping take care of our sidewalks and making sure that our students are safe and making sure our school-- it looks like our school pipes, nothing bursts. So that's good. I come from Utah, so we would still go to school with, like, three feet of snow, and they would not cancel school. I know we didn't have any school closures, but we had delays, but it always makes me laugh when people are like, oh no, there's a snow drop. So anyway, that is all I have.

Thank you, Director Petrini. Director Van.

Yeah, if you haven't noticed yet, but we are getting ready for our next generation of students, our class of 2037. So if you know of any kiddos that will be five years old or older by August 31, our kindergarten registration opens up on February 5. So looking forward to seeing those smiles this next year. Exciting, but wow! 2037, it's coming up real quick.

A couple of things prior to our personnel that's in our consent agenda here. I just want to do a quick shout out to Sharon Colby. For the last two years she's been our executive assistant, just keeping us in line and making sure we follow up on stuff. And she's moved to be part of our HR department as their executive assistant, as well as Adriana is now our new exec assistant. So congratulations to you, Adriana, but also thank you to Sharon for your support for the last two years keeping us in line. And that is it for me.

Thank you, Director Van. And for me, I would just like to second Director Petrini's. We had an opportunity to come together and really learn about our roles and responsibilities as Board Directors. So it was a good opportunity for us to also learn, and for some of us, reminders about why is it that we do what we do. And with that, just announcements around other MLK events that happened in our district.

In Hazel Valley Elementary, students and staff participated in a heartwarming parade around the playground, embodying the values of Dr. King. They sang the Civil Rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome," and carried signs about the love, kindness, and human rights and unity. Also, in Tyee High School, their leadership class organized their school's MLK assembly. Eula Manuel, an 11th-grade student, presented a poem. Guest speakers included Pastor Terrence Proctor-- Proc-tor. Sorry. I hope-- I'm sorry if I'm not pronouncing it correct. And singer Rita Fisher.

ASL students interpreted the Black national anthem, also known as "Life Every Voice and Sing." And again, just feel, I think, honored, and just I would say, even though we're blessed to be able to celebrate some of these events in our district. And with that, that concludes our School Board Reports or Director Reports. And we move on to our consent agenda.

And so I'll ask, do we ask a motion to approve? So I need a motion to approve our consent agenda for this evening.

I make a motion to approve our consent agenda.

I'll second.

And it's a voice vote, not a roll call vote.

OK, so all in favor.

Aye.

Aye.

Any opposed? So with that, that gets approved. We have no action items besides that. And we get into introduction items. So motion to approve the addition of sixth-graders to WIAA girls softball at the middle school level. And usually this is an opportunity for Phil to come up and just tell us a little bit more about this so we can learn.

Thank you-- Phil Willenbrock, District Director of Athletics. My pleasure to be here this evening. Thank you, directors, Superintendent Duran, and Director Alvarez and Tidholm. I look forward to working with you on a variety of WIAA items. Five years ago, when we opened Glacier Middle School, we had the opportunity to really assess what sixth-grade opportunities might look like at our middle level.

We currently hold girls softball for seventh and eighth grade only in season one at the middle school level. Over the last few years, participation numbers in softball for seventh and eighth graders has been on a continual decline, to the point where we really have barely been able to field one team per middle school. So as part of WIAA rule 18.18.0, one of the permissions and requests that we need to allow sixth graders to join seventh and eighth grade in competition is to receive the thumbs up from the local school board as well as the superintendent.

Let it be known as well that the five middle school administrators, principals at our five middle schools, overwhelmingly support this. So they are ready to go next fall and looking for board approval so that we can take the next step to add sixth graders to our girls softball at the middle school.

Thank you. Any questions for Phil? So Director Tidholm?

Do you know why the enrollment's declined the last few years? There are a few sports nationally, regionally as well, and locally that have taken a bend towards AAU/club sports. Softball and volleyball are two of those sports. And we feel that at the middle school level, we haven't been able to pinpoint exactly what the reduced numbers have-- what's caused that. Our high school numbers are steady but low as well.

So we're hoping that adding sixth graders to link in and have that foundational sense of belonging at the middle school and athletics, that perhaps we can begin to see high school numbers increase as well.

And why were sixth graders not permitted to play initially?

Some rules have changed in the WIAA with respect to which sports sixth-graders might be able to join seventh and eighth. So based on those rule changes, sixth-graders are allowed to join participation with seventh- and eighth-graders now in all sports except for football. And in speaking with our middle school folks, administrators, and athletic coordinators, we felt it was time to see if we can buffer the participation numbers in softball and add sixth graders.

Initially, was it a safety issue with the sixth-graders not-- you might not have the answer. And if not, that's fine, too. I'm just curious.

Yeah, there might have been a little bit of safety issue there. But I think statewide, as other districts move towards adding the sixth graders in, the WIAA changed their perspective a little bit and said, hey, let's allow this with local school board approval.

Thank you.

Mm-hmm.

