

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON 2025 SPENDING REDUCTION PROPOSAL

Special Board Meeting | March 6, 2025

FOR OUR FUTURE WORLD
Bellevue School District Strategic Plan



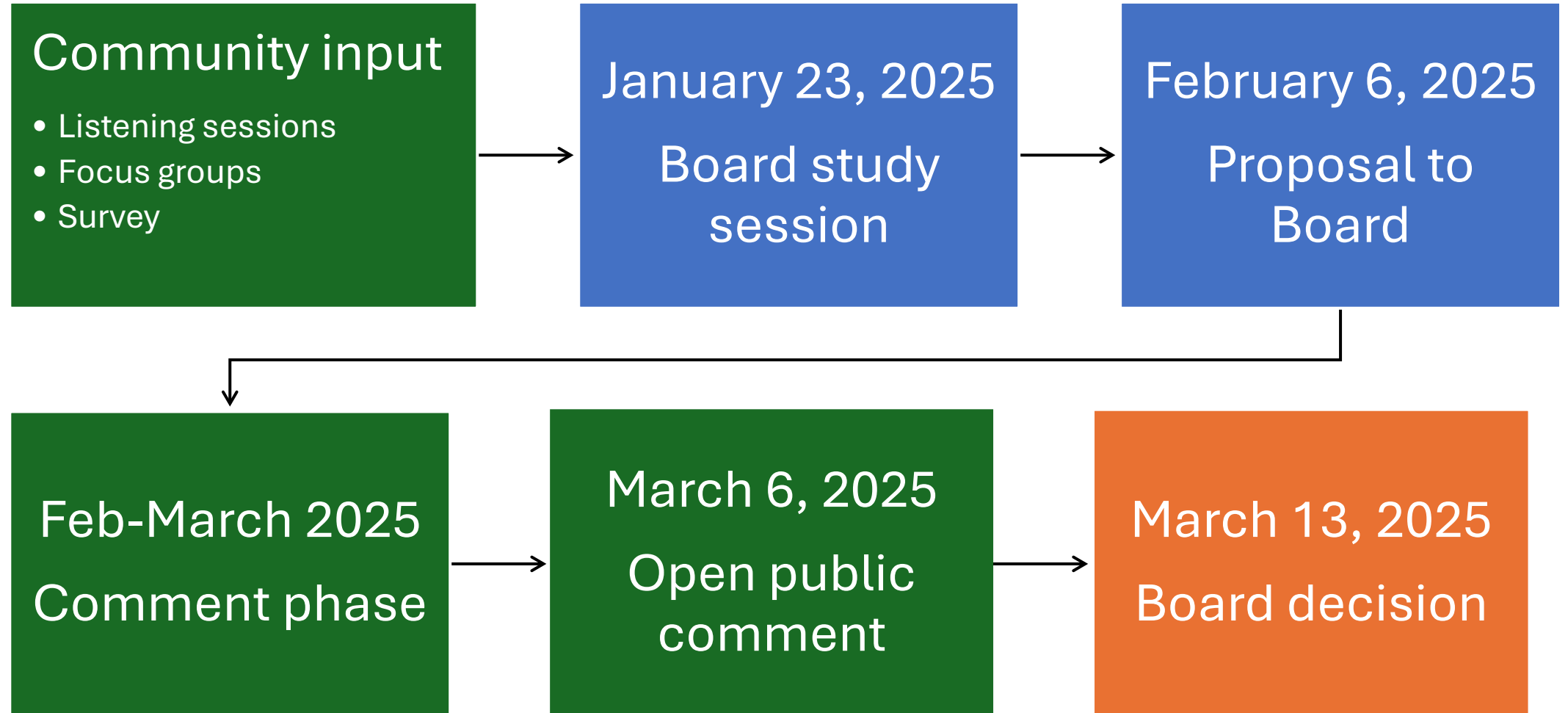
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Community Engagement Plan

