

AMY L. HORVATH

RENO, NV 89511

April 29, 2025

Re: WCSD H2 Zoning Option for Huffaker Elementary School

Response to April 22, 2025 WCSD Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Dear WCSD Trustees Hull, Westlake, Phoenix, Smith, Woodley, Mayberry, and Nicolet;
Ms. Zimmerman; Mr. Rombardo; and ZAC,

My name is Amy Horvath. I am a mother of two students at Huffaker Elementary School. I am writing to you today to express my thoughts and concerns with last Tuesday's unanimous vote to approve Option 4A and H2 for the 2026-2027 school year. While this decision was made one week ago today, I do ask that you take the time to read my comments. I am submitting this to you today, one week later, in order to take time to digest last week's decision, rewatch the meeting, and clearly communicate. In advance, I thank you for your time.

Our family made the decision to move from California, the only state we had ever lived in, to Reno, based in large part on the Rancharra neighborhood and its access to Huffaker Elementary School. Coming from California we were concerned with the education system and the "wild wild west of Nevada," in terms of the lack of rules and regulations. In fact, we were looking at different states entirely. Then, by accident or kismet, we found the Rancharra neighborhood.

When we found the Rancharra neighborhood, Huffaker Elementary School, Wheatland Park, and Bartley Ranch we were elated; we truly felt we had found the neighborhood and school of our dreams! We decided to move to Reno, leaving Truckee - the only home our children have known - where they had been raised, attended preschool, and the beginning of elementary school (TK-2nd). We decided to move the summer between 2nd and 3rd grade so that our children, girl/boy twins, would have three years at Huffaker Elementary School to form relationships with friends before entering into middle school. As an educator, I know how important the friendships and relationships are that students build in elementary school and how these connections become vital

as they move into middle school where peer pressure, social media, and puberty begin to play major roles in a pivotal period of childhood development.

When we began our experience with WCSD during the 2023-2024 school year, we were told our children were zoned for Huffaker Elementary, Pine Middle, and Reno High School. As I became immersed in the Huffaker Community, I learned that Huffaker had been zoned Swope/Reno in the past, at one point Pine/Galena, but had recently undergone rezoning to Pine/Reno. I then learned that Pine was going to be closed, which would mean Huffaker students would yet again be rezoned. While I attended meetings at Pine and Swope to engage in discussions surrounding the options for the future of Pine, dialogue of rezoning Huffaker began. It was at these meetings that I learned that Huffaker would definitely be rezoned for the 2026-2027 school year and discussions of Swope/Reno and Herz/Galena began. There was no mention of Vaughn/Wooster. When Ms. Smith attended our PTA Meeting during the 2023-2024 school year and was asked which middle/high schools Huffaker would be rezoned for, she said she could not say for sure, but when looking at the numbers Swope likely would not be a consideration and Herz/Galena would be the viable option. During the 2023-2024 school year there was *never* a discussion about the possibility of Huffaker being a split feeder nor of Huffaker being rezoned Vaughn/Wooster.

During this school year (2024-2025), as the Zoning Advisory Committee began discussing Huffaker's future, the prospect of Vaughn/Wooster did not come into play until the February meeting. At this point, the Huffaker Community was clear, for a multitude of reasons, we did not want be rezoned Vaughn/Wooster. While the Huffaker Community was split on their preferences - an almost 50/50 polled split between Swope/Reno and Herz/Galena - WCSD Staff made it clear in their presentations at the 2025 ZAC meetings that Swope/Reno was not a viable option for Huffaker due to current capacity conditions and projections for utilization thresholds. After engaging in many ZAC meetings and hearing hours of public comment at these various meetings, the ZAC narrowed the options between Option 4 and Option 4A only; ultimately deciding on Option 4A. For the Huffaker Community this meant a continued connection to flow south to Herz/Galena, which many families were already doing via School of Choice.

