

Highline Public Schools | School Board Regular Meeting - February 11, 2026

Well, good evening, everybody. Great to see everybody here tonight. Welcome to our regular school board meeting. It's Wednesday, February 11th. Can we all please stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance? Thank you. Roll call please.

Director Espinoza.

Here.

Director Tidholm.

Present.

President Van.

Here. And Director Alvarez and Director Holien have an excused absence. And to my left is our superintendent, Dr. Ivan Duran. With that, any calls or changes to tonight's board meeting agenda?

I would move to move-- apologies. One moment. 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 to consent.

So Director Tidholm made the motion to move 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 to the consent agenda.

I second.

All those in favor?

We need to do a roll call vote, please. Director Tidholm.

Yay.

Director Espinoza.

Yes.

President Van.

Yay.

This motion passes three to none.

Thank you. All right. Well, good evening, everyone. I just want to share we have a lot of celebrations and recognitions tonight. As we gather to celebrate Lunar New Year, we honor a tradition that symbolizes renewal, unity, and hope for the year ahead. Across many Asian cultures, the dragon represents strength, wisdom, and protection. Its stance is a powerful expression of energy and joy, believed to bring good luck, good fortune, and prosperity to all.

So tonight, our Raisbeck Aviation AAPI community proudly shares this vibrant tradition with you. May this performance spark excitement, inspire connection, and usher a year filled with success and opportunity for all. So please welcome in welcoming our Raisbeck Aviation AAPI dance team, dragon dance team.

That is wonderful. Thank you so much. With that, I'm going to have Cindy and Ms. Tipton come on up. We're going to do a quick photo. Everybody give them another round of applause, please.

All right. We're going to move on to our acknowledgments and appreciations here. And we're going to grab a mic. Get that going. First up here, we're going to recognize it's CTE month. Can I please invite Elizabeth Palow, our CTE Assistant Director, to come on up? Director Tidholm.

Whereas the month of February has been designated career and technical education month by the Association for Career and Technical Education. And whereas profound economic and technological advances necessitate a capable, educated workforce with career ready skills, thereby placing new and additional responsibilities on our educational system.

And whereas career and technical education, excuse me, connects Americans with potential careers and is the backbone of a strong, well-educated workplace, which fosters productivity in business and industry and contributes to American leadership in the international marketplace and fill the growing skills gaps. And whereas career and technical education offers individuals lifelong opportunities to learn new skills, which provide them with career choices and potential satisfaction.

And whereas the ever increasing cooperative events-- efforts, I'm sorry, of career and technical educators, businesses, and industries stimulate the growth and vitality of our local economy and that of the entire nation by preparing graduates for career fields forecast to experience the largest demand in the next decade. Now, therefore, the school board and superintendent of Highline Public Schools do hereby proclaim February as Career and Technical Education Month in Highline and urge all Highline citizens to become familiar with the services and benefits offered by the career and technical education programs in our district.

Thank you so much for that. Good evening, Superintendent Duran, President Van, and members of the Highline School Board. My name is Elizabeth Palow, and I serve as the Assistant Director for CTE. And it is an honor that I get to represent Highline CTE programs serving students from seventh to 12th grade. And today, also speaking for the Puget Sound Skills Center.

February is Career and Technical Education Month, and in Highline, CTE is more than a collection of classes. It's one of the most powerful ways we fulfill our promise of preparing our students for the futures they choose. Every day, our students step into learning environments where their passions become possibilities. From engineering, health, science, American Sign Language, computer science, commercial art, to our state recognized construction trades pre-apprenticeship program and so many more.

Our pathways begin in middle school, where students develop essential 21st century skills that prepare them for high school and beyond, and can extend to our specialized programs at the Puget Sound Skills Center, including things like auto tech, dental assisting, and digital sound, to name a few, that are designed to provide students with industry grade experiences.

Behind these opportunities are exceptionally committed CTE teachers. They not only teach technical skills, they guide our students towards real world successes. They prepare students for industry recognized credentials and college credits that open doors to colleges and careers. They connect classrooms to careers through internships, guest speakers, and field trips, and they closely collaborate with industry advisory committees to ensure our programs reflect current trends and evolving workforce needs.

CTE is where our students discover what they love, what they're good at, and how they can contribute to their community and world. It's hands on, it's relevant, and it's life changing. Thank you for your continued support of CTE and for believing, like we do, that every student deserves a future filled with choice, opportunity, and hope. Thank you so much.

Thank you so much. Can I have you come on up and all the CTE teachers and representatives come on up for a photo, please?

Going to move on to School Counselors Week, even though counselors week was last week. But since this was our only meeting in February, we still wanted to take the time to recognize and appreciate all that they do. So with that, can I please have Melissa Pointer, our Director of Social Emotional Learning, and Janet Blanford, Director of Secondary Success, College and Career Readiness come on up. Dr. Espinoza, a pleasure, please.

Thank you. So whereas school counselors are employed in our schools to help students reach their full potential, and whereas school counselors are actively committed to helping students explore their abilities, strengths, interests, and talents as these traits relate to career awareness and development. And whereas school counselors help parents or guardians focus on ways to further the educational, personal, and social growth of their children.

And whereas school counselors work with teachers and other educators to help students explore their potential and set realistic goals for themselves. And whereas school counselors seek to identify and utilize community resources that can enhance and complement the comprehensive school counseling programs and help students become productive members of society. And whereas comprehensive school counseling programs are considered an integral part of the educational process that enables all students to achieve a success in school.

Now, therefore, the School Board and Superintendent of Highline Public Schools do hereby proclaim that February 2 to the 6, 2026 was the National School Counseling Week in Highline, and we urge all Highline to join us in honoring and to recognize the dedication and hard work of all school counselors. Thank you so much.

Thank you so much for having us. We're so excited to be here to celebrate the invaluable work of our school counselors, and we're actually going to have Melissa Knudsen, Principal Intern and School Counseling Specialist come up and talk a little bit about the invaluable work they do in addition to what you shared. Thank you.

Good evening, Superintendent Duran and members of the Highland Public Schools School Board. I am honored to be able to talk about our school counselors and just to celebrate the proclamation, even though it was last week, of National School Counseling Week. I want to thank you for recognizing the essential work of school counselors across Highline Public Schools.

National School Counseling Week is intended to focus public attention on the unique contributions counselors make within our school systems, and to highlight the way that they support students' college and career development, academic success, social emotional learning, and as well as their long term well-being.

This year's National School Counseling Week theme was school counselors amplify student success, which aligns so powerfully with our promise that we make to our kiddos here in this district. Every student known by name, strength, and need, and graduating prepared for the future they choose. Counselors play a key role in upholding that promise by advocating for students, by removing barriers and by preparing them, or helping to prepare them for the future they choose.

Thank you for uplifting the role of school counseling in Highland Public Schools. Your support strengthens our collective commitment to amplifying the success, pardon me, of every student and ensuring that we really do deliver on that promise that we make to them. Thank you.

Can we have all of our counselors come on up and our support staff, please?

Yeah, a little bit in the middle. Thank you.

We have one more recognition and then move on to our community partner. As you know, February is Black History Month. We're going to be sharing on our screen the recognition on Highline's website this month. This year, Highline is centering student voices during Black History Month. We asked students from across our schools one question. What does Black History mean to you today and for the future?

Students shared their reflections in their own words. Black History Month is a time to honor the past, recognize the present, and look ahead. It began as a way to ensure Black history was taught, shared, and remembered. Today, it is also about listening, especially to the voices that shape our future.

This year marks 100 years of national Black history commemorations. This work connects directly to our promise. In Highline, we are committed to knowing every student by name, strength, and need. That includes creating space for students to see themselves in history, and to share what that history means to them now and moving forward.

I encourage everyone to explore our students' words on the website. Thank you to the students who shared their thoughts, and thank you to our communications team for their work to put Black History Month recognition together on our website. Thank you.

We have a community partner we're going to be recognizing tonight. Can I please have Micaela White, our Enrollment Director?
[INAUDIBLE] Thank you so much, Micaela.