- **Phase 1: Community Input (January)**
 - EDDM Spectrum of Engagement: Inform and Consult
 - Purpose: to understand our community's perspectives and ideas on ways to reduce spending, generate revenue, and prioritize trade-offs
 - Includes: listening sessions, focus groups, and survey
- **Phase 2: Comment Phase (February – March)**
 - EDDM Spectrum of Engagement: Inform and Consult
 - Purpose: to provide an opportunity for our community to comment on the Spending Reductions Proposal that was proposed on February 6
 - Includes: survey, focus groups, and public comment opportunity



Timeline



Community Input – Comment Phase

STUDENT OUTREACH

- Chinook Student Leadership Group
- BSD Student Advisory Group
- Tillicum Student Leadership Groups
- Newport High School Black Student Union

FAMILY & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Highland Cafecito (Latinx parents)
- Safe Parking
- Mary's Place

SURVEY & EMAIL

- Open February 10 – 28



5 Key Takeaways

1. Members of our community **understand our fiscal situation** and the need to make spending reductions.
2. The feedback on the proposal **varies somewhat depending on role** (student, staff, families, community) and perspective (ex. elementary, middle, high).
3. Our **staff are feeling the greatest impact** of the proposal.
4. People want the district to address the **impact on student learning and mental health**.
5. The community encourages **continued transparency** in communication.



Comment Survey

English (United States) ...

Comment on the 2025-26 Spending Reductions Proposal

Like many districts across the state, the Bellevue School District is facing significant financial challenges. Please see Dr. Aramaki's Spending Reduction Plan Proposal for 2025-26 posted on the BSD District Budget webpage: <https://www.bsd405.org/about-us/district-budget>

Your feedback is important to us! Please share your comments in the survey below by **11:59 p.m. on February 28th**.

Additional ways to share your voice:

- On March 6th the school board will hold a special meeting at 5:00 p.m. to hear public comments. Register to speak at <https://forms.office.com/r/a24z8PBx1x>
- Email communityinput@bsd405.org

Dr. Aramaki will present the final proposal to the school board for approval on March 13th.

