

## **School Board Comments**

**November 28, 2023**

Good evening Supt. Balderas, Board Chair Pérez and members of the School Board.

For the record my name is Lindsay Ray and I am a high school math teacher currently serving as the president of the Beaverton Education Association.

I hope that you all had a recharging and fulfilling break last week. This work is hard, and it's important that we find and seize upon opportunities to rest.

I'm here tonight with many of my colleagues tonight to amplify a message: BSD students and staff need more support. I've sat here in front of you many times to talk about the fact that our students are showing up every day with increased needs—more mental health challenges, more need for intervention, more basic needs being unmet, etc.

All of our staff and students are impacted by these increased needs. We are seeing students act out and not able to engage in learning because their behavioral health needs are not being met, staff who are working many many hours outside their contract to differentiate curriculum and develop classroom routines to address the variety of academic and social levels in each class or to make sure they get to each and every student on their caseload, and students receiving special education services who are not receiving adequate support.

I want to recognize and applaud District leaders for already taking steps to mitigate the challenges we are facing, specifically in adding a huge number of paraeducators to schools, providing professional development opportunities to paraeducators, allocating additional funding for students with extreme behavioral and mental health needs and adjusting the staffing ratio at the ACE program. These supports will no doubt make a difference in the day to day experiences of our staff and students.

That said, there are still needs that will remain unmet. I don't want to just share problems, so here are some proposed solutions:

- First, safe learning conditions for all students and staff, including consistent supports and accountability measures for students. We know our students thrive when they feel safe, when they are given structure and consistency, when they know what the expectations are and are held accountable to them, and when they know that the

educators with whom they interact every day care about them enough to meet them where they are and teach them how to be a part of a safe and supportive learning community.

- Second, zooming in on special education, adjusted staffing ratios for special educators (including resource room teachers, specialized program teachers, Speech Language Pathologists, and school psychologists as well the paraprofessionals who support them). For many of our special education staff, caseloads are simply too high to maintain effective and legally required services. People are getting hurt and students are not able to get the individualized attention they so desperately need.
- And finally, clear communication about special education processes and procedures, especially the pre-referral process for students. While we know there are many twists and turns within special education processes and that many depend on the individual student, there is so much uncertainty that creates a feeling of helplessness for educators when trying to work with students and families. More transparency of those processes would help educators and families know what to expect as they navigate an incredibly complex system.

These are just a few things we can do to make the experiences of our students and staff better every day. Let's work together to create the schools Beaverton students and families deserve.