

May 27, 2025

Superintendent Ernst and Honorable WCSD Board Members,

My name is Kathy Gage, and I am a Critical Needs Teacher for Special Education at Shaw Middle School. I am writing to you today to express my concern as a citizen, teacher and former school administrator over the new policy communicated to Critical Needs teachers from HR Talent Manager, Doug Owens, April 17, 2025, as well as the “clarification document” communicated by Camille Druitt, Staffing Specialist.

I strongly believe the new policies communicated in these documents are detrimental to hiring well qualified candidates to fill vacant positions in critical teaching areas that typically continue to remain unfilled. Vacancies in these positions tend to impact our most vulnerable populations (Special Education, Title Schools) who should receive quality instruction and care from experienced, certified teachers. Vacancies at school sites create stress on entire school communities, and filling these vacancies must be a priority at WCSD. Due to this new policy for Critical Needs teachers, many of our best CNGT's will find positions elsewhere, (and many are already committed to positions) outside of WCSD.

The changes that are most likely the reason many teachers on critical needs status will not return include:

- Teachers will be re-employed under the Guest Teacher Designation at a daily rate of pay of \$400 a day.

- If you elected to enroll in the WCSD Retiree Health Insurance, your benefits will continue to be deducted from PERS, as is Standard for retirees. (Guest teachers will not receive insurance benefits)

- Critical labor shortage teachers will not be eligible for leave or receive sick or personal days.

- incentives and certification bonuses will not apply.

- Retirees hired in a critical labor shortage are hired in an at-will capacity and may be separated at any time

- Retirees are not included in any negotiated agreements or entitled to the benefits provided to any employee group

In the clarification document sent out by Camille Druitt, Staffing Specialist, it was noted that Critical Needs Guest Teachers (CNGT's) would be required to work bell to bell but are

expected to show up 30 minutes prior to the start day and not be compensated. This document also noted that Special Education teachers would be required to write and facilitate IEP meetings as that is part of the expectation for \$400 a day. I would think that since all CNGT's are being compensated the same at \$400 per day, (music, math, science, ELL, all elementary grades) positions that require extra hours, and outside work will continue to be left vacant. The writing of an IEP certainly cannot be completed during school hours, and the meetings themselves last 45-60 minutes, longer for eligibility meetings. The testing required for student eligibility meetings takes hours to complete and must be done individually, one-by-one, by someone who is trained to administer the required tests. Who will do this testing? The clarification email from Ms. Druitt suggested that the school principal can opt to pay a stipend to compensate CNGT's for an hour before or after school for IEP meetings. Will the district provide these additional funds to schools, or will this expense come out of a school's general budget?

A question was asked in the clarification document about who would arrange for a substitute when the CNGT would be absent? There was no clarification of who would complete lesson plans for a substitute.

The clarification document mentioned that CNGT's will not be responsible for daily lesson plans and preparation, as these will be created by the Department Lead (DL). Are DL's aware of this additional responsibility? This is a lot of work. Will they be compensated for writing lesson plans, grading, conferences, parent notification? I am concerned that our students will be harmed if these answers are not addressed prior to the 25-26 school year.

I am aware that many of our school board members come from the business world and areas outside of Public Schools. I encourage all of you to speak to school Principals about how school vacancies disrupt the school environment. When positions are unfilled, the students still arrive, and site administrators are responsible for determining who and how students will be "taught" when there is no teacher of record. In some cases, a substitute will cover a class. In the best-case scenario one sub will agree to return on daily basis until a "teacher" can be found. In the worst-case scenarios' s students receive a new person "day-to-day." There is no continuity, no relationships between teacher/student, typically, no learning. I have witnessed Middle School math classes, Kindergarten classes, special education classes, music classes with a different sub every day, and students did not receive "instruction." Substitutes do their best, but they do not have the knowledge/experience to do much more than "supervise," and sometimes just supervising is at a minimum. Our district must do it's best to ensure that a quality, certified teacher is in front of each class, to ensure all students receive a quality education. Substitutes are

cheaper, and not filling all positions with a certified teacher will certainly save the school district money, but in doing so we sacrifice the learning and future of our students.

Because we have a substitute teacher shortage, many times, a substitute position is not filled, and then the site administrator determines who will not work their assigned job for the day and will instead cover a class. Those who “cover classes” and are pulled away from the jobs they were hired for typically are Deans, ELL teachers, Special Education Teachers at the Elementary Level, and prep periods are given up at Middle and High School levels.

We must do better. Our students deserve instruction, not just supervision. I am not trying to be difficult, but really, truly, honestly, I want to know that those in the driving seat of our district have a map (plan) to fill every vacancy with someone who can teach the content and can create a culture where students thrive both academically and socially.

As I look at the job board today at WCSD, I see we have: 197 vacancies posted at school sites. Of these, 109 are Special Education positions. Does our district have a plan to address these vacancies without retired teachers? I know many who are teaching in Critical Needs positions who will not be returning under the current policy. As a young, retired person, please understand that finding a job that pays \$400 a day without benefits that requires far less work and effort than teaching is not a challenge. And many in my situation are deciding to not return because they do not feel respected and valued. Old teachers and young teachers deserve to be valued and treated as equals when the work we are required to do is the same. There is no possible way that working bell-to-bell will happen or will work to provide the best education for our students. Quality teaching requires a great deal of preparation and planning, it is much more than following a lesson plan.

My greatest hope is that Washoe County will become a district where young, certified teachers, beginning their careers line up to work for Washoe County Schools. My hope is that all students in Washoe County have a certified teacher welcoming their students to a new school year on day one of the 25-26 School year. I would love the time to arrive when asking retired teachers to return to the classroom is no longer needed, sadly, we are not in this position and have not been since Covid. I am respectfully requesting that as board members and leaders of WCSD you will re-evaluate the Critical Needs Guest Teacher policy and consider treating the retired teachers returning to support WCSD schools and students as valued employees deserving equitable pay and benefits for equal work and expectations. Our students will benefit from this decision.

Thank you for your time and commitment to our students and schools and community of the Washoe County School District.

Respectfully,

Kathy Gage
7th Grade ELA Special Education
Resource Teacher
Shaw Middle School

From:
Sent: Tuesday, May 27, 2025 6:19 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Magnet Program at WCSD


⚠ 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.

Hello,

Before starting I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Nate, and I am a sixth grader at Marce Herz, and I'd like to share with you my experience as a student in the Magnet program. Being able to study in the Magnet program has been a blast, and something that felt like a true privilege to take part in this. Even on the first 1-2 weeks I could recognize my teachers' intentions, and was able to connect their strictness for their care for us. I know that all they want is for us to succeed, but if the district approves these possible budget cuts, the possibility of us to succeed will greatly diminish. What will happen to us? These budget cuts will decrease education quality and will likely worsen the overall experience of the Magnet program. I really, from the bottom of my heart, hope that the program does not get budget cuts, as this results in supply quality decreasing as well, and so many other problems such as the one I went into detail with in this letter. Please do not do anything to this program, as I and so many others believe it is perfectly fine. Why drop a cup on purpose? The two share a similar ideology, and that is what I am writing this for.

-Nate, 6th Grade
Sent from my iPhone

From: Sue Bugajsky
Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2025 9:42 AM
To: Public Comments
Subject: [EXTERNAL] School zone lights

 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.

If school is out why are we seeing flashing lights in school zones?
Did someone forget to reset the computers.

Susan Bugajsky