



## Washoe County School District Board Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2018

### 1. Opening Items

#### 1.01 Call to Order

The meeting of the Board Policy Committee was called to order at 2:00 p.m. in the Board Room of the WCSD Administration Building, 425 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Reno, Nevada.

#### 1.02 Roll Call

President Katy Simon Holland and Trustee Members Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley were present at roll call. Trustee Angela Taylor was absent at roll call. Superintendent Traci Davis and staff were also present.

#### 1.03 Public Comment

There was no public comment at this time.

#### 1.04 Action to Adopt the Agenda

**On motion by Veronica Frenkel, second by Debra Feemster, the Board Policy Committee approved the agenda as presented** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

### 2. Discussion, Presentation, And Action Items

#### 2.01 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING ON DECEMBER 5, 2017

There was no discussion on this item.

**On motion by John Mayer, second by Scott Kelley, the Board Policy Committee approved the minutes of the December 5, 2017 Board Policy Committee Meeting** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

**2.02 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED ADOPTION OF BOARD POLICY 4550, STAFF INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS, WHICH INCLUDES LANGUAGE REGARDING APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION METHODS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Chief Human Resources Officer Dawn Huckaby presented the policy. It was explained that the policy, which ensure that relationships and communication between staff and students are appropriate and enhance the educational environment, has previously been before the Board Policy Committee. The policy received preliminary approval by the Board of Trustees in November. Due to the number of questions and concerns posed by staff during the public review and comment period, the decision was made to retract the policy, make further revisions, and bring the policy back to the Committee.

In December, Ms. Huckaby and others met with members of the Washoe Education Association. From that meeting, revisions were made to the policy, specifically to provide guidance to staff related to appropriate communication related to school or education matters.

Trustee Raymond inquired about the provision in the policy related to social media and the practice of “friending” a student. Ms. Huckaby explained that use of social media related to educational purposes is appropriate. Use of personal social media that would include students is not appropriate and staff are discouraged from friending, following, or “otherwise interacting with students individually or personally from social media accounts. There was additional discussion related to the gray areas that occur when discussion over social media is related to classroom discussion but could be perceived as the personal opinions of staff in areas such as politics and others.

Trustee Feemster suggested an addition to the policy related to the use of social media and training of staff on acceptable use. Trustee Frenkel agreed and suggested adding, as a guiding principal, that the District seeks to provide guidance to staff in this area. It was suggested that “professional development” be added to the purpose statement.

Trustee Mayer requested that all staff receive the policy, upon its adoption, to ensure they are educated about its existence.

Trustee Feemster re-stated her belief that the policy should contain specific information as to how professional development will occur and that it should be immediately upon the start of the school year. President Simon Holland suggested those details should be included in the Superintendent’s Administrative Regulation rather than the policy. Superintendent Davis added that there are many things occurring at the start of the

school year and that a school may not be able to conduct this training on the first day or in the first week. Additionally, such training should be on going and not limited to the beginning of the school year.

President Simon Holland restated the suggested changes to the policy. The final sentence of the Purpose Statement will be revised to read, "[t]hrough this policy, and any associated administrative regulations, clear procedures *and professional development* shall be established for all staff, defining appropriate and inappropriate conduct, mandating the reporting of inappropriate conduct, cooperating with law enforcement, and ensuring compliance with applicable laws." The Desired Outcomes section will have an additional provision which reads, "[e]nsure all employees have timely training and professional development to implement this policy."

Public Comment:

Tom Stauss, Executive Director of the Washoe Education Association, thanked District staff for their willingness to make revisions to the policy and take into account the comments of teachers, counselors, and other staff. He added his agreement that training is a necessary component to the policy.

**On motion by Malena Raymond, second by Veronica Frenkel, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed adoption of Board Policy 4550, Staff Interactions With Students, with proposed changes to the Purpose Statement and Desired Outcomes to address training and professional development related to social media use, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval**

Trustee Mayer suggested a friendly amendment to add a reference to the pending social media regulation in the "Associated Documents" section of the policy. Trustee Raymond agreed to the friendly amendment.