I know that I was curious, too, and actually asked another coach. And they had said very similar, that before the rules was seventh and eighth was middle school. And then sixth grade has been added. So it's lagging behind a little bit, making sure everything is legal, is from what I get now, too. Director Hagos, any questions? No? Director Petrini?

Yeah, are we talking about a sixth-grade team at every school, every middle school? Or could we combine certain schools so that they're collaborating together? Because they usually play other districts, correct, not each other?

Thank you. Wonderful question. So we currently have the International League, which are our five middle schools in addition to Showalter Middle School and the Tukwila School District. So our six middle schools form a league. And so we don't really play anybody outside of that level. And if you could repeat the other part of your question, that would be great, too.

So we play against other districts, like, our middle schools are not playing against each other right? Because we don't have enough students?

Currently, we've had to combine middle school teams.

OK.

Cascade would be combined with Sylvester. Chinook would be combined with Pacific. And what that provides is a transportation. It's really difficult on families, from what we hear from families, the transportation issues trying to get middle school kids to one site for practice. By the time that happens, maybe there's only an hour left of practice time, and then get back to school to get home safely on time has been a challenge. So we're hoping that adding sixth-graders to the current seventh- and eighth-grade team so that all three grades will play together, ideally, to form two teams-- a varsity team and a subvarsity team.

All right.

Thank you.

Mm-hmm.

Director Van?

Yeah, thanks, Phil, for sharing this with us. Since we're looking at softball-- and I see that you're the middle school offerings-- when will the opportunities be available for girls softball and, you know, girls basketball? So is that going to be coming down the pipeline sooner than later, that the sixth graders will be able to join the seventh and eighth?

Other sports.

Perhaps. Soccer and volleyball and basketball, perhaps. One of the opportunities we have with softball is that the facilities are available. One of the challenges that we have with basketball and soccer is we get to a bit of a facility crunch between what's going on at the high school level and what's going on at the middle school level. Juggling nine schools and finding places for those individual sports to practice can be challenging.

Also, we have not seen a dip in numbers with soccer in seventh and eighth grade, volleyball in seventh and eighth grade, basketball in seventh and eighth grade. Those sports are thriving. So we haven't felt that there's a middle school folks-- when I say "we," it's myself, middle school administrators, middle school athletic coordinators and coaches-- have not felt that there's been that need yet to add sixth-graders to those other team sports.

Thank you.

Yeah.

Is that across the spectrum? Are you having the same issues with boys baseball, the numbers dropping, or is it just girls?

We do not offer boys baseball at the middle school level.

At all? Not seventh or eighth either?

At all. At all. So it's strictly softball. Softball has been the only middle school sport where we've had difficulty fielding even one team per middle school. So I think this will allow us to at least field one team, hopefully to the point where we can field both a JV and varsity, so two teams for each middle school, and have a thriving schedule, as we do with every other current middle school sport that we offer.

Is this something that could become like a co-ed team so that you don't have issues-- or people who want that opportunity to play softball that don't have it.

Thank you for the question. The WIAA is very clear in identifying girls softball at the high school level. Of course, we've got girls softball and boys baseball. We have not investigated adding baseball into the middle school level, yet.

OK.

So this would be only a girls softball team. Is that differentiated by physical abilities? Is that why we have that distinction?

When we established the middle school schedules back in 2011, and moved away from intramurals into a more comprehensive program, we took a close look at facilities and what facilities were available. And that was one of the key contributors to why softball made sense in season one in the fall, to couple then with high school season in the spring. So that facility conflict and coaching availability were two main factors that we looked at and why softball was added at that point.

OK.

Any other questions, comments?

Phil, well, thank you so much, Phil. That was wonderful.

Thank you.

Thank you Thank you. And with that, that concludes our introduction items. I don't know. That's the only item we have. Do we want to add that to the consent agenda?

I--

I--

No. Director Tidholm?

I make a motion to approve the addition of sixth-graders, the WIAA girls softball at the middle school level to the consent agenda.

I need a second. Did anybody want to second that?

I'll second that.

All right. So all in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye. Any opposed?

I actually think I would like to see it as some further discussion. I might have some further questions down the road. I don't know.

I'd say no for now.

So we had made a motion and second, and we had approved and said yes. It doesn't mean that you can't have further discussion. You can always connect with Phil, if you need any more questions, or anybody that can-- well, with Phil, not just with anybody, or with Dr. Duran, I should say-- whoever can answer the questions that you have. So with that, that makes-- just to clarify that that motion made it to the consent agenda.

Correct. Can I just clarify the voice vote? Who was there?

So the voice vote for consent who voted yea?

I did.

Yes.

Again?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Yea.

OK.

Aye. And then--

I'll say Yes, but I still can ask questions, you mean?

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Wonderful. Thank you for the clarification.

So with that, then the motion passes and goes on to our consent agenda.

Yes.

All right, and with that now all we need is a motion to adjourn.

I make a motion to adjourn.

I'll second that. All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Any opposed? Who wants to stay?

Me!

You sure?

[LAUGHTER]

All right, we're dismissed. Thank you.