Good evening School Board directors, Dr. Van, and members of our Highline community. High schools are built around a four year finish line. But for students who fall behind or step away, that finish line can feel out of reach. In Highline, reengagement is more than programs. It's a mindset that sees students' strengths and potential even when their path takes a detour.

Tonight, we honor a partner who embodies this belief, the Open Doors Career Link program, a long standing collaboration between South Seattle College and Highline Public schools. Since 1994, Career Link has supported students ages 16 to 21 whose education was interrupted, offering no cost pathways to complete high school, earn a GED, and connect to college and careers.

Grounded in a shared truth, students labeled as dropouts are not unmotivated. They are resilient young people navigating real barriers, not a lack of ability or ambition. Career Link shows what happens when we pair flexible pathways with genuine belief. Their work helps students move forward with confidence, hope, and a future of their choosing. Please join me in recognizing the Career Link team directors Curt Peterson and Molly Ward for their unwavering commitment to Highline students and the community.

Thank you. Nice to see you all. Nice to see you again. You were at our graduation last year, I believe. I'm going to give you a quick two minute history of our program, because it goes all the way back with Highline. In the mid '90s, the college decided this population deserved a chance to learn on a college campus as well. And when they were looking for a partner to do that with, they came to Highline, even though we're up in West Seattle.

And for the first 10 years, it was a GED model plus CTE. It worked real well, but we found ourselves in the early 2000s with ed reform. We looked around the room and Molly and I had been there. We came from this K12 world and we said, you know, we could do diplomas. And we wanted to offer everything a kid would need to get a diploma, and then hold their hand into the college game. And again, we came to Highline said, what do you guys think we want to do diplomas? And Highline was game again.

And it was super successful. Took kids, took our classes, they got diplomas with us, thousands and thousands of college credits along the way, and it started to spread around the state. So this partnership has spread around Washington. The culmination of that was they codified that in the Open Doors laws. Those laws were written out of partnerships like the partnership we have.

And so since the last 10 years, the partnership since 2014, it has all been under Open Doors, but it has spread to tens of thousands of kids around the state. So it's a neat model, and it really, really works.

So thank you for your support. I have a loud voice. I feel like it's going to really project. I just want to highlight two students. Unfortunately, they could not be here tonight. They were involved, I think, in Seahawk activities today. So that is exciting for them.

But I have two students. We have many hundreds of students that have graduated from Career Link over the course of the years. I'm going to highlight two from last year that show the different pathways a student can take.

The first one, Edith, went to regular high school. She was bullied there. It was not a good experience. She moved to online school, where she felt really lonely and didn't feel like that was a good fit either. So she just did a search for alternative high schools and she found Career Link last fall. She came to us. She made friends academically. She just blossomed. Spring of last year, she took a full load of college classes very similar to what a Running Start student would do.

And now she is at the University of Washington. I just did a reference for her. She's going to go to Vienna in the spring on a study abroad. And her life has just kind of taken off. So having that opportunity to come to Career Link, take college classes, and just be successful was huge.

Second student had a really hard time coming to school, both at their regular high school and then at Career Link. So we talked to this student about doing our GED model. She did that, because she was just having troubles at home, and coming to school every day was a challenge. So she graduated with her GED, and now she's in the heavy diesel program at South Seattle College in her second quarter.

So it is students like these who just didn't fit in with a traditional high school pathway that Career Link serves. And we're so happy with this partnership. Thank you.

Thank you so much. Can you come on up for a picture, please? And then I'm going to introduce Dr. Kevin King to come on up. He's our Instructional Leadership Executive Director. We have a school presentation tonight. So Dr. King.

Thank you, Board President Van. Superintendent, Dr. Duran, prestigious members of the board, good evening. Thank you for your steadfast and courageous leadership through these most critical times for our students, families, and community.

It is my honor to introduce this evening key members of the Seahurst Elementary School community. They are living Highline's promise, specifically leveraging student strengths and needs by supporting students to drive their learning. Here to tell you more are Seahurst leaders, Elizabeth Maine, Jessica Ma, and fifth grade leader, Michael. Please come to the podium.

I'm going to let him sit, because he's going to upstage me. Good evening, Dr. Duran, members of the School Board. Thank you so much for having us. I'm Elizabeth Maine, the very proud principal of Seahurst Elementary. In a moment, you'll hear from Jessica Ma, our wonderful Assistant Principal. I want to shout out some of our fabulous Seahurst staff who are in the audience. And you will be really excited to hear from our fifth grader, Michael. He's going to bring us home at the end.

So tonight we're going to briefly share some of the ways that Seahurst is living out the Highline promise of knowing students by name, strength, and need. Seahurst is one of our smaller elementary schools in Highline that gives us a really close, tight knit community. And our motto is innovate, collaborate, and belong.

Something that we're really proud of at Seahurst and our identity is that over 40% of our students are multilingual learners, which we'll be talking about in a minute. And we're also really proud that Seahurst houses Highline's only elementary virtual program. Right now that's in grades two through five. And we find that by having our virtual program as part of our campus, we really can include our virtual stars and they're full part of our community. So we have students come in on Fridays, we have students come in person for interventions, and we really are just that community of stars that all belongs together.

Tonight, we're going to be focusing in on some ways we're addressing innovative learning and then our culture of belonging. And we'll start with innovative learning. So one of our big priorities this year, which I think is shared district-wide, is literacy growth for all students. And you can see on our slides, we have some sort of specific goals around that growth. One of them is that we want to increase the number of students who are showing a year or more of growth in literacy, which we measure with our iReady test. So we set a goal to grow by seven percentage points from where we were at last year.

And then also, we're really thinking about the percentage of our students who read two or more grade levels below grade level, and closing that number by really supporting our students who need support with maybe some of the basic building blocks of reading. We feel that we're really preparing them for the future they choose. And ultimately, we want all these numbers to be at 100%. We want 100% of our students making a year or more of growth, and we want to have 0 students reading two or more grade levels below, but we're working on taking steps to get there.

Then we also have some goals around a sense of belonging. Ultimately, our goal is that every single student, we're preschool through fifth grade, feels that they belong at Seahurst. And so we've set goals based on our panorama data to really increase that number of students who report that sense of belonging.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about some work we're doing around our literacy learning, and we're going to talk about our multilingual learners. Because as I said, that's a huge population of students at Seahurst. You can see that Michael here from last year is represented in these slides. He's very excited. I don't think he's seen that picture of himself yet. But over 40% of our students at Seahurst are multilingual learners. The majority of them are first language Spanish speakers, although we do have many other languages represented.

And when Miss Ma first came to Seahurst, this is our third year leading together, we and the staff looked at our literacy data after the '23, '24 school year, and we saw that our non-multilingual learners were making significantly more growth than our multilingual learners. And we thought this is a gap that we really want to address, and this is the way that equity can live out in our school.

So last year, we made some really targeted efforts through staff PD, through our work with teachers, and then through our practices with students to increase what we were doing to support our multilingual learners. So we thought about adding visuals to our classrooms, giving students opportunities to talk, really making language learning a piece of what we're doing every day and the way we teach. And we've continued that work this year. We're talking a lot about how students talk to each other, how students get practice with language.

And you can see some examples on our slide. So we have four signature talk moves we call them at Seahurst. You'll see them in every classroom. You'll see them in assemblies. We also have lots of people saying agree. In a classroom, you might see students saying, I have another idea or I want to add on, or my favorite, a hand over the heart just means I empathize with you. I understand what you're saying. And it's a way that we can engage and practice language without needing to speak.

And then a couple other just artifacts they wanted to share with you. We've done a lot of work around Guided Language Acquisition Design, which you might hear abbreviated as GLAD strategies. And these are strategies specifically to support language development through content. So you have an example of a second grade sentence patterning chart where students can take different parts of speech, they're color coded, and put them together to support their writing. And then on the right, you have some first graders gathered around a pictorial input chart, which uses images and labels, and again, color coding to help students kind of visualize a bank of learning that they've done. And then they refer to it over the course of several different lessons.

And so some data that we're proud of. Something that we really celebrated at the beginning of this year was when we compared our iReady growth from '23, '24 to '24, '25 last year. We saw that we actually had flipped that pattern that we'd seen and our multilingual learners, made more growth last year than our non-multilingual learners. And just really being explicit and talking about it all the time I think was something that was really powerful for all of us.