**On motion by Malena Raymond, second by Veronica Frenkel, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed adoption of Board Policy 4550, Staff Interactions With Students, with proposed changes to the Purpose Statement and Desired Outcomes to address training and professional development related to social media use, and addition of a reference to a social media regulation, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

**2.03 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED REVISION OF BOARD POLICY 4505, STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT, WHICH INCLUDES CLARIFYING LANGUAGE RELATED TO ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR STAFF, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Chief Human Resources Officer Dawn Huckaby presented proposed changes to Board Policy 4505, Standards of Professional Conduct. This policy states the Board of Trustees' commitment towards high standards of work performance and professional conduct. Ms. Huckaby described the changes to the policy which include the addition of an Ethics section which states the intention of the Board and Superintendent to set an ethical tone throughout the District by clearly communicating acceptable behavior and expectations. Additionally, clarifying language was added related to staff conflict of interest to provide guidance to staff who own, contract with, are employed by, or volunteer with an outside entity. The guidance relates to use of District property and/or equipment when such use is for the outside entity, organization, team, etc. Lastly, with the recent adoption of a Staff Freedom of Speech policy, Ms. Huckaby recommended the removal of the section from this policy to avoid redundancy.

Trustee Frenkel inquired about the Desired Outcome related to whistleblower protocols. The Policy Coordinator, Lisa Scurry, explained that staff is in the process of revising the old procedure and elevating it to an administrative regulation. She added that the new document will align to the current public complaint process. Trustee Frenkel requested that the new documents be added to the Implementation Guidelines and Associated Documents section of the policy.

**On motion by Scott Kelley, second by Debra Feemster, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed revision of Board Policy 4505, Standards Of Professional Conduct, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley. Not Present at Vote: John Mayer). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 5-0

**2.04 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED REVISION OF BOARD POLICY 5340, INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS, WHICH INCLUDES LANGUAGE RELATED TO SANCTIONED AND NON-SANCTIONED ATHLETICS, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Dr. Byron Green, Chief Student Services Officer, Michael Doering, Executive Director, and Rollins Stallworth, Coordinator of Student Athletics and Activities, presented draft

Board Policy 5340, Interscholastic Athletics, to the Board Policy Committee. Dr. Green explained that the policy was drafted in collaboration with the Deputy Superintendent's office, school administrators and athletic directors, and the Office of the General Counsel.

Mr. Doering explained that Board Policy 5340, Interscholastic Athletics, and the next policy to be presented, Board Policy 5345, Prevention and Treatment of Sport Related Injuries, will eventually take the place of the current policy - Board Policy 5305, Interscholastic Activities, Athletics, School-Sponsored Events, and Prevention and Treatment of Sport Related Injuries. The policy has been separated to give proper weight to the individual topics.

The goal of the policy is to provide clarity related to the difference between sanctioned and non-sanctioned athletics, to include the District's role with these activities.

Mr. Stallworth provided details about the policy and explained that sanctioned athletics are approved, initially, by the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association. Non-sanctioned activities (also known as "club sports") are not managed or financed by the District. The policy specifically addresses the difference between District sponsored athletics and non-sponsored teams, organizations, and entities. In so doing, guidance is provided in several areas, to include eligibility, participation and equal access to programming; roles and responsibilities of staff and coaches; the role of the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA); and, student behavior relative to participation in extra-curricular athletics.

Additionally, the policy provides guidance to the community related to access to the District's facilities and students for non-sponsored activities, teams, and organizations. This includes use of facilities, distribution of materials to students, and ethical considerations for District staff who are involved with these entities outside the course and scope of their employment with the District.

Mr. Stallworth added that the goal of the policy is not to limit student opportunities but to ensure such opportunities are equitably and ethically applied.

Public Comment: letters from two individuals, Teri Slade and Rhonda Beadell, related to lacrosse were entered into the record by President Simon Holland. (attached to the end of these minutes).

President Simon Holland asked the presenters to provide information related to lacrosse. Mr. Stallworth spoke to the District's affiliation at the high schools with lacrosse. Of the District's eleven high schools with sports, six have some type of lacrosse program using the school's facilities. Of those six, only five have a girls program while all six offer a program for boys. Of those programs, five of them are

following District protocols for non-sanctioned activities/athletics. One school, Spanish Springs High School, has allowed the lacrosse program to run as a school club rather than a non-sanctioned activity.

At the request of President Simon Holland, Mr. Doering and Mr. Stallworth provided additional information related to sanctioned and non-sanctioned athletics, to include provisions in the policy that non-sanctioned athletics will not be included in the school yearbook, are not eligible for school-sponsored athletic letters, etc. Mr. Doering explained that allowing non-sanctioned athletics to be included in the yearbook, to be part of awards nights, eligibility protocols, etc. gives the false perception to families that the team is being sponsored by the District.

Trustee Mayer asked if lacrosse is sanctioned by the Nevada Interscholastic Activities (NIAA) and Clark County School District (CCSD). Mr. Stallworth responded that lacrosse is not sanctioned by the NIAA and CCSD is not currently offering it as a sanctioned sport.

