

August 29, 2019

Neah-Kah-Nie School Board of Directors:

Our members would like to respond to the meeting notes from the July 2019 School Board Meeting. These meeting notes reflect school board disappointment in our members' opposition to the district proposal to add instructional minutes to the school day. It is our hope that we can alleviate that disappointment by sharing our rationale for opposing this proposal.

As educators, we strive to keep students at the heart of our work. During the contract negotiations process, this mission maintained its position in the forefront of our minds. When the district proposed the additional instructional time, the question we asked ourselves was, "What does this mean for students and families?"

As teachers, we have a unique understanding of the needs of our students. This understanding prompted immediate concerns that additional instructional time would do far more harm than good. We recognize that our students have complex needs, many of which cannot effectively be met during "seat time." Additional instructional minutes would, in fact, be in direct conflict with some of these needs, including: social/emotional, sensory, physical activity, executive functioning.

In our professional development regarding trauma-informed care, we have learned about brain states. When students "other" needs are not met, their brains move from an executive state (ready to learn) to an emotional or survival state, at which point the brain is consumed with coping and is not able to process additional content. As evidenced by the increase we have seen in emotional and fight or flight responses from our students, it is our firm belief that we are placing more than enough demand on students within our current instructional day. Additional time would be counter-productive.

As always, we are open to looking at options to improve our instructional practices through avenues that honor the needs of the children and families we serve. We invite you, our board members, to visit schools and see the exciting ways administrators and staff are working together to meet the ever-changing needs of our students. It is our recommendation that classroom teachers and building administrators continue to work together and investigate the allocation of existing instructional minutes to determine how to use them to best meet the diverse needs of our students. In order to be able to provide our students and families with the educational experience they deserve, it will be important for our members to work collaboratively with administration, classified staff, and the school board. It is our hope that we will all be able to move forward together, each and all of us focused sharply on the children and families with whom we are privileged to serve.

Sincerely,
Neah-Kah-Nie School District
Teachers Association Members