And then a more recent celebration. This year, this is really new data, our winter 2026 iReady data came out in January. And you can see that we've made some pretty big jumps since the fall in terms of our students at or above grade level, one grade level below. And then you can see we're trying to close that two grade levels below gap.

And something that's not shown here, but that we're really proud of, is we have 36% of our students already who have made a year's worth of growth. And our goal for the end of the year was 50% of our students. So we're really hoping we can knock that number out of the water and just watch our students continue to grow. So Jessica Ma, our Assistant Principal, is going to come up now and share a little bit about the culture of belonging here at Seahurst.

Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to share the work Seahurst Elementary is doing to build a culture of belonging. At Seahurst, our work is intentional and focused on everyone in our school community, students, family, and staff.

For our students, one of the foundational ways we build belonging is through our weekly habit of the week. Every classroom sets aside dedicated time each morning for explicit teaching around the focus habit. For example, this week, our focus is I can show kindness by honoring others identities. Students don't just learn about the habit. They see it modeled, they practice it, and they are recognized for it. We provide school-wide opportunities to celebrate students who demonstrate the habit in action.

We also foster belonging through heritage month celebrations and opportunities for student voice and leadership. Star Squad and student job opportunities empower students to contribute meaningfully to our school community. For families, belonging means partnerships. We host a variety of family engagement opportunities to bring our community together in a joyful and meaningful way. Some examples include Family Art Fridays in partnership with the Seattle Art Museum and other family events throughout the year. Tomorrow we're really excited to have our academic carnival night, where we're going to engage families in learning activities together in a fun and welcoming environment.

For staff, we foster a culture of belonging by creating opportunities for staff to feel supported and connected. This year, we launched a new paramentor program that we are especially proud of. We paired veteran paraeducators with new paraeducators to serve as mentors. This program has strengthened our onboarding process for new paras and helped to create connections for our team.

Here we have some pictures. So the one on the left is a picture from our annual MLK Legacy March. And then on the right, we have our Family Art Friday. And then here we have some photos from Open House and again from Family Art Friday.

Last, we have some data from panorama student and staff surveys that we'd like to share. We're really proud that our student data remains relatively high. At the same time, we're committed to continuous growth. Our data shows that while many students report a positive sense of belonging, we have an opportunity to strengthen that experience, particularly with our third through fifth graders.

To better understand student voice, our culture and climate team administered a mid-year paper pencil survey focused specifically around questions about belonging. We're currently reviewing that data as a school team and will be identifying next steps to further increase student sense of belonging.

On our fall panorama data, we were really encouraged to see the highest percentages since the '23, '24 school year around sense of belonging for both certificated and classified staff. We're especially encouraged to see the numbers growing, particularly amongst our classified staff, where we have increased our efforts to support our team.

Thank you, Jessica. All right. So we're going to conclude with some real world examples. So we've included a couple of quotes we have from families. So I'll read. This one was from a first grade parent. "Seahurst is such an amazing school, and the teachers are so nice and kind. We are a Native American family, and we are seen and heard. My daughter gets excited to start the school day because the songs playing are songs that she knows from Roblox video games she likes to play." And it is true that if you come to Seahurst, we're often playing music outside at arrival and dismissal. We take some student requests.

And then a quote from one of our parents who has a kindergartner and a third grader. "I just wanted to express how wonderful literacy night was last night. My kids had a blast doing all the activities, and were so excited to meet the author or 'Arthur' as my four-year-old called her. It was great to see so many teachers present and so many families engaged." And this was almost exactly a year ago. And like Jessica said, we have our academic carnival night. It is this year tomorrow, which we're very excited for.

All right, now comes the very best part. I am so excited to introduce Michael. He is one of our fifth grade stars, and he's been with us since second grade. And he's going to share with you all a little bit about what he loves at Seahurst.

Hi, my name is Michael. I'm in fifth grade at Seahurst. I have grown a lot as a reader since coming to Seahurst. I read at school, at home, on the bus, and even when I'm eating. I've also grown a lot by paying attention in class. My fifth grade teacher teaches me a lot about reading, spelling, and punctuation. I've grown in writing paragraphs and essays. I use strategies like the [INAUDIBLE] paragraph, and I've learned vocabulary words like ecosystem and biodiversity. That is how I've grown a lot in reading.

What I love about Seahurst is that all the teachers are really nice and passionate about our learning. I also love that I can make a lot of friends and play at recess with them. I love the after school programs and all the kindness they give us. I also love all the specialist teachers like music, PE, library, and science.

I really love the library. I love that we can get books and bring them home and read them. The library is really clean and really organized. I can always find what I need. I also love that the principles are really nice and they care about our safety like all the other teachers. Thank you for your time and thank you, School Board, for having me. Have a great night.

Hey, I told you he needed to go last. [LAUGHS] All right, so with that, we welcome any questions or comments for myself, for Jessica, for Michael about the work we're doing at Seahurst.

Thank you very much, Principal Maine. Directors, any questions or comments?

I guess I could start. Hi, Principal Maine. Thank you so much. I'm going to start with Michael. Michael, thank you for being here and for sharing your powerful voice. We're so proud of you. Keep reading. Keep being a leader. We need your voice. Thank you. And to the parents.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

Yeah, so let's see. I think I'm going to go with a question around the new paraeducator mentor program. So you mentioned that this was something that you are growing. At this point, are there any key learnings that you want to share with us?

That's a really great question. I need to just shout out-- I can answer the question, but I need to shout out Jessica, our Assistant Principal, because this was really her kind of baby and brainchild. And so something I think we noticed this year is we hired a lot of new classified staff this year. And just because of the way the days are structured, classified staff don't always have as much time in staff meetings as we do, and their contractual hours are a little different. And it's a built in system within our building and within Highline for new teachers to have mentors.

And I think what we realized with so many new people this year is as much as Jessica and I tried to support them, we realized, I don't know that we're the right people. I think you having people who have been in exactly your shoes, done this job, know the perspective of a classified educator that you can go to with big questions, little questions, everything in between, and who you're potentially sharing an office space with or you see all the time would just be really supportive.

And so we used some budget that we had set aside for professional development to pay extra service to some of our veteran paraeducators, who were also really excited about the program. I think it helped that they were so excited. And I think one learning that we have is just it is so wonderful to have those mentors.

I think our new paraeducators are feeling supported in a way that would be impossible for us to give them without that mentor program. And then I think what's been so nice for us is those mentors have been able to say, hey, I'm hearing this common theme from my mentees about questions around this. Could we do some professional development or could we address that in another way?

So a takeaway I have is that it's great, and I would love to find a way to systematize paraeducator mentors the way we do for teachers. And also that I think both our mentees and mentors are getting a lot out of that partnership.

Thank you. And just one comment. So I'm a parent of a Seahurst student. My son's a second grader, part of the virtual learning program and then at Seahurst part of the week. And I just want to say thank you for all the support that you've given him. He's just growing and feels like he's part of the community. And I see that in other students, so I'm really grateful.

He is and we love him.

Thank you, Director Tidholm.

I was going to ask something similar, but you answered it with the paraeducator program. That's really great. I'm super excited that you guys are doing that. And Michael, thank you for coming to speak. That was very brave of you. Like Director Espinoza said, you keep being a leader and using your voice. And the library is also my favorite place. So thank you for coming.

Thank you so much, Michael. I just want to thank you for being here tonight, and so proud of you. Thanks for coming and sharing what you love about Seahurst. And it means so much to hear you speak about your school and the support that you get. You're representing your school very proudly, so thank you so much.

I do have a couple questions to ask of you. You answered one of them, but I have two more. So the winter data shows a really strong shift in students at or above grade level, the 19% to 36%. So can you share with us what really drove that growth?

That's a great question, and it's something we've been talking about in bigger teams, in smaller teams. I really feel like I just have to shout out many of the people in this room and our teaching staff. We have really strong teachers at Seahurst. I feel so, so fortunate to have a teaching staff who knows their students, who are really living out that promise.

