

Name: Emily Timoshevskiy

District Residency: Reside in Springfield Public School District, within the Guy Lee Elementary School boundary

Contact: Happytree17@gmail.com, Cell: 541-554-8871

Topic: Allocating funds for promoting programs, and improving programs such as a dual immersion, TAG coordinator and activities, or partnerships to improve learning engagement and quality of education.

Hello,

My name is Emily Timoshevskiy. I live within the Guy Lee Elementary School boundary, and have two students who attend Guy Lee (kinder and 3rd grade), both are in the Dual Immersion Program. I grew up in Springfield and graduated from Springfield High School. I am writing to you today because I am very concerned about the declining enrollment in our school, the district, and public schools as a whole across our country. I know dozens of people who are within the Springfield School District but choose to homeschool or send their children to charter schools outside of our district. The primary factor is perceived quality of education; they do not believe their children will receive quality education if they remain in Springfield Public Schools. The second factor is simply being unaware or misinformed about the education and programs SPS provides. I believe Springfield Public Schools is a special public school system. I really value the education I received, and the education my children have had so far. I believe that better promoting programs that already exist, building up programs that are in place but need a little attention, and developing programs and partnerships that encourage more robust engagement of students and increase quality learning will retain in-district students, and possibly recruit students that are out of district. All of those suggestions require funds, so my comment is to allocate some of the funds for the next budget year to these areas:

Better promote programs that already exist:

Dual Immersion: I believe a better promotion of programs that already exist would help retain in-district students. One such program that both of my children are in is the dual immersion program. We have had a wonderful experience in the Dual Immersion program at Guy Lee. My sons are so excited to be learning another language, and really enjoy having classmates whose primary language is something different than their own. Many of my neighbors sent their kids to different schools or districts, and they had no idea Guy Lee, their neighborhood school, had a dual immersion program. One such neighbor sent their children to Buena Vista, not knowing Guy Lee had an immersion program. I think a little more advertising across wider media would help get the word out as well. I would also love to see the program expanded either by adding more classrooms to Guy Lee, or by expanding to other elementary schools. It's a shame that there were waiting lists and cutoffs the last several years. Guy Lee could have had a few classrooms of each grade by now had there been the capacity to expand, and we would have kept some families from exiting the district.

Other services that I had no clue were available when enrolling my oldest son were the speech pathologist, the IDP programs and extra assistance to kids who need it, the nutrition services for all elementary school students, or that there were "specials" i.e. P.E, Music, Library, etc. Promote the elective classes in Middle and High Schools, and be specific about how parents can get their students involved. Promote these programs and the unique opportunity students have to experience diversity in cultures and backgrounds in public schools. **Mail out pamphlets or flyers with QR codes to highlight what SPS has to offer to give in-district parents an idea of the wonderful programs SPS has.**

Build Back Programs that need a little attention:

TAG program: My 3rd grade son is advanced. We had him tested for giftedness before entering kindergarten, and he scored in the top 3% on IQ. We explored many options for his learning before enrolling him in kindergarten. We value public education due to the many community benefits it provides, as well as the interactions students get with a diverse student body. On the same token, we wanted to ensure he stayed engaged in learning; he was reading books and able to calculate multiplication and exponents in his head by the age of 4. My son entered kindergarten in the fall of 2020. In the fall of 2019, I started researching where I would send my son for Kindergarten. I talked to Stephanie Lovdokken (District TAG coordinator at the time) on the phone for nearly two hours about the

program when she was running it. She described the activities the TAG students got to do, such as TAG get togethers, extra projects, and the options for accelerated learning etc. It sounded like a wonderful program, and she convinced me that my son would do very well in SPS due to the learning options through the TAG program. Unfortunately, by the fall of 2020 when my son entered kindergarten, she had stepped out of that role due to a lack of compensation or time for taking on the district TAG coordination (I don't blame her). Technically, my son is still in the TAG program, but it is not thriving nor robust. We are basically at the mercy of how much time his teacher is able to spend on assigning extra activities. There have been no TAG nights, no information on extra programs, and no additional testing. We are kind of on our own. Looking at the testing and graduation numbers for the TAG students, it seems like it's a program SPS would want to maintain and build up. I'm afraid if it is not improved, current and future TAG students will also move outside of SPS for more tailored learning. Improving the program, and advertising could potentially recruit families back who have TAG identified kids. Perhaps the district could compensate a district TAG coordinator, and give some incentives to the school TAG coordinators to improve the program.

Bring in programs and partnerships and volunteers to better engage in learning:

One way to better engage kids that may be at standard or above is to improve the engagement in the classroom and challenge them. Perhaps extra EAs could be assigned to each school to rotate around classrooms and engage with the students at varied learning groups. We have a thriving PTO at Guy Lee. Parents are looking for opportunities to volunteer in the school, or after. Partner with PTOs for in-classroom volunteering for helping with the full spectrum of learning. See if a partnership with Willamalane, PTOs or both is possible for after school STEM clubs.