539 responses

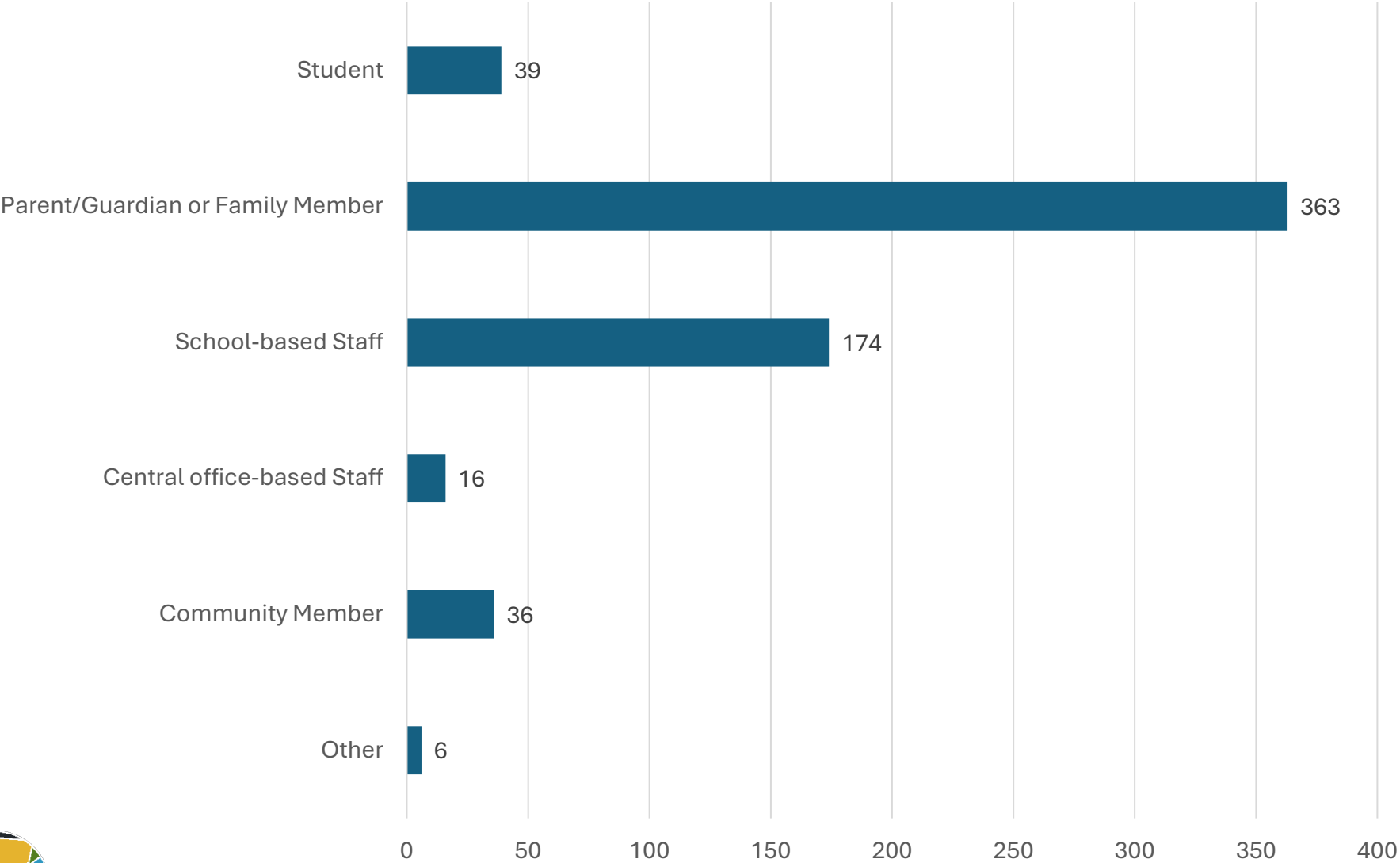


Survey Questions

- Your **role** in the district
- What **challenges** do you think might come up if these proposed reductions happen?
- What would help **mitigate the challenges** created by these proposed reductions?
- What **positives**, if any, do you see with these proposed reductions?
- What **other ideas** do you have to reduce spending or increase enrollment or revenue?
- **What else** would you like district leaders and board members to think about before making final decisions?



Survey Results – Who has responded?



539 total responses



Survey Results: Challenges

Impact on Student Learning and Mental Health

- Larger **class sizes**
- Reduced supports like **mental health**
- Decreased **quality and access** to resources
- Increased **achievement gaps**

Impact of Decreased Staffing Levels

- Job security and **teacher retention**
- Increased **workload**
- Reduced **administrative support**
- Potential increase in **behavioral issues**

Availability of Extracurricular Activities and Community Services

- Reduced **extracurricular** opportunities
- Impact on **student well-being**
- Decreased **community engagement**
- Limited access to **enrichment programs**

Challenges Identified *by Group*

Students

- Concern about loss of **extracurricular activities**
- Concern about loss of supports like **mental health**
- Concern about decreased **individualized support**

Parents & Family Members

- Concern about quality of **education and well-being**
- Concern about student **safety and behavior** supports
- Concern about loss of **critical staff** (ex. APs)
- Concern about impact for **special education** students

Staff

- Concern about **job security**
- Concerns about **workload** and ability to maintain same level of **excellence in teaching and support**

Community Members

- Concern about **financial health and overall reputation**
- Concerns about **community services and partnerships**

Ideas to Mitigate the Challenges

Pursue Alternate Funding Sources

- **Legislative** Advocacy
- Grants, Fundraising, Partnerships, Property Rentals

Reduce Costs

- Reduce **administrative expenses**, streamline bureaucracy
- Implement **efficiencies** (ex. transportation)
- Optimize **staffing** creatively

Optimize Staffing & Programs

- Adjust **class sizes** moderately, ensuring student-teacher ratios remain effective
- Merge or eliminate **under-enrolled** programs, courses

Leverage Community Partnerships

- Collaborate with **community partners**
- Increase **volunteer involvement**

Improve Communication and Partnership

- Continue to **improve transparency** and partnership with parents, staff, and students

Positives About the Plan

Increases Efficiency

- **Streamlines** operations and administrative overhead

Encourages Community Partnership

- Can leverage **community resources**

Focuses on Core Services

- Maintains core educational services and **prioritizes student-facing supports**