A couple things. I think the work we've done around multilingual learners to build on what I shared has really taken hold in some great ways in classrooms. If you come into any classroom at Seahurst, you're going to see those pictorial input charts up. You're going to see students interacting in really authentic ways, having conversations and really engaging. And I think we've talked a lot about over the past couple years how to be an engaged learner, sort of using a lot of those strategies we talk about. And I think we're just seeing that practice grow and grow.

Something else we didn't talk about as much that we're also really proud of, and that, again, Mrs. Ma, Jessica, has really led at our school, is we've built a strong intervention program where we're really going through six to eight week cycles of our students who have the highest levels of need being in targeted small groups. They're sometimes with classroom teachers, they're sometimes with paraeducators, but each grade level has a time during the day when for 30 minutes, students are getting what they need.

So if that's a fourth grader who still needs to work on sounding out words and word parts, we do that. If that's a second grader who needs to be reading higher level chapter books in a small group, we do that. And I think just over the past three years that Jessica and I have worked together, we've tried to really strengthen that school-wide intervention program and build that up. So I would say amazing teachers is the number one reason and amazing students is tied for number one. And then just those tier one kind of classroom practices followed by our intervention system.

Thank you so much. And I'm going to do one last question here. Looking at your presentation, if you could double down on one strategy, you have quite a few here and it's working, what would it be? If you were able to double down on one.

I've been thinking about that. It's a really hard question, because there's so much happening in schools all the time. But when I think about just our classroom teaching and when I think about so many of the strategies we've tried on for our multilingual learners, I think really doubling down on how are we giving students the voice in our classroom by making the content accessible so they can talk about it, by giving students opportunities to talk and ways to talk, showing sentence stems, really listening.

Like, OK, when I tell you to turn and talk to your partner, are you talking? If you're not, how can I get you there? And really just continuing to build that student agency. So student voices are the ones we're hearing. Students like Michael. I also need to shout out Michael's amazing sister [INAUDIBLE], who's a fourth grader. She's been a fantastic audience member and was asking very good questions earlier in the presentation. But just how are we giving our students that agency?

So that's not really a strategy, but I think what we want to double down on at Seahurst is how are we creating students who are engaged learners? How are they driving their learning? How are they talking about things and how are they really able to get up and share with all of you? This is what I'm learning at Seahurst. And I wrote these words and now I'm sharing them.

Thank you so much.

You're so welcome.

All right. Can we give them around of applause and Michael? Thank you very much. And that is going to conclude our acknowledgment and our appreciation for this evening. We have our superintendents reports. Dr. Duran.

All right. Thank you, President Van. I want to thank our students from Raisbeck for the performance and the team from Seahurst for the school presentation tonight. Having students, staff, and families at our board meetings is always a reminder of why we do this work.

I want to thank our educators, family, staff, and Highline community for all you do to support our students and ensure the Highline promise comes true, that all students are known by name, strength, and need and graduate prepared for the future they choose. We are all here to support our students. We stand by our students. We stand by our educators. And when we come together, we are stronger together.

This is the last year of our current strategic plan. We have heard clearly over the past year from our students, families, staff, community that Highline's strategic direction is the right one. The passage of our levy, along with recent polling and survey results, show strong alignment around our goals and our Highline promise. We have begun a refinement process of the district's plan, with a focus on how we implement our strategic plan goals and how we measure progress. Anecdotally, initial feedback indicates we have a lot more work to do, and it will take all of us working together to reach our goals.

We continue to seek input from our Highline community using thought exchange. Family, students, staff, and community members are invited to share their thoughts online. The thought exchange is open now at highlineschools.org but will close at the end of this week. So please spend some time adding your thoughts and contributing to the work that we need to do to support our goals and ensure this promise comes true for everyone of our students. It's now my pleasure to invite Jeb Binns, the Highline Education President, to come to the podium to share a few remarks. Welcome, Jeb.

Good evening. I'll start with letting you know that my duties as assigned, also known as Vice President, who is always by my side at this meeting, is not here tonight because she is in Washington, DC fulfilling her role as an NEA Director. And she told me if I didn't tell you that, that I would be in trouble. So, Shauna, I told them that.

Very good. Duly noted.

OK, just wanted to make sure. Good evening, Board Directors, and Superintendent Duran. My name is Jeb Binns, and I'm here tonight representing the Highline Education Association to speak in support of student designed and student led walkouts protesting ICE and the treatment of immigrants in our community.

Let me be clear from the outset this isn't about policy. It's about who we are as a district and what we believe the young people we serve every single day. Our students are watching how we respond when their communities are under threat. They're watching to see if we mean what we say. All students belong here.

Civics lesson time. Old habits die hard. The Supreme Court settled this question over 50 years ago in *Tinker v Des Moines*. In 1969, the court ruled 7 to 2 that students don't shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. That case involved students who wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The court held that schools cannot prohibit student expressions unless it would materially and substantially interfere with school operations or the rights of others.

Not theoretical disruption, not discomfort with the message, actual substantial disruption. And here's what matters. In *Tinker*, there was no actual interference. The school only feared disruption. The court said it wasn't enough. Our students today have the same constitutional protections as those students did in Iowa in 1965.

This principle goes back even farther. 1943, *West Virginia v Barnette*. Justice Robert Jackson wrote that one of the most powerful statements in our constitutional history, if there is any fixed Star in our constitutional constellation, is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. That's our tradition.

Public education shouldn't strangle the free mind at its source, or teach youth to discount important principles of government as mere platitudes. Education should enable students to make informed choices about what to believe in and how to express those beliefs.

Now, I want to be absolutely clear about something you'll likely hear tonight. These walkouts are student designed and student led. Period, full stop. You may hear claims that teachers told students what to do, what to say, that educators forced or coerced participation. Those claims are false. Our students organize these actions themselves because these issues directly impact their lives, their families, their communities. They don't need teachers to tell them when their neighbors are afraid. They don't need teachers to tell them when their classmates are missing from school because of fear. They get it.

Our role of educators isn't to direct student activism, it's to support student voice. There's a profound difference. When students come to us asking how to organize safely, how to communicate their message effectively, how to express their constitutional rights responsibly, we can provide guidance without directing the content. That's what good educators do. We create space for student leadership without controlling it.

This isn't about discipline. It's about support. It's about recognizing that student led organizing is a powerful form of civic education. Our students in Highline aren't asking adults to solve this for them or to tell them what to think. They're asking us to trust them, to use their voices, to organize peacefully, and to make their own choices about how to respond to injustices in their community.

And let's be honest about what's happening right now. We've seen Minneapolis Public Schools create hybrid learning because of the massive attendance decline driven by fear. We've seen Saint Paul, the second largest district in Minnesota, move to remote operations. ICE activity is increasing in the South Sound. Our students aren't reacting to abstractions. They're reacting to real threats to their families, their neighborhoods, their friends, and their sense of safety.

When students organize a walkout, they're not disrupting their education. They're engaging in it. They're practicing democracy. They're learning that their voices matter, that collective action is powerful, that standing up for what you believe in takes courage. That is civic education at its finest. Supporting student-led walkouts doesn't mean that we abandon our responsibility to maintain safe and orderly schools. It means we recognize that sometimes the most important learning happens when students take the initiative to stand up for their communities. It means we trust them to be thoughtful, organized, and purposeful in their dissent.

This board has an opportunity tonight to stand up on the right side of history and the right side of the law. Support our students' constitutional rights. Let them know that when they organize peacefully to protest injustice, that we've got their backs. Because if we don't protect their rights right now, we're teaching them that those rights don't really matter. Tinker was decided 56 years ago, Barnette decided 82. The principles haven't changed. Students have rights, and those rights don't disappear when they walk through our doors. Our students are counting on us. Let's not let them down. Thank you.

Thank you, Dr. Duran. We're going to move to our board reports, and I'm going to start with Director Tidholm.

First of all, thank you, Jeb. So the Highline Schools Foundation is seeking applications from high school seniors for its annual scholarship program. The scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$30,000 and can be used for college, trade school, or career training. The students complete one application to be considered by multiple scholarships, and the deadline is Wednesday, February 28.