It was not until ***the weekend before*** the School Board Meeting, that *five additional options for Huffaker were presented to the Trustees*. **There was no public engagement.** There was no request from Trustee and President Ms. Smith to meet with the Huffaker Community to discuss these new options. There was no

communication to the Huffaker Community that additional options were being presented. *Unless one knew exactly where on the district's website to look, **one did not know five additional options were being presented to the Board. This is the epitome of disingenuous and disenfranchising.*** After attending the many ZAC meetings, the Huffaker Community believed that the options that were presented at the ZAC were the only options the Board would be reviewing. Many in the Huffaker Community *had no idea that additional options could be and would be, not only presented, but considered, and ultimately voted upon.*

When Ms. Rose (a Huffaker and Swipe parent) in her public comment at the meeting said she was the *only* Huffaker parent in attendance, she was not wrong. The rest of us, who had attended the previous ZAC meetings, were not in attendance at the Board Meeting because ***we did not know additional options could be or were being presented without public input.*** When Ms. Rose presented herself as a representative for all Huffaker parents she did so in error. When she stated that the rest of us parents must be at soccer practice, she was mistaken. Many of us, who are active participants at Huffaker Elementary on a daily basis, were getting ready to attend the monthly PTA Meeting. When Ms. Rose stated, "They all sent emails," she was mistaken. Many of us did not send emails as we understood the Board to be voting on the options *already presented* by ZAC. *We did now know five additional options had been added.* When Ms. Rose stated, "Our children play sports and extra curricular activities that also align with the Swope feeder schools. When we play soccer, we go north. We don't go south," she was mistaken. *Many of us do in fact go south.* Sports and extra curricular activities are often based on zip codes and proximity. *Many of us, and not just those south of Windy Hill, do go south, especially those of us in the 89511 zip code.* When Ms. Rose stated that the Windy Hill split "It is exactly what the parents are asking for with the poll that was taken at Huffaker. It's an almost exact 50/50 split," she was mistaken. ***In fact, she misconstrued the poll and its data. The poll asked Huffaker families which middle/high option they preferred based on what the ZAC had presented, not if Huffaker families wanted a split feeder, not if they wanted to be split along Windy Hill.*** In fact, the Huffaker Community was **never** asked outright if they wanted to be split. The Huffaker Community was never asked if they were to be split, *where* they would like to be split. In fact, ***no one*** from the District, from ZAC, from the Board of Trustees, not even our District D Trustee and President Ms. Smith ***came to our school, attended a PTA Meeting discussing the new zoning options, or sent an email asking the Huffaker Community for their input regarding the new options.***

While I am thrilled the ZAC Chair, Mr. Rogers, went to Vaughn and Pine, meet with principals from various schools, and meet with PTAs of the impacted communities, *Huffaker was not on this list*. While I am glad underserved communities had their District Trustees, Mr. Rogers, and Ms. Zimmerman come to their schools to listen to and hear their concerns, I ask, ***why was not this same time and consideration given to the Huffaker Community?***

At the April 22nd meeting, Mr. Rogers said that it was tricky to identify the exact desire of the Huffaker Community outside of not Vaughn/Wooster. I agree with his statement. At the ZAC Meetings, Huffaker's Community was split. However, wouldn't an easy remedy be to meet with the Huffaker Community? To poll the Huffaker community? **To present the five new options for Huffaker to its community? To listen to the Huffaker Community?** In Tuesday's meeting, Mr. Mayberry asks if all the Huffaker options were presented at ZAC, to which Ms. Zimmerman replies, no; additional options brought today were not shown to the public or discussed with the public. I ask, **how should this been seen other than inequitable and disingenuous?** Ms. Hull comments at one point that it is really important to *collaborate and engage in transparent conversations with communities* when looking at zoning and consolidating schools. It seems this was the case for the other schools who were rezoned last week. I ask, **why was not this the case when Huffaker was being considered?**

Furthermore, ***why is Huffaker Elementary School the only elementary school in the district to split feed for middle school?*** One of the Trustees even commented during last Tuesday's meeting, do not split communities. To which Ms. Zimmerman commented, "Some middle schools split feed. It's not desirable, but it does happen. Middle school split is not as detrimental as an elementary split." To which, Ms. Smith responded, "Lots of middle schools split." Later, **Ms. Zimmerman also states that a Huffaker split feed is not compatible with Admin Reg 7107.** The decision to split feed Huffaker does not "keep subdivisions and small neighborhood units in the same attendance zones" nor "assign students to the closest school to the extent possible," nor "comply with feeder patterns to the extend possible." (For some of us, a zoning to Reno High is actually further away than Galena High.). ***Huffaker as a split feeder does not align with three out of the five guiding principals of Admin Reg 7107.***

