

School Board Comments

March 19, 2024

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 want to start this evening by recognizing our special educators in BSD. The joint BEA/BSD Special Education Committee met last week, and we spent a lot of time talking about the incredible, difficult, and life-changing work special educators in BSD do every single day. Our learning specialists, teachers in specialized programs, autism specialists, CTP/ACE teachers, sped facilitators, school psychs, speech language pathologists, and the indispensable paraeducators who support our students are working each and every day to get students what they need. These are huge jobs, often impossible jobs, and we know we have work to do to make your work sustainable. Thank you for showing up for students.

Bargaining is well underway and we are having powerful discussions at the table about our collective bargaining agreement and the experiences of students, staff, and administrators. As a reminder you can tune in on either the BEA or the BSD YouTube channels to watch sessions. We are working to improve class sizes and caseloads so that students can get the individualized attention they deserve, to find ways to recruit and retain qualified and diverse educators, to create and maintain safe learning environments with support for every student who walks through our doors, and more. I'm hopeful that we can continue moving toward an agreement in the coming months.

I noticed later on this evening the board will be discussion the School Support Fee. As I understand it, this fee is imposed on certain businesses in lieu of property taxes and is in fact 70-85% lower than property taxes. The recommendation in the agenda is to establish this fee at the lowest allowed rate, which is 15% of what these business's regular property taxes would be. This recommendation is made in conjunction with the City of Beaverton and the City of Hillsboro to attract businesses to our district. While I understand the desire to keep our district as a place that is attractive to businesses, it's also imperative that we understand that those same businesses benefit when public schools are able to provide a robust and meaningful education to students. We constantly talk about the lack of funding from the state, so we should be utilizing any and all avenues to secure additional funds for students. We ask community members in our District to pay property taxes and levies for schools, and we should hold businesses accountable to supporting the communities that support them.

Last time I was here I spoke about our colleagues in the Northwest Regional Education Service District who were still in mediation for their bargain. They have since reached an agreement, and I want to congratulate the bargaining team and the union members there. I also want to express our solidarity with our union siblings in Salem-Keizer who are taking a strike vote this week as they continue to work toward a settlement with the Salem-Keizer School District, and I encourage the BSD board to join me in demanding that the Salem-Keizer School District come to a fair agreement with educators.

And finally, next week is Spring Break. I want to encourage all staff and students to truly find some rest. I'll speak for myself (and I imagine many people) when I say that I'm real tired. I'm thankful for an opportunity to ground myself and get re-energized for the months to come. I wish everyone a safe and rejuvenating break.

Thank you for your time this evening.