National Board teachers. Last night, 20 Highline School District teachers, I'm sorry, were recognized for earning their National Board certification. Five educators renewed their certification and two school nurses also completed the national certification this year. The rigorous process recognizes high levels of professional practice and leadership in schools. Highline is among the top five districts in Washington for new board certified educators, which is pretty cool.

Also had the pleasure last weekend of attending the Rainier Educators of Color Conference, which was co-founded by our very own Shauna Moore. Really grateful to be in that space. I recognize it is a space for educators. So I am grateful that I was able to be there in that safe space for them.

As a school director, just being able to be in that space and hearing some of the experiences of the educators and the school staff, things that I wouldn't necessarily consider from the seat that I'm sitting in or even as a parent, it was really great. And having that space for them to be and also one of our very own actually security guards has a catering business and they catered it. And there were also some really good sandwiches. Thank you for that.

And then legislative stuff. Excuse me. So we're midway through the session. We're past the big cut off, which is February 4, which is the deadline for any bills to pass their house of origin policy committees. Unfortunately, many of them that would have benefited school districts didn't get through. They died.

One of the positive things, though, 2257 House Bill, it did pass out of the Finance Committee, and that's the one that is impacting the sales tax that is impacting schools. We pay about half a-- I'm sorry, half a-- is it half a million? Yeah, half a million every year added on just to that tax was started in October. This is October? Initially, it wasn't intended to impact school districts. However, the language didn't specify that, so it has impacted us. And when the state is not fulfilling their paramount duty to fully fund education, half a million could go a long way.

Other potentials is going to be the millionaire's tax, which we are hoping-- Superintendent [INAUDIBLE] did note that he would like that to benefit schools. We shall see how that goes. We have a long way for that to be passed, implemented, and then to see any funds if it does happen. But crossing our fingers.

And then also some of them didn't go through that we were really looking forward to would be the-- what number? I don't have the number. I'm sorry. But the one that would have required fees for exorbitant public records requests to mitigate the impacts on school districts. Four more weeks left in the session. So crossing our fingers that the state will fulfill their paramount duty to fully fund education. That's all that I have.

Thank you, Director Tidholm. Dr. Espinoza.

Yes, thank you. So I have a host of updates. I'm going to start with Highline High School had a belonging exhibit where students curated at the Highline Heritage Museum an exhibit that was focused on belonging. Students created art and shared personal stories that explored immigration identity and what it means to belong. The exhibit is on display in the museum in [INAUDIBLE] through this month.

Let's see. At [INAUDIBLE], students attended the University of Washington A Doctor For A Day program this month. Students explored medical careers through hands on activities with practicing doctors and physicians and researchers. And experiences of this sort help students connect learning to future career pathways.

In the last couple of months, I also had the privilege to visit a few schools. I was at Pacific and Seahurst and Evergreen. I learned so much from the staff and from students, and was a witness to a lot of their incredible programming there.

So earlier this week, I attended a music class at North Hill where I saw classes from the kindergarten and second grade students. And then I was also there in support for our strategic plan refinement meetings with families and community and then with staff. And then I will be back at Evergreen this week for some more student led activities.

I also want to just reiterate how moved I am by Michael's presentation and his voice. His voice matters, and it belongs in this room and in our community, in our schools. That, to me, is a form of civic engagement. And I want to speak about civic engagement that we have seen by our students in our communities in Highline across the weeks.

Civic engagement is the foundation, it's a cornerstone to democracy, and learning how to participate thoughtfully and respectfully is part of education. Our students are not separate from the world around them. They are part of it. They see what is happening locally and globally, and they will inherit the future that we are shaping today. When young people ask questions and when they share their perspectives and take part in civic processes, they are practicing the very skills of democracy that our country is intended to be built upon.

I believe in students. I believe in their capacity to think critically, to lead with integrity and dignity, to use their voices for good. I support students in developing these skills, not only for them as a benefit, but because it benefits our entire community. Gracias.

Thank you, Dr. Espinoza. Good evening, everybody. It's been a very busy few weeks across the district for staff, families, and the broader community. So thanks to those who took the time to attend our community meetings. The conversations around the refinement of our strategic goals and budget aren't always simple, but they do matter. So thank you.

There was an opportunity to attend this staff meeting at Evergreen and the community meeting at Madrona, alongside Dr. Espinoza and the members of the team. So what stood out to me the most in these spaces was the willingness to listen and to share perspectives. Different experiences were brought forward. And that kind of dialogue helps us grow. So appreciation goes to Dr. Duran and the staff who supported and helped guide those conversations. Thank you.

So with the recent CPAC meeting, our members are working hard towards a capital bond recommendation for November ballot. So they're going to be bringing that to us very soon. So before the next meeting, members are seeking feedback from students, staff, and families in the broader community. Please watch our Highline website later this week for a chance to share your input.

As Director Tidholm shared, Tuesday night was a special moment with the national board celebration that was there with Dr. Duran and HEA President Jeb Binns. Congratulations to every educator we earned national board certifications or recertifications. This level of commitment takes a lot of time, focus, and dedication to the students and their profession, and it shows commitment to their family, because it takes a lot of time away from their families. So our district is much stronger because of that effort. So thank you.

Before tonight's meeting, there was also an opportunity to attend Cascade Middle School's lunar celebration. I was able to go there with Dr. Duran, and we had a lot of food. So our Vietnamese families and the school welcomed everybody with incredible warmth with, like I shared, with food, culture as they celebrated the Lunar New Year. Events like this highlight the richness of our community and the importance of making sure every family feels seen and valued in our schools.

So I just want to share with you there may be speakers tonight who want to address what's happening nationally and locally, including student walkouts and other forms of self-expression. These are complicated moments, and I recognize that people are coming into the space with a wide range of feelings and perspectives.

At its core, the role of the district is to educate. That means ensuring students have access to information, exposure to different viewpoints, and the opportunity to build critical thinking skills. Families remain essential partners in helping students process and understand these issues through their own values and beliefs.

Schools are not here to tell students what to think. They're here to help students learn how to think, to ask questions, to seek understanding, and to make informed decisions. And part of that learning recognizes that choices come with responsibilities and accountability. That's part of growth. In the end, there is a shared goal. Supporting students and making sure schools remain places where learning, respect, and belonging come first.

As we move into public comment, the hope is everyone approaches one another with patience and respect. Differences will exist, but calm and thoughtful dialogue will help us move our community forward together. So thank you for being here tonight. And that concludes our director's reports.

As we move to our scheduled communications this evening, we have a full slate. We have 20 speakers and two on the wait list. So if we don't have a speaker, those two people that are out on the wait list will move on up. So on behalf of the board, we sincerely appreciate you taking the time to join us and share your thoughts this evening.

You'll notice that our norms and guidelines are displayed on your screens for your reference. Please remember that you are addressing the board, and there may be students present who are watching, who are listening carefully to what you are saying. Please note while the board is unable to respond directly to your testimony during the meeting, we value your input. So thank you so much for being here and speaking with us. With that, we're going to start off with Katie Kresley.

Good evening, Directors. My name is Katie Kresley, and I represent and I write for an independent media source called *The Highline Journal*.

Directors, what I have noted is that you and other leaders in Highline take the culture of belonging very seriously. And I do too. In Highline, the culture of belonging means that students are valued and heard, no matter what side of an issue that they support. And families are respected as essential partners in their child's education, as beautifully stated in the Seahurst presentation. Those kids were great.

In Highline and in Washington State, students retain constitutional rights, freedom of speech and assembly, as noted several times today. I agree. At the same time, Washington law also recognized parents are the primary stakeholders in the care, custody, and upbringing of their children. Student safety remains our non-negotiable responsibility.

However, recent events, student walkouts, for example, during instructional time revealed a lack of clarity in our policies when student civic activity occurs off campus during instructional hours. From a parent's perspective, and I'm not a parent, but I know many, not being notified or not asked for permission, especially when staff is accompanying students or allowing them time the day before to create posters during instructional time and accompanying them, this is confusing and concerning.