When children leave the warm cocoon of elementary school, breaking long-standing friendships and familial support systems can lead to increased anxiety; a sense of isolation, loneliness, and loss; decreased sense of self and self-esteem; and academic

struggles. The instability of friendships and support systems of split feeders at the elementary level, along with the loss of feeling safe, secure, supported, and connected can impact student outcomes and academic performance. *Split feeders can undermine the success, emotional well-being, confidence, and sense of self during a time when the consistency of peer relationships is crucial.* Going back to our family's move and attendance at Huffaker, we selected third grade as the time to have our children switch states, schools, and school districts in order for our kids to have consistent, stable, supportive friendships and community prior to their journey into middle school. Unfortunately, with Huffaker now being a split feeder, this has been eliminated. Our two children will now be ripped apart from their friends as we are zoned for one middle/high school and their friends another. Is this what WCSD stands for? Is this what is intended in the WCSD's promise and strategic plan to its students "*in partnership with our families and community?*"

I agree with Ms. Smith's statements when she suggests Option H2, "It offers a clean line. [...] I believe a good zoning map should not need a while story about why it was chosen. You should look at a boundary line and simply understand it. If you have to tell a whole story [...] a map should just make sense. H2 offers us a clean line. Clear geographical boundaries. Sustainable enrollment. [...]" However, I do not agree with how this decision was made - without the community it affects being given a seat at the table. *The way in which this decision was made does not align with the Strategic Plan of the district* - "strong partnership among families, community, and school" as outlined on the district's webpage: "trust among the family, school and community is nurtured through shared responsibility for student success; proactive and respectful teaming with families; and sustained relationships with the community." This decision was made without the trust of the community, without the respect of the community, and by damaging relationships with the community. This is **not** what our democracy is about (Mr. Mayberry). This is **not** the hearing of desires (Mr. Ernst).

I sincerely hope the Board of Trustees will consider revising its decision. Consider meeting with the Huffaker Community in a multitude of ways, listening to the community's desires to be or not be a split feeder, and if a split feeder is truly desired - to engage in meaningful discussions as to where the dividing line should occur. Please rebuild Huffaker Community's trust in the district and with its Board of Trustees. Please make this decision a shining example of our democracy in action and engage the Huffaker Community and hear its desires.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,



Amy Horvath

Mother of Two Students at Huffaker Elementary School

Educator, Small Business Owner

P.S. Per the Agenda: “The Board/Committee will also accept public comments before and during the meeting through publiccomments@washoeschools.net . The Board/Committee will take time to read those comments during the meeting and announce the names of those who provided public comment via email.” My public comment (and name), along with that of Chelsea Moore’s was not accounted for during the meeting, even though it was submitted prior to the vote per its timestamp.

CC:

Christine Hull - chull@washoeschools.net

Colleen Westlake - Colleen.Westlake@washoeschools.net

James Phoenix - james.phoenix@washoeschools.net

Beth Smith, President - Elizabeth.Smith@washoeschools.net

Alex Woodley - Alex.Woodley@washoeschools.net

Adam Mayberry, Vice President, At Large - Adam.Mayberry@washoeschools.net

Diane Nicolet, At Large - DNicolet@washoeschools.net

Tami Zimmerman - tzimmerman@washoeschools.net


Neil Rombardo, Chief General Counsel - nrombardo@washoeschools.net

publiccomments@washoeschools.net

BoardMembers@washoeschools.net

Zoning@washoeschools.net

From: Kati Kerr
Sent: Wednesday, April 30, 2025 7:12 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Kindergarten Student to Teacher Ratio

 External Email: This email originated outside of WCSD. Please exercise caution. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Evening,

I am writing to you today as a parent with a current and an incoming Kindergartener for the 2025-2026 school year. Currently the class sizes at our school are 24 students and I fear that the upcoming year will be even more than that due to the School of Choice Option for other families not in our zone. As a parent volunteer and part of the PFA I witness the difficulties our teachers face trying to manage these larger class sizes. Don't get me wrong they are rockstars and do the best they can but it is not fair to them or to all of the students. Even with one aide split between the 3 classes it's not enough support. With varying academic and social needs Kindergarten classes need to have the least amount of kids out of all of the grades. I am asking that you decrease the student to teacher ratio to the recommended 16:1. Our youngest learners deserve focused attention and instruction in order to foster a love for school and learning.

Thank you,

Kati Kerr

Sent from my iPhone

From: Williams, Tavia
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2025 11:55 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Subject: Concerns Regarding Changes to Critical Needs Positions

Dear WCSD Board of Trustees,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed changes to the Critical Needs positions for the upcoming school year. The potential shift in policy will present significant challenges for many of us who have returned to the District under the current structure.

