
From: Hansen, Elyse
Sent: Sunday, January 26, 2025 3:30 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Pine/Trainer

I would like the board members to know I DO NOT believe a PK-8 model is a good idea for Pine or Trainer. Middle school age children do not belong on a school campus with PK students. My main concerns are safety, behavior, and exposure to things that are not developmentally appropriate. I also worry that the administrative jobs would be too much for 1 principal. Please follow recommendation and DO NOT approve a PK-8.

Thank you

Elyse Hansen

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From: Kimber, Brooke
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 8:48 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Public Comment for 1/28/2025

Board Members and WCSD Community,


I would like to voice my opinion on the PK-8 model and the K-5 model for the Pine/Smithridge area. I do not believe that the PK-8 model is a right fit for the Smithridge/Pine community. My number one reason being safety. Young students should not be mixed in the same building as older students. This model would potentially have 3-4 year olds in the same building as potential 13 year olds. Safety in schools needs to be our number one priority and splitting these age groups alleviates any unnecessary exposure to violence, drugs, weapons, etc. that our preteens are unfortunately exposed to and grapple with themselves.

I would like to voice my opinion on the models for the K-5 school residing in a renovated Pine building. I think that this would be the best and most appropriate option for this area of town. Smithridge is one of the oldest schools, with many structural challenges, little landscaping and HVAC issues that students and staff have faced over the years. This neighborhood is well past due for an upgraded campus. Renovating the current Pine building to be turned into an elementary school is a great way to utilize what is already established in this neighborhood. I also believe that widening the zones to include Dodson and potentially Donnor Springs will add to and provide a diverse community within this new school.

Thank you for exploring all of these options and making the best decisions for our most precious and vulnerable students in WCSD,

Kindly,
A dedicated WCSD teacher and mother of a WCSD student,
Brooke Kimber

From: kristenirene
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2025 8:52 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] General Public Comment - The Importance of Paraprofessionals

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Dear Board of Trustees and Superintendent Ernst,

I am sorry I am not there in person. I have an IEP meeting for one of my students.

My name is Kristen De Haan and I am a member of the WEA and the Social Resource teacher at Moss Elementary School. I am writing to share my heartfelt support of paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals are the absolute backbone of special education. In special programs (of which Social Resource is one), it is extraordinarily challenging to effectively do all we do without our paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals support their teachers as well as their students. They work with students, they help to collect data, they provide individual support, they help to regulate students, they help to teach students, and they support them when they are escalated (in the yellow or red zone if you know zones of regulation) and when they are low (in the blue zone). Paraprofessionals support students with diverse needs. They assist and support teachers. They contribute to overall school success.

Before I became a teacher, I was a substitute for about 13 years. I often worked in special programs, usually in the developmental pre-k class or early childhood strategies class at Spanish Springs Elementary School. The assistants and aides in those programs helped me so much. They helped me run circle time, knew where everything was, which students went on which buses, and which students were picked up. They knew who needed what and when.

In 2015, I was a long-term substitute in a Strategies Pre-K class. When I started there, I let my assistant and aides know that I understood that they knew their students, the routines, and the needs of each student. I needed their help and support. We were a team. Period. They changed diapers, took data, helped calm students, and helped with the routine. I also changed diapers because I felt (and still feel) I should not expect my assistant and aides to do anything I wasn't willing to do as well - and sometimes, my hands were the ones that were free to do the diapering.

Social Resource is a self-contained special education program. However, students are typically in their general education classroom with Tier 1 instruction and their peers 75-85% of their day. This typically means that they have group with me for 1/2 hour daily. Sometimes the assistant is with me during group to help keep students on task (especially when I have younger students). Throughout the day they also do walk throughs. This entails going into classrooms to support students (and collect data). Sometimes this means reminding them of the tools and strategies they know to calm themselves, sometimes it is just to be a support in the room, sometimes it is to give students a break when they need it. We are in and out of

classrooms most of the day. When I am with a group, if another student needs support, it is one of my assistants who go to the classroom and help them.

When I became the social resource teacher at Drake Elementary School, Julia Petersen was my assistant. She had worked previously as an aide in the Strategies SIP (a program, along with CLS SIP, that is sorely missed in WCSD) and then became an aide in Social Resource. After a few years, she became the assistant in the program. You have no idea how lucky I felt to have her with me when I became the Social Resource teacher. Julia had connections with each of our students and was able to help me know their likes, dislikes, and some of the ways to best support them. She knew the routines of the program which helped when I started and as we created our own routines with the students, she was right there to support me. She knew how to collect data which is imperative for progress monitoring where students are with their goals and objectives. She and I would discuss different ideas to better support our students. Honestly, the ways in which she supported me and the students in the program are too many to enumerate.

When the district moved my program to Moss Elementary, Paige Bray became my assistant. Again, I have an incredible assistant who understands our students, who knows how to support them and me as well. She was new to the district and learned quickly all that the job entailed. We went from three students to six students in a matter of months. Some of our students had very challenging behaviors. Paige worked just as hard as I did to build positive relationships with each student. There were, and still are, times when students needed to be in a space without other students around. Paige and I have taken CPI (crisis prevention intervention) training together for the past 3 years. This program is helpful in de-escalating students and Paige does it well.

This year we began the year with 12 students. I run four groups throughout the day. That is a total of two hours when I am with groups while Paige and/or my new assistant, Janet Esparza, are conducting walkthroughs and supporting the students who are not in group at that time. Janet was new to the district and needed to hit the ground running.

Twelve students might not sound like a lot to some people, but when each student has their own set of needs, challenges, behaviors, etc., it is, indeed, a lot. My assistants do so much to support each student. They are working with students (ours and other students in the classroom) all day. When I am absent, I know that my students are in good hands because Paige and Janet are there. They are the ones running group in my absence (unless I am lucky enough to have a substitute who already knows my students and program). They support the substitute and the students. They get the students to the buses and to the parent pickup. They know who needs a gentle prompt and who needs a more direct one. They know who will need extra support because there is a big change in their day.

Paraprofessionals are truly the backbone of special education. Paraprofessionals do not make nearly enough for all the work they do. They deserve a living wage. They deserve health insurance. They deserve incredible respect from everyone. I am a better teacher because of all the support I receive from my assistants. Special education students and many general education students receive support from paraprofessionals. Our entire district is better because of the paraprofessionals we employ. If we can provide them with the living wage they deserve, more paraprofessionals will fill the many empty positions. I want our district to support our paraprofessionals as much as paraprofessionals support our district. They deserve adequate compensation and recognition for all they do.

Thank you for reading my public comment. Again, I apologize for not being there in person.

Respectfully,
Kristen De Haan