I respectfully invite you to consider a policy update that clarifies the difference between a student led walkout and district sanctioned, staff supervised activity. I believe everyone would agree this distinction matters for consent, supervision, and duty of care. The school has better things to do than to fight lawsuits for unhappy parents.

Thank you. Joe Lipp.

Dr. Duran, board members. I recently came here to talk about wanting to add HealthPoint for schools and the preparation for helping those with adrenal insufficiency. Adrenal insufficiency happens to 1 out of 100,000 people. Why we're concerned with that, I have no idea. What is there, 7,800 kids in Highland School District? Unless we're preparing for something that nobody else knows about.

We're talking about the walkouts and kids' safety and what happened to that mother up in Issaquah who the children decided to beat for no apparent reason. Kids need to understand, yes, they have a First Amendment right. Yes, they can speak their mind.

And let's try to remember Charlie Kirk, who was 90% smarter than most of the people sitting in this room. And his core value was to bring people to debate, to understand what was happening in the world today, and get people to talk about what was going on. But I guess it didn't align with what everybody else wanted to do, so they murdered him.

We all know who Charlie Kirk is. I'm sure everybody, especially the head of the Teacher's Union here, knows who Charlie Kirk is. He was somebody bringing this country together. Whether people disagreed with him or not, he was getting the kids to come out and talk. And I got some bad news. He touched a lot of people between 8 and 35 years old, and those people are going to rise up and they're going to make.

Thank you. Vance Glawe.

This claim, it used to be political. Now it's personal. Our children are involved. I am sick and tired of watching politicians and school boards, people from the city telling children they can go out and f***** get-- excuse my language. Go out and get in the face of law enforcement.

Good evening. My name is Vance Glawe. And on the afternoon of February 2, 2026, my 14-year-old child called me. He was not at school. He was not sick. He was in the middle of White Center, Washington, in the middle of a protest that was organized for his middle school. My stomach dropped when he called me. You guys have noticed that on January 31, 2026, two children were killed just blocks from the school on Rainier that was having a very walkout that day.

RCW28A600035 by allowing them to leave and under initiative 2081, the Parental Bill of Rights, I have the right to know where my child goes. That was taken from me. I was not given notice. I was not given an email. I was not given a call. You exposed him to real danger. That's neglect and that's endangerment. RCW9A42035, criminal negligence by not being aware of the substantial risk.

You call it policy? I call it abandonment. I am filing a lawsuit. Before the ball drops, I want to make something perfectly clear. Someone's going to be held accountable, but all of you will remember it. Because for some reason, we lose our case, we'll make a case law out of this. Protect parents' rights to know where our kids are at all times. It's ridiculous. It's criminal negligence. And yes, a principal was fired for coercing students participate in protesting.

Just so you know, I had an hour worth of yelling to do, but today I'm going to narrow it down to two minutes, because you didn't give me enough time. But I will be here at every school board meeting to continue what I had to say today. I am not finished. And I yield my time.

Thank you. Next up is Paul Croom.

My name is Paul Croom. I'm a retired civil engineer, and I live across the street from the Evergreen High School swimming pool. I've lived there for 53 years now, and three of my children went to Evergreen. Two of my grandchildren went to Evergreen. So I have a long term investment in that school and the surrounding grounds.

I talked to one of the security guards at the school a short while ago, and he said that I couldn't walk through the school anymore because they're planning to make it into a closed campus. And right now, a contractor is putting fencing around the school ground.

I have been walking to the school and through their grounds for many years, because I like to walk in the morning. And during my walks, there's dog walkers. I tell my wife I know all the dogs' names, but I don't know the owners' names.

I am familiar through my former job of what's called a prescriptive rights easement, and I wrote a letter to the school claiming that we have a right to go to the school through that easement, and they have not responded at all. So I'm disappointed at that. And anyway, if you read the easement.

Our next speaker is Atal Krorr. Atal? Nadia Pappas.

Hello, my name is Nadia, and I'm a senior at Evergreen High School. I'm the founder of the EHS anti-ICE walkout and a co-organizer of the movement. My other organizer wishes to stay anonymous.

I'd like to recognize first that our protest is peaceful, non-violent, and successful. We walked about two and a half miles in solidarity against ICE in our communities and our schools. ICE has become an increasing threat to our safety outside of our own communities, but our schools too.

It infuriates me and disgusts me to see a video go viral of a man labeling our protests as deadly, and that our staff and teachers forced his child to attend. It disgusts me by how much privilege he harbors to paint our school district in such a negative manner that is full of misinformation.

Our protest was strictly student led. We had a deescalation team that consisted of community members, and we had support from the students of Cascade Middle school, along with EHS. The fact that you are putting our staff in harm's way by saying that they organized this is completely invented. They do not get credit for our advocacy, our movement, our voice.

I hope the people in this room recognize how this video not only affects the well-being of our school district, but also our very own communities. The video that was posted after our protest fueled hate in the direction of not only the district, but a whole community of people. Spewing of hate, comments, death threats and discrimination was pushed in our direction. And a common theme I noticed was kids don't belong in politics. But to that I say I strongly disagree. Our youth is our future.

I do understand that some comments come from a place of concern of the fact that middle schoolers are protesting, along with the safety and well-being. They were in good hands. The students who protested exercised their First Amendment rights to contribute to this movement. We weigh the consequences of our actions, and we advocated because an unexcused absence is minuscule compared to the amount of ICE killings that have happened in 2026. And all the stories that are being fabricated about the organization, execution, and presentation of this protest are all mistruths. Thank you.

Our next speaker is Katelyn Asare.

I'm honored to follow that powerful student speech. Good evening, members of the School Board, President Van, and Superintendent Duran. My name is Katelyn Asare, and I'm here today to speak to you about the importance of Career and Technical Education, or CTE.

I'm a proud Highline educator, and I've worked at PSSC or Puget Sound Skill Center since 2012. In my 14 years at the Skill Center, I've witnessed the transformative power of CTE time and time again.

Three years ago, my co-teacher, Ms. Maribel Melagon and I started the Teaching Academy. We prepare students for careers in education, but we also do so much more than that. For example, our student, Victoria, started the year incredibly timid. She even cried during her first in class presentation just from fear of speaking. But today she led a tour group of 12 eighth graders, all by herself, around PSSC for 90 whole minutes. In a few short months, she gained the confidence to stand head held high in the front and lead.

I'm reminded of our student, Evelyn. She came to us last year, bright as could be, and still learning to master English. She was confident to speak in Spanish with her classmates, but rarely shared her voice in English. Today, she's a confident leader, interning in a developmental pre-K classroom at Des Moines Elementary, where she can use both her English and Spanish to assist our youngest learners.

Through our CTE program, students have the opportunity to gain leadership skills, earn college credits, and pass industry recognized certifications. Our students earn their paraeducator certification, and in fact, we have two former students serving in Highline as paraeducators today, [INAUDIBLE] Gonzalez Gutierrez and Alexis Moore. In addition, we have three more students in Federal Way and three students getting education degrees full time in university.

While these examples come from my own teaching and [INAUDIBLE] program, I know there are stories like these in every program at PSSC. I urge our district to continue to support and even expand our career and technical education offerings. Our students deserve an education that translates into the real world. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hayden Bass.

Good evening. My name is Hayden Bass, and I'm a parent of a student at Evergreen High School. I'm here tonight to express my admiration and support for the students who chose to exercise their First Amendment rights last week by organizing and implementing a student led walkout. It takes courage to assert your rights and express your beliefs, especially during a time when free speech rights are being threatened. And I'm glad to see Highline students voluntarily choosing to make their voices heard.

I'd also like to express my appreciation to the Highline faculty and staff who rightly chose not to impede the student walkout. The students who elected to take part had every right to do so, and I'm grateful to Highline staff for respecting the students' rights to freedom of expression. At both Cascade Middle School and Evergreen High, my student has had wonderful teachers who consistently respected student autonomy and dignity. I'm grateful for that, and I hope and trust that the district will continue to allow students to exercise their constitutional rights. Thank you.

Our next speaker is Bin Lee.

Before I speak about the fence, I want to say that I saw the students from Evergreen and Cascade Middle School walk by my house, and it was incredibly inspiring. So thank you so much.