Have you considered the possibility of grandfathering in those of us who rejoined WCSD with the understanding that certain benefits—such as health insurance, PERS contributions, and accrued sick leave—would be available under the existing terms? It would seem both fair and reasonable to honor the commitments that influenced our decision to return.

In addition, I urge you to consider negotiating future terms for new Critical Needs hires in a way that ensures fairness and transparency, while also maintaining incentives that help attract and retain experienced educators. I was disheartened to hear that there was such a lack of collaboration with the Association, and I know these changes should have been brought to the table and bargained in good faith before anything was shared with impacted staff.

Thank you for your time and your ongoing commitment to our students, staff, and community.

Sincerely,

Tavia Williams

Dedicated 3rd grade Teacher

Mrs. Tavia Williams

3rd grade teacher

Huffaker Elementary



Mrs. Tavia Williams

From: Borsum, Jaclyn S
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2025 1:51 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Critical Needs

Dear Board Members,

I retired with 30 years of service from the WCSD. For 10 years, I taught with a private online company and tutored students in my home. I was thrilled when the district opened critical needs to elementary schools. For the past two years, I have been working as a critical needs teacher and have loved almost every moment of it. I worked as hard as I did prior to retirement. I have attended all school meetings, PLCs and most functions. I have taken on planning field trips and grade-level events. Additionally, I believe I have missed class just 10 times in two years.

I appreciate the district has found a way to utilize retired teachers who still wish to engage with children in our community. Unfortunately, substitute teacher pay is low compared to private tutoring. Critical needs teachers, like me, who are completely engaged with students, staff and parents should be compensated and deserve to receive equal and fair pay.

Thank you,
Jackie Swobe Borsum

Batchelder, Jennifer

From: Dunn, Shari
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2025 8:13 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Evans, Calen; Spriggs, Earl; Dunn, Shari
Subject: Critical Needs

I'm one of the many, many critical needs folks who have returned to teaching, accepting positions that are very difficult to fill, primarily with our most vulnerable kids, special needs. I accepted a position in a Strategies classroom, grades 2-5. My plan was to do this same job next year to provide continuity to kids who have had a different teacher every year since Kindergarten.

If the critical needs positions are converted to non-contract, day to day guest teachers (\$400.00 per day, no days off, no benefits, at-will employees) I will not be returning, sadly. For those of us who have taught for over 30 years, loads of experience with kids and families, this is a major slap in the face.

Questions I have:

1. Who will write the IEP's? These are litigious documents that are difficult to write, need training to achieve, and are often done before/after school and on weekends (since we are with kiddos all day). How will the day-to-day critical needs folks be compensated for the outside of school hours to take the IEP training? (there are two, EdPlan training, and Sped 101 training).
2. Who will conduct the IEP and 3 year reevaluation meetings? These occur before and after school, taking 1-1.5 hours at a minimum. How will these "guest teachers" be compensated for the extra time preparing for and conducting the IEP/3 year reevaluation meetings? (I have heard a rumor that the certified Sped teacher would do these, in addition to his/her own workload. I don't feel that this will work since they are not necessarily working directly with the students).
3. In order to be a Strategies teacher, you must take three college courses, not paid for by the school district. If you leave the position you're in (strategies) you will be removed from the IRC program. So if there is a reduction in workforce (as was stated in the letter sent to us) then we lose the classes we have started/not finished without extra compensation.
4. Guest teachers are usually bell-to-bell teachers, beginning at the first bell, and leaving at the last bell. When will lesson plans be written? Materials gathered? Set up for the next day happen? If they are working with kids all day, there will not be time for a guest teacher to do these things.
5. I understand that there is a potential "workforce reduction" based on the lower student funding at both the state and federal levels. I understand the district needs a group of folks who are not on contract to let go if needed. I think this is the wrong group of folks (working directly with students, often the most vulnerable populations).
6. From what I understand there isn't even a list of the critical needs folks and the positions they currently occupy. I feel this should be the first thing that needs to be determined to see what jobs might be left open for the year if this policy is enacted.

Suggestions:

1. Grandfather in the current critical needs folks (we will age out, most of us stay 2-3 years or less) and allow the new critical needs applicants to fall under the new policy, whatever that ends up being.
2. These veteran teachers should be respected for their experience, degrees, and wisdom. Allow them to work under a contract, with benefits, and days off. This contract might look different, but should allow them to still work in the district, with respect.