Two major hindrances to volunteering and engagement of parents are the no-visitor policy, and no younger children in the schools. We have many parents who would like to volunteer at events during the school day, but cannot because they would need to bring in their toddlers. These are events such as jog a thons, or setting up for teacher appreciation lunches. Our principal would like to have parents come on certain days a week for coffee with the principal, but cannot due to the no visitor policy. From my understanding, these policies were put into place during the pandemic. The pandemic is over, please consider lifting these policies and going back to pre-pandemic rules. You would get more parent involvement and volunteers.

Summary:

My basic message is that I think more funds or emphasis needs to be put on the great programs that exist, and possibly new partnerships to improve learning engagement and advanced learning opportunities. Allow for visitors, and allow volunteering parents (in some situations) to bring their children while volunteering. Send out mailers with information on the programs we already have (Dual Immersion, free meals, ESL, Elementary Specials, IDP, integrated learning environments, electives, special programs and opportunities in secondary). Expand the Dual Immersion program. Improve the TAG program. Give an employee (perhaps Stephanie Lovdokken again) some extra salary or a set amount of time each week to dedicate to district TAG coordination. Let each school TAG coordinator have a few hours a month of OT to dedicate to TAG. Work with Willamalane and PTOs to see if we can get some after school STEM clubs at the schools. Bring in a few extra EAs to bounce between classes, and work varied learning groups. Allow greater flexibility for parents who want to volunteer.

I believe in public education. In order to build community, and achieve equitable education, we must have engagement in public education across the spectrum of backgrounds and family situations within our SPS community. I hope by promoting and building upon the great opportunities SPS already has, and creating new programs and partnerships to improve learning engagement, more families within the district will re-engage in public schools, and our public school community can start to build back after the pandemic exodus.

Thank you for your consideration,

Emily Timoshevskiy

Dear Springfield School Board,

Good afternoon! In my written communication to you on April 10th referenced the public comment that I made at the school board on Monday, April 8th. It was later suggested that I submit my public comment in writing so people who were not at the meeting would be able to access it:

“We are here tonight to thank the school board for your call to action regarding the concerns of cancer and autoimmune disorders taking place within the Mt. Vernon Elementary School building. This is a great step in the right direction.

In my conversation with Oregon Health Authority (OHA), I was tasked with the homework of determining what we should test for. As I conferred with my colleagues and did some research a pattern emerged we would like you to consider, not as a means to take anything off of the table, but as something to keep in mind.

Whenever there is construction done on the building, two or three years later, cancer and autoimmune disorders appear. (Please know the following years of construction are estimates.) Mt. Vernon was built around 1997 or 1998. Between the years 2001 and 2008, the first cancer group happened. An expansion was done on B-wing in 2015 or 2016. In 2017, the first cancer of the second cancer group was diagnosed. Our last cancer of that group was diagnosed in 2020, and then we shut down for COVID.

In the winter of 2021, people started coming back into the building wearing masks. A new HVAC system was installed around the summer of 2021. We continued to wear masks through the 2021/22 school year. When the '22/'23 school year began the mask requirements were lifted. My colleague, Tama Rowan, and I were the only two of the second cancer group to return to Mt. Vernon and we both had a second cancer diagnosis, hers on her windpipe and vocal cords and mine on my tongue and in my neck.

Let's also not forget our staff who retired from working at Mt. Vernon for twelve or more years, discovering they, too, had cancer or severe autoimmune disorders. One educator diagnosed with a disease that is known to be spread through A/C systems and another educator being told his brain cancer was a slow growing tumor and it absolutely started while he was working at Mt. Vernon.

We are also here to put on record the district was notified of the first cancer group in 2008. The group was told no testing would be done. The district was again notified of the first cancer group, in addition to the second cancer group, in 2019. We had full support until a conversation was had with OHA where it was mentioned we were of the age for breast cancer, which for some of us is not necessarily correct. This was taken as nothing further needed to be done. However, when I spoke with OHA, I learned that wasn't the entire conversation. I mention this because a letter that had

no date was going to be sent home to families stating that last summer was the first time the district learned of our concerns and this is inaccurate information. As I remind you, something was said in 2008, 2019, and Feb. 23, 2022, when Colleen Hunter spoke to the board, and then again this year, 2024.

Once again, along with the testing taking place, we ask for a committee with representation from the Certified and Classified staff, current and past, in the cancer and autoimmune disorders groups, as we are continuously left out of the conversation and transparency has become murky over the years. We also request any and all testing results be shared out to all invested parties. Thank you!"

Since April's board meeting, we learned testing took place at Mt. Vernon shortly after. Unfortunately, a committee that had been requested several times by several individuals was never formed. There is still a lack of collaboration.

We also learned that the testing in the building was not necessarily thorough, as only A, B, and C-wings were tested, however the gym and office were not tested, nor were the cafeteria (where two staff members who passed away from cancer worked) or music room, where Tama Rowan primarily worked and mold had been found in previous years. When the testers were asked about this, different answers were given. One person was told that if something was in the air the test would pick it up. Another person was given the answer that these areas weren't tested because they weren't in the contract.

We are looking forward to the results from the initial testing, however we are cautious for many reasons: lack of transparency, lack of consistency, and lack of complete testing (see the attachment on the April 10th's written public comment that listed what to test for).

Thank you for your time and action. We greatly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Heather D.