Evergreen High School recently put down fence stakes for a perimeter fence around the school property. I request that the board pause construction on the fence to speak with students, neighbors, and the disk golf community about the impact of the proposed fence and to see if a new route and access points can be agreed upon.

I've lived two houses away from Evergreen since 2021. Before school construction, I loved walking between the school campus and the disk golf course. These walking paths were cut off because of construction, but they reopened in 2026 with the new school.

I walk every morning in the park with my dog, seeing Paul, who you heard earlier. There is a network of walking paths you can make between the park, the new school, [INAUDIBLE] gardens, and behind the aquatic center. After school and on weekends, I see many neighbors, including elders, fellow dog owners, families with children, and students use these walking paths. We wave and chit chat, and it makes me feel like the school is part of the community and that I am part of the community as well.

As a neighbor to Evergreen, I feel a lot of impact from the school through traffic noise and the upcoming new fields and field lights. Cars speed along 116th, Fourth Ave, and all the streets surrounding the school at 40 miles an hour. They do not stop for pedestrians, even students at intersections. I avoid these cars by walking around the school campus, and I love meeting my neighbors who are doing the same. It eases the burden of living by the school.

Currently, the school building itself has a perimeter fence and visitors are only allowed through the main entrance. I understand that this building perimeter fence is for school campus security. I would like to understand what a perimeter fence around the lot itself adds that the building fence does not already provide. For example, the perimeter fence could run so that the two disk golf holes are available, access points between the school and gardens are available, and like they were before construction. Thank you.

Thank you very much. Juliana Vallejos.

Good evening, Superintendent, members of the School Board, administration, and community members. My name is Juliana Vallejos, and I'm a student enrolled at PSSC or Puget Sound Skills Center, and I am in the Teaching Academy. I wanted to speak today because Career and Technical Education and Teaching Academy specifically has had a real impact on my future even as a first year student.

Through PSSC, I've learned what it means to be a part of conversations that help improve our schools and education. It's given me confidence, leadership skills, and a sense that students' perspectives truly matter. But I've also found a purpose in going to school. Being a part of the teaching program will also allow me to gain hands on experience in classrooms, helping me understand the responsibilities, dedication, and passion that it takes to be an educator.

This program has helped me develop important skills like communication, patience, and professionalism. It has also deepened and confirmed my interest in pursuing a career in education. In fact, I've already earned my paraeducator certification and I can work in Highline Public Schools as a bilingual paraeducator when I graduate June 2027.

Programs like PSSC do more than just enhance our school experience. It prepares students to become the next generation of leaders, professionals, and contributors to our community. So thank you for the continued support of career and technical education programs like PSSC.

Thank you very much. Robert Dechaneau.

Hello. I'm not much of a public speaker, and if I do half as well as Michael, the fifth grader, I'll be very thrilled with myself. I have two things to address. Before Evergreen High School was built, the community got a flyer that said that things that would be addressed, and one of them was the disk golf course. I play disk golf every day, and we lost four holes. And over 100 people a day play that course. So I'm hoping we can do something about that.

Secondly, I want to address the concerns of what I call my 6:30 to 8:30 friends. They're the people that I meet because I'm there every day. I meet the two people who spoke before I've become friends with. And there's a lot of people out there who view this park as a community, and the access through it involves going on the school grounds.

So we were never warned that the path would not open again. We waited two years when the fences were up, construction fences were up, expecting two things to happen. One is that we would get the disk golf holes back, because there was a flyer that was sent out that said it would be addressed. And we thought the school district was working on that all during these two years, and we're expecting, oh good, we've waited the two years. Now things are going to happen. And that turned out not to be true.

We've sent letters, had emails not returned. I think we just all feel kind of let down that we thought what was going on was going to solve these problems. And now it's possible that these problems can still be solved, but it's like we have to start the clock again and maybe it'll take two years to get them fixed.

Thank you very much. Maribel Arriaga.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

I want to take a moment to talk about something that means a lot to me, the Puget Sound Skills Center. For many of our families, especially our Hispanic community, going straight to college after high school is not always realistic. Parents work incredibly hard just to keep the household running. Sometimes there isn't enough money for tuition, books, and everything else that comes with college.

That's where Puget Sound Skills Center makes a real difference. This school gives our students something powerful, real. Real skills, real confidence, and real opportunities. They don't just sit in a classroom and wonder what comes next. They learn careers. They earn certifications. They start to see a future where they can make a decent living, support themselves, and help their families. And if they decide to continue their education later, they can. But now they have options.

I say this not just as a teacher, but I'm a very proud teacher. I proudly watch some of our students go out and peacefully protest because their families were being hurt. They were not being valued. They are not being valued. I saw courage, leadership, and heart. These are not kids who don't care. These are young people who love their families and want a better future.

In our community, there are still people who think of our students and only see a pair of laboring hands. I see something very different. I see smart, capable, bilingual young people with huge potential. I see future teachers, nurses, technicians, business owners, and community leaders.

CTE is that pathway. PSSC gives students a purpose and a sense of accomplishment. We remind them that they belong, they matter, and they can build a good life. As their teacher, it is truly an honor to be part of their journey. Thank you. Gracias.

Thank you very much. Deborah Lipp.

Good evening. Hello, everybody. I am a retired school bus driver for Highline. Woot woot! Love the job, I love students, I love kids. I have a bunch, and I had a bunch on my bus, and I adored them. And yes, I'm proud of them.

I'm also wanting to keep them safe. Two and a half miles? I live by Tyee. I know that I go two and a half miles away from my house. And White Center, I'm pretty sure not either. So that breaks my heart. And then, you know, speak directly to the microphone.

And that's why I'm here, to show students we all follow rules. And there's rules now today that everybody thinks they can just break because they have a right. So I have the security guards here today. You guys are awesome. You rock too. You've been really good the 20 years I was there. I appreciate you immensely.

I also appreciate the police that are out there tonight, because I respect authority of all kind, and I want the kids on my bus to know I love my kids and they respected me. And I really appreciated that, because we have lost respect. There's no reason those kids should have been out there. Whatever you want to call it, care about their safety. I have kids in the school district still. I care about their safety. So tonight, you guys brought it on. OK.

Thank you. Next up, Patricia Bailey.

Good evening. When I read of this student led ICE walkout on Friday, February 6, as a former Seattle teacher, I could feel my body react in terror. For teachers, this is the stuff nightmares are made of. I know how carefully I planned for off campus events with my class and how critical it was to have sufficient chaperones, an emergency kit, and EpiPens. And of course, I had signed permission slips from parents so they would know where their child was.

Sending an email to parents the evening before the walkout that they may or may not have read is not legal, professional, safe, or respectful. Leaving school for an appointment, for example, is completed in the office when the custody of the student is transferred from the school to a trusted adult. Now, that precedent has been shattered, and this fact will not go unnoticed by students. Now these students understand that they can leave school whenever they want.

When school personnel got wind of a student walkout, they should have informed students immediately, explaining custody and safety protocols to students. If children want to participate in anti-ICE demonstrations, parents are free to take them. If parents did not see the last minute email, I'm afraid trust has been broken. Admitting to the community that what happened was wrong may be the only recourse you have to rebuild trust with many parents and conscientious teachers. Thank you.

Thank you very much. Next up is Benjamin Folgers.

Good evening, everyone. First, shout out to my wife, who just passed her national boards. Very excited about that. So hearing this testimony today, I'm reminded of a conversation I had with an alumni. You know that meme that's going around from the Super Bowl with that outstanding Bad Bunny? He's going like this and falling. I shared one with her or just on my social media that says, seeing your former students succeeding in life.

And this alumni commented, you should see my transcripts, LOL. And while I'm sure it was meant as a joke, as is the Zoomer humor, I don't let anyone, even my students, or former students, talk about themselves negatively like that. So I share with them a phrase I heard from a conference I went to recently. The phrase of standing in your power.

I told this alumni that it's not her transcripts or grades which dictate her success to me and my pride in her, though she was always a great student and will always continue to be. But what dictates my pride in her success is how she stands in her power. What a phrase, right? Standing in power. What does that mean? It means owning who you are, your core self, not let anyone or anything get in the way of how you view yourself.