I hope that the school board suspends this new policy (\$400.00 per day, no benefits, no days off, at-will employee) until the issue can be debated, discussed, a shared understanding of the types of positions that are currently filled by critical needs (mostly hard to work with populations, hard to fill jobs). Then, several new policy/contracts could be suggested, discussed, and voted on so it won't be as controversial.

Thank you for reading my email. I hope, with all my heart, and with the Strategies kiddos I work with in my brain, that you put the current "plan" on hold for review.
Thank you.

Shari Dunn

Special Education Teacher
Huffaker Elementary School
(775)689-2510
skdunn@washoeschools.net

From: T LEWIS
Sent: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 8:02 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Safety concern at Incline Elementary School
Attachments: IES Letter .pdf

⚠ External Email: This email originated outside of WCSD. Please exercise caution. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

A 5th grade student at Incline Elementary School threatened the lives of other students and was found to be in possession of a bullet. When school police attempted to investigate further, the student's parent refused to allow a search of the home to ensure no firearms were present. Despite this, the student was allowed to return to school after only a half-day suspension—before the residence was cleared for potential weapons.

This decision raises serious concerns about student safety and the principal's handling of the situation. It must be addressed immediately.

Please see the attached letter for further details.

Warmest Regards,
Tim Lewis

Immediate Concern Regarding Student Safety Response at Incline Elementary School

To:

Superintendent Joe Ernst
WCSD Board of Trustees
Principal Gina Curtis

Dear Superintendent Ernst, President Smith, Members of the Board, and Principal Curtis:

We are writing to formally express serious concern regarding the response to a recent safety threat at Incline Elementary School. A student made a direct verbal threat to another student's life on the school bus—saying, "I'll kill you." It later emerged that the same student had a bullet in his possession. This information did not come from school staff but from multiple fifth-grade witnesses, several of whom physically handled the bullet. These students are credible, and their accounts were consistent. Additionally, the student's mother later confirmed the existence of the bullet, stating that she disposed of it.

Law enforcement was contacted but was not permitted to search the student's home, as the parent denied them access. As a result, it remains unconfirmed whether a firearm is present in the home. Despite this serious situation, Principal Gina Curtis—who stated she had the discretion to issue a suspension ranging from 1 to 10 days—chose to suspend the student for just one day. The student has since returned to school.

This decision was made with full knowledge of the following:

- A credible life-threatening statement was made in front of witnesses.
- A bullet was in the student's possession, confirmed by peers and the parent.
- The student's home was not searched, leaving a potential ongoing safety risk.

This threat has not been reasonably ruled out. The student remains in school while other students and parents are left unsettled.

Additionally, there was significant confusion and rumor among parents. These rumors could have been avoided had the school issued a timely, transparent communication. After learning that law enforcement was denied entry to the home,

a statement should have been released explaining that a safety concern had occurred, law enforcement had been involved, and the school was following WCSD protocol.

We respectfully request clarification on the district's policy regarding communication with parents following incidents of this nature. If policy prevented transparency, then it is our strong recommendation that this policy be reviewed and revised.

We are requesting the following actions:

1. That the student be suspended for the full 10 days allowable under district policy.
2. That the disciplinary decision be reviewed by WCSD at the district level.
3. That a full internal review of the school's handling of this incident be conducted.
4. That WCSD clarify its communications policy regarding threats, and revise it if necessary.


This is not just a matter of discipline; it is a matter of maintaining student safety and public trust. The current response has left our community with more questions than answers.

We expect timely and decisive action.

Sincerely,
Timothy and Veronica Lewis

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Timothy and Veronica Lewis.

From: Janine Luciani
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2025 7:11 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Stead Elementary

 External Email: This email originated outside of WCSD. Please exercise caution. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

My heart is broken for Stead Elementary.

I am a retired WCSD teacher. I worked my entire career in Washoe County and dedicated 15 years of my life to Stead Elementary. During my time there, I loved the students and staff. I spent my last 13 years teaching 3rd grade along with at least three other colleagues – there were a core four of us who were consistent, but as the population grew, we sometimes had up to six 3rd grade classrooms. These teachers became more than colleagues, they became family. We were together during marriages, births, tragedies, and eventually retirements. Many of us even brought our own children to Stead due to the quality of teachers they would be exposed to. To this day, we continue to be in one another's lives even as we have all moved on from Stead Elementary.

We were not the only grade level with this type of camaraderie. In fact, several grade levels formed this type of bond and many are still together. You see, when you work together for many years several things happen. Sure, you become comfortable within your grade level as well as with your fellow teachers, but the biggest thing that happens is you build an expertise in your teaching craft. This happens because you feel safe to share ideas, try new things, and build on one another's strengths. In my team, we each had a different strength that helped all of us grow.