Encourages Innovation

- Provides opportunities for **creative problem-solving and innovation**

Stabilizes Our Finances

- **Prevents** more drastic measures in the future (ex. binding conditions)

Improves Transparency and Communication

- Appreciate the district's efforts to **improve transparency and communication** which builds trust

Other Ideas

Pursue Cost Reduction Measures

- Reduce the number of high-level **administrative** positions
- Explore **solar energy** options
- Share services with **neighboring districts**
- Reduce the use of **laptops and iPads** for younger students

Make Staffing Efficiencies

- Reduce the number of **part-time teachers** to save on benefits
- **Share staff** across buildings

What else?

Long-Term Planning and Sustainability

- Consider long-term impact of budget cuts on the district's **reputation, enrollment, and future funding**
- **Avoid** similar budget crises in the future

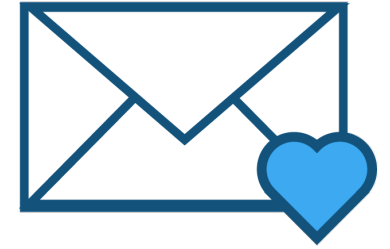
Equity and Inclusion

- Ensure budget cuts do not disproportionately affect **underserved students** and families
- Maintain support for **low-income families** and ensure they have access to necessary resources and services

Specific Suggestions and Concerns

- Consider **school closures** (mixed reactions)
- Prioritize funding on programs and initiatives that have the most significant **impact on student outcomes**

E-mail Responses: Themes



- **Mental Health Supports:** Parents raised concerns about MHAT services, especially in high schools.
 - *Mental health funding cut is concerning. Kids' mental health deteriorating is an environmental trend. What's the plan around increased reliance on community agencies to support students?*
- **Class Sizes & Staffing:** Parents and teachers express concerns about larger class sizes.
 - *I am simply not as effective a teacher with a class of 28 students as a class of 21 students.*
- **Support for Inclusive Practices:** Parents, particularly at Inclusionary Practices Program schools, shared concerns about the impact of staffing cuts on the quality of inclusive education
 - *I am very concerned about what the school with budget changes + inclusive model will be like next year.*
- **Administrative Support:** There were numerous e-mails expressing support for assistant principals and their role in elementary schools.
 - *Our assistant principals play a crucial role in managing student behavior and supporting staff, and their elimination could have significant negative consequences.*
- **SUMMIT Program at High Schools:** A number of students and parents expressed support for the SUMMIT program at high schools
 - *Summit changed my perspective on not only school but the ways to look at life itself. I truly believe that without it I wouldn't be in a place to graduate.*



Targeted Outreach & Focus Groups



Family & Community: Problems

FAMILY & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Highland Cafecito (Latinx parents)
- Safe Parking
- Mary's Place

What **problems** do you think might arise if the proposed reductions are implemented?

- **Decreased Student and Family Support:** Lack of mental health supports, decreased family engagement support, and the potential negative impact on students' academic outcomes.
- **Increased Class Sizes, Decreased Learning:** Larger class sizes could hinder student learning and engagement, particularly for those newer to the country and need to learn English.
- **More Safety Concerns:** There are concerns about increased fights in middle and high school and lack of staff to support students



Family & Community: Mitigations

What would **help reduce the problems** created by these proposed reductions?

- **Increase Community and Volunteer Support:** Increasing volunteer involvement from parents and the community. Better communication with teachers and the community.
- **Optimize Resources:** Rent unused buildings, reduce the number of face-to-face meetings, and have more control over food waste. Analyze and reduce senior executive positions and ensure that remaining staff are effectively utilized.
- **Promote Financial Efficiency:** Implement measures such as charging for broken computers, collecting lost books, and subcontracting transportation services.
- **Transparency and Communication:** Keep families well-informed about how resources are distributed and decisions are made



Family & Community: Positives

What **positive** aspects do you see in these proposed cuts?