And I reminded her that to stand in her power means to care for other people. To stand in power means to also walk in compassion with others. To stand in power is to know that they do not have to be personally affected by harm, to care that it is harmful to somebody else, and to demand change for those people. That is always how this student carried herself. They cared for others and they continued to care.

And so I say to all those students who staged walkouts, to Nadia, that I am proud of you all for standing in your power, for standing up for other people, and for walking in compassion and demanding change. And finally, I am proud of this district and to work in this district for making sure students are able to.

Thank you. Chasmon Tarimel. Chasmon. OK. Next up is Jenn Mackenzie.

Good evening, members of the board and Superintendent Duran. My name is Jenn Mackenzie, and I am proud to teach the sports medicine students at Puget Sound Skills Center. I'm here tonight because I care deeply about our students and about the responsibility we share in preparing them for what comes next.

Our children are brilliant. They are creative, resilient, and full of potential. What many of them lack is not intelligence, but structured guidance and the habits that lead to long term success, time management, perseverance, professional communication, and discipline, critical thinking. Those skills don't just appear. They are built through consistent high expectations paired with support.

Research shows that students in rigorous CTE and dual credit programs graduate at a higher rate and are more likely to persist in college and career. That happens when learning is relevant, structured, and challenging. High expectations are not about being rigid, they're about equity. When we hold students to meaningful standards and walk alongside them with mentorship and feedback, we communicate something powerful. You are capable. You are worthy of excellence. We believe in your future even when the work feels hard.

And sometimes it does feel hard. There can be resistance. There can even be attrition. Consistency over time is challenging, but students rise when adults stay steady and refuse to fall. When expectations are clear and taught early, resilience forms, confidence grows.

Today's workforce is shaped by automation, AI, and rapid change. Information is abundant. What will set our students apart at PSSC is their ability to think critically, solve problems, provide ethical judgment, and persist through complexity no matter what.

In sports medicine, we are preparing students not just for a job, but for college, graduate study, and careers beyond their first choice. Our students are brilliant. They deserve opportunity, and the most equitable thing we can do is ensure they're fully prepared. Thank you.

Thank you very much. Edissa Jaramillo. Edissa? OK, Amanda Stanley.

Good evening, school board directors and Dr. Duran. My name is Amanda Stanley. I'm a computer science teacher at Highline High School. I'm also a proud Navy and Army veteran.

I'm here speaking tonight in solidarity with our students. What we witnessed during the walkouts was not chaos. It was not disorder. It was not disruption for the sake of disruption. It was student led. It was student organized. It was peaceful. It was empowering.

As a Navy veteran, I swore an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. That oath didn't end when I separated from service. Our students demonstrated their First Amendment right in its most authentic form. They exercised their voices respectfully. They planned thoughtfully. They communicated clearly. They showed up for something they believe in.

In a time when so much feels uncertain for our youth, this is a glimmer of hope. It was a reminder that our students are thoughtful, compassionate, and capable of engaging in democracy with integrity. Teachers and staff members supported students during these walkouts on their planning time or used personal leave, all for the purpose of student safety. Not politics, not publicity, safety. When students exercise their rights, adults have a responsibility to ensure they do so safely. That's exactly what happened.

Public education is not just about content standards and assessments. It's about preparing young people to participate in civic life. If we say we want critical thinkers, engaged citizens, and future leaders, then we must recognize when they rise to that call. Our students did that. I'm so proud of them. I stand with them, and I hope we continue to create spaces where student voice is not feared but is fostered. Thank you.

Thank you very much. Next up is Kristin Plischke.

I'm not Kristin. She's my friend and one of my neighbors who couldn't make it tonight.

Hold on. So you're not Kristin, we can't have you speak this evening.

Even if she wrote it for you this afternoon?

Sorry. You can send it via email. That'd be great. Thank you very much. So we have two spots left, or we have spots opened, and I'm going to have Tommy Butzerin come on up, please.

Hello, my name is Tommy Butzerin, and I'm not going to be talking about ICE, actually. Tonight I want to comment on the legislative report that was discussed at the January 21 meeting regarding potential state legislation that would limit what were described as frivolous or burdensome public records requests.

Now, I understand that responding to certain requests can place a strain on staff time and resources, and I respect this is a legitimate concern that you have to contend with. However, I am concerned about the district expressing support for legislation that would further restrict public records access. Terms like frivolous are indeed subjective, and how they are defined and applied matters greatly when we're deciding who gets to have public records.

Public records laws exist to ensure accountability and transparency. There are already established legal exemptions, including protections for student privacy under FERPA, of course, but these limits are clearly defined by law. Additional restrictions could unintentionally reduce access to the information the public has the right to see.

I also want to note that the outgoing legislative liaison who spoke on this issue seemed enthusiastic about limiting records requests. Regardless of your intent, that comes across as excitement about restricting information. That is not a good look for a district that says that transparency is a core value.

For parents who have students in the district, it is often difficult for them to clearly understand how their students are performing. Academic data can be complex, and the way results are presented can make it challenging for parents to gauge the full picture. This is certainly true of iReady statistics, for example.

In that context, supporting legislation that narrows access to records may give the impression that transparency is being reduced rather than strengthened. If transparency is truly a core value of this district, I encourage the board to ensure that any advocacy at the state level reinforces that commitment and increases clarity, rather than limiting public access to information. Thank you.

Thank you very much. And our last speaker is Jessi Traugher.

Good evening, community members, students, staff, and members of our school board. I had initially intended on talking a little bit more about First Amendment rights, but I think that has been pretty well covered this evening by many of you in the crowd.

I would like to touch on a couple of points that I think are important that were brought up in terms of questions from those in our community or other folks who raised concerns, the first of which is that this idea of respect and students' place in speaking up in the world. That is an element of the First Amendment that wasn't addressed in prior commentary this evening.

Named in the First Amendment, there's a line that says that we all have a right to petition the government for redress of grievances. That's a very fancy way of saying that we have a right to notify our government that we have concerns, or that we feel like something is unlawful, that there is behavior that is inappropriate or wrong or harmful. And that's exactly the nature of what motivated these students, these fabulous young people, Nadia and others, to participate in these walkouts.

Furthermore, to those of you who speak to rules and guidelines and district policy, or I know there were RCWs named as well this evening, I would like to point out that the district has a very clear policy, 3242, that names all of our schools as closed campuses. That's found in most school handbooks, school rules, that are all publicly available to students and families. And that explicitly says that our schools are considered closed campuses and students are not expected nor encouraged to leave. If a student does so without notifying staff or without parent or guardian permission, we're typically not allowed.

Thank you very much. That concludes our scheduled communications this evening. Just thank you, everybody, for coming and sharing your thoughts. Appreciate it. And we're going to move on to our consent agenda. As we moved earlier, 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 were moved to the consent agenda. So if there's any questions or comments. Any motion to approve our consent agenda?

I'll make a motion to approve the consent agenda.

I second.

All those in favor?

Aye.

Yes.

Any opposed? Hearing and seeing none, thank you very much. There is no addition. There was nothing that was removed from the consent agenda. There's no intro or action this evening. We do have two intro items. 10.1, this is motion to approve Evergreen High School replacement project grant of easement for Seattle City Light. Any questions or comments on that? Hear and see none.

10.2, this is motion to approve Health Point license agreement at Highline High School, Tyee High School, and Evergreen High School. Any questions or comments?

So this is part of the school based health centers?

Yes.

Do they ever come to the board or share about their work? I think it's such important services and work that they provide our students and our schools. And it would be a good opportunity to hear from them and have our families and community also hear.

Yes, we've had them here before, so we can create the possibility for them to be here another time.

Thank you.

Thank you, Dr. Espinoza. Any other follow up questions or comments on 10.2? Hear and see none. Any additions to the-- well, that concludes our intro items this evening. Any additions to the upcoming consent agenda?

All right. That was quick. With that, can I have a motion to adjourn?

I motion to adjourn.

I'll second.

All those in favor?

Aye.

Yes.

Any opposed? Have none. Thank you, everybody, for being here tonight.

Thank you.