In addition to the professional bonds, you build relationships with the students as well as their families. I taught many siblings over the years and it was a comfort to me as well as those families to already have a connection with them – and I am still in contact with many of those families. The continuity of the staff helped build a community at Stead Elementary – a community rare for such a low socioeconomic school. Teachers stayed because we were happy – happy with our professional teams, happy with our students, and happy with our families. I even went back a couple of years ago to teach music as a critical-needs teacher and even then, I taught siblings of former students. (On another note, I would not consider a critical-needs position again due to the new compensation model.)

I was sad to learn that the district would be tearing down my house. I will not be able to show my grandchildren where I spent the majority of my teaching career. But then I heard you would be breaking apart families! Families built through community and love. Families that CHOSE to stay together. Requiring the teachers to reapply to the new school is unbelievable to me. To my knowledge, this has never happened in our district. It would be different if you were opening a new school without shutting down Stead, but that is not what is happening. This is a detriment to the students, their families, and the Stead staff – a staff that CHOSE to STAY there! This is evidenced by how many teachers are leaving Stead to start at a new school next year now that their family is being

dismantled. I cannot imagine the reason for this decision. Is it because it is the North Valleys? We always felt like our community mattered less to the city and the county, but I didn't think we mattered less to the district.

As I write this, my eyes are tearing up for my Stead family. How will you get teachers to replace those who left when they know it will only be for one year? It is the students (students who NEED consistency) who will suffer the most – my heart breaks for them. Why are you doing this?

Respectfully,
Janine Luciani

From: Jacky, Donna
Sent: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 12:37 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: harmful proposed changes to critical needs hiring and to the WEA

Washoe County School District Board of Trustees:

I am writing today to address two issues of major concern to many of us throughout the school district.

The first item I want to address is the proposed changes to the hiring of critical needs teachers. While I understand everyone is looking to save money and cut budgets, risking placing highly qualified and experienced teachers in classrooms across the district has the potential to negatively impact the education and learning of students and to cost the district large sums of money via due process lawsuits. The hardest to fill special education classrooms are typically Strategies classrooms and the highly specialized classrooms at Marvin Picollo School. Some of our most medically fragile and behaviorally challenged (often violent/aggressive) students are in these programs. These students deserve quality education provided by highly skilled, trained and experienced special educators - many of whom happen to be critical needs teachers. To staff these classrooms with inexperienced, untrained substitute teachers is a travesty for the students' education, an enormous liability for WCSD, and a huge risk to the safety of students, teachers, and other staff. Strategies programs are unfortunately the origin of many of the school districts' due process lawsuits. The potential for the district to lose a due process lawsuit because the substitute teacher running the program was not highly qualified, experienced or trained is a very real possibility.

Another concern with the proposed changes to critical needs hiring is the fact that the school district did not discuss or negotiate any of the components of their proposed changes to critical needs positions with the WEA before sending out a mass e-mail that blindsided affected employees. Nor did the district survey any of us serving in critical needs positions for our input prior to proposing such a major change to hiring practices. If the district fills the multitude of open classrooms with critical needs "guest teachers" that are not offered the protections of a yearly contract, there is the potential for some of those positions to experience turnover throughout the year, resulting in a significant disruption to students' education, student/staff safety concerns, a possibility of increased due process filings, and a burden on school administrators who would be forced to begin the hiring process all over again.

The second highly concerning issue I want to address is the district's proposed changes to the WEA – eliminating the VP position, limiting the term of the president, and doing away with leave days. Why is this even being proposed? The WEA provides critical support and essential advocacy that enhances the work lives of teachers and other staff as well as greatly improving the education our students receive in our schools. Removing leave days would prevent WEA representatives from lobbying our legislature to advocate on behalf of students, teachers/staff, and the WCSD as a whole. How does this make sense? Enacting these proposed changes would have negative impacts on students, teachers, other staff, and schools. It would also prevent WEA staff from attending trainings. To what end?

I urge the members of the Board of Trustees to carefully and thoughtfully consider the range of potentially harmful and dangerous consequences that changing critical needs hiring practices and limiting the WEA would have on our students, our staff, our schools, and our district.

Respectfully,

Donna Jacky, M.A.

Edward Cornelius Reed High School

Resource Math Teacher (critical Needs Position)

Special Education Department