- **Teamwork and Efficiency:** Opportunity for parents, teachers, and schools to work together more effectively and efficiently.
- **Focus on Essential Services:** Opportunity to reflect on which roles and services are essential.
- **Community Outreach:** Appreciation for the outreach efforts and inclusion in decision-making.

What **other ideas** do you have to reduce expenses or increase enrollment or revenue?

- **Community Engagement and Fundraising:** Increase fundraising and find creative ways to raise funds.
- **Resource Management:** Make staffing more efficient but don't remove family connection centers.
- **Cost-Saving Measures:** Reduce number of exams, advocate for lower housing rents (affordable housing) to keep families in district and increase enrollment



Family & Community: What Else?

What else would you like district leaders and school board members to think about before making final decisions?

- **Student-Centered Decisions:** Prioritize students' needs and ensuring that all students are supported.
- **Communication and Inclusion:** Improve communication with Hispanic families and provide more instruction on understanding the school system



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBER QUOTES

“The loss of Family Engagement Specialists would be very shocking, the community-school nexus would be missing.”

“Connection Center is very important to families. It’s indispensable.”

“The school district could advocate for more apartment and house rents to be cheaper so people do not move outside Bellevue.”

“Hispanic families are brave and have a voice, but we need more instruction in how to understand the school system so we can collaborate more.”



Students: Problems

STUDENT OUTREACH

- Chinook Student Leadership Group
- Student Advisory Group
- Tillicum Student Leadership Groups
- Newport High School Black Student Union Group

What **problems** do you think might arise if the proposed reductions are implemented?

- **Overburdened Counselors:** Cutting MHAT counselors may lead to overburdened counselors.
- **Barriers to Mental Health Support:** Partnering with organizations like YES could help, but there are concerns about barriers to having to go outside to get support.
- **Stress in Rigorous Environments:** In high-stress environments, having MHAT counselors available is crucial for student well-being.
- **Representation and Advocacy:** Administration and MHAT counselors are seen as top resources for representing minority students and communicating trends within the school or district.
- **Valuable Lessons and Support:** Programs like SOS are valuable, and there is a need to retain staff who represent and aid students and staff in the community.



Students: Mitigations

What would **help reduce the problems** created by these proposed reductions?

- **Representation Matters:** Black administrators, counselors, and educators are invaluable for Black/African American students.
- **Focus on Resilience and Compassion:** Use this an opportunity to train more educators and staff on basic counseling, become more compassionate towards students, and help students build resilience.
- **Improve Transportation (and other operational) Efficiencies:** Utilizing in-district school buses instead of coach buses for sports teams to save funds for mental health and other services.
- **Cost Reduction at School Level:** Explain cost-saving measures to athletics directors, ASB, and administrators to help reduce spending at the school level.



Students: **Positives**

What **positive** aspects do you see in these proposed cuts?

- **Reevaluation and Efficiency:** Opportunity to reevaluate spending, reorganize resources, and make smarter decisions.
- **Focus on Impactful Resources:** The cuts allow the district to keep the most impactful resources and enhance efficiency instead of just removing resources.

What **other ideas** do you have to reduce expenses or increase enrollment or revenue?

- **Marketing & Outreach:** Invest in marketing outreach to attract out-of-district students.



Students: **What else?**

What else would you like district leaders and school board members to think about before making final decisions?

- **Consider Consequences:** Leaders should consider the consequences of their actions, such as the impact on teacher morale and the quality of education in classrooms.
- **Improve Communication:** The budget crisis was communicated late, and there is a need to improve communication with parents, students, teachers, staff, and the community about the situation and its impact.



STUDENT QUOTES

“Black admins are invaluable. Black/African American students feel more comfortable going to them, especially on issues surrounding race”

“Administrators can represent minority students, especially in the big rooms; a reevaluation of the right administrators in the right places is important”

“What makes MHAT counselors special is they know what students are going through in the moment (otherwise), have to get parent's permission, transportation, etc. involved and that could be a barrier”

“Students already struggle to reach out to MHAT counselors in schools and it will only be a bigger hurdle to help students gain necessary mental health resources outside of the school district”

“I’m really happy that our extracurriculars aren’t being cut”

“Being open with students about why these cuts were made is important”



Timeline