Dr. Green added that the perception that an outside entity being perceived as a District sport/activity could increase the District's legal liability.

Trustee Frenkel inquired about how a sport becomes sanctioned. Mr. Stallworth explained that the District is a member of the Nevada Interscholastic Activities (NIAA) Association. As such, the District only offers as sanctioned athletics sports that are sanctioned by the NIAA. When new sports are contemplated, the District would need to show that it has the space available, resources, impact on other sports, etc., to provide the sport. Additionally, though, there are Title IX (of the Education Amendments) concerns with adding new sports – both related to equity among schools and with participation numbers between males and females. Lastly, he added that to implement lacrosse as a sanctioned sport would cost approximately \$500,000.

Dr. Green, in response to President Simon Holland's inquiry, stated that the policy would be fully implemented for the 2108-19 school year. This timeline would allow the District to continue to work with the community.

Vice-President Raymond asked for clarification about club sports. It was explained that non-sanctioned athletic teams are referred to as "club" sports. This is different from a club offered by a school related to an activity such as the chess club or a diversity club.

Mr. Stallworth clarified with the Trustees that there are many "club" sports at all of the high schools. Some of those teams are coached by staff outside of their duties and function outside of the District.

Trustee Feemster inquired how the new policy and its associated protocols will be introduced to the community. Mr. Stallworth replied that most schools are already following the procedures outlined in the policy and the District will work with any that have questions or concerns. Dr. Green added that there is confusion surrounding the definitions of sanctioned and non-sanctioned athletics and that his office is working with the Office of Communications and Community Engagement to communicate that information.

Trustee Frenkel suggested that the policy should reference how a sport would become sanctioned and that an administrative regulation may be necessary. Dr. Green agreed and proposed that Mr. Stallworth work on those implementing procedures.

**On motion by Veronica Frenkel, second by Debra Feemster, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed revision of Board Policy 5340, Interscholastic Athletics, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

## **2.05 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED REVISION OF BOARD POLICY 5345, PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF SPORT RELATED INJURIES, WHICH INCLUDES LANGUAGE RELATED TO APPROPRIATE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR POTENTIAL INJURIES SUCH AS CONCUSSIONS, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Dr. Byron Green, Chief Student Services Officer, Michael Doering, Executive Director, and Rollins Stallworth, Coordinator of Student Athletics and Activities, presented draft Board Policy 5345, Prevention and Treatment of Sport Related Injuries, to the Board Policy Committee. Mr. Stallworth explained that the District currently has a policy related to activities, athletics, and injuries and the proposed policy has been extracted from it and expanded upon. The policy was written to address the importance of safety protocols to prevent and/or treat injuries that occur as part of student participation in interscholastic athletics, to include protocols related to head injuries/concussions.

Mr. Stallworth explained that the District has a concussion management program that includes when a student can return to practice/competition, applicable certifications of coaches and athletic trainers, etc. Additionally, the policy speaks to such topics as cardiac issues, heat acclimatization, and controlled substances, to include steroids and other performance enhancing drugs.

At President Simon Holland's inquiry, Mr. Stallworth explained that the concussion management program is a nationally recognized protocol driven by medical authority.

Vice-President Raymond commented about new research related to head injuries and the need to continue reviewing the policy and District protocols. It was suggested that the policy and the implementing protocols be re-visited every two years.

Trustee Feemster inquired if the District has doctors on the sidelines at games. Mr. Stallworth replied that the District has athletic trainers at each school. Athletic trainers possess a master's degree in the field and are generally considered as qualified as a physician's assistant.

**On motion by Malena Raymond, second by Debra Feemster, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed adoption of Board Policy 5345, Prevention And Treatment Of Sport Related Injuries, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

## **2.06 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED REVISION OF BOARD POLICY 3051, FUND BALANCE, WHICH SPEAKS TO MAINTAINING ADEQUATE LEVELS OF UNRESTRICTED FUNDS IN THE DISTRICT, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Mark Mathers, Chief Financial Officer, and Mike Schroeder, Budget Director, presented proposed changes to Board Policy 3051, Fund Balance. It was explained that a fund balance is like a savings account for the District. The District's fund balance or reserves policy is a key policy that rating agencies and others consider when evaluating the creditworthiness and financial strength of a public agency. The preservation of adequate reserves is important in order to weather revenue fluctuations and unanticipated costs, as well as to provide sufficient liquidity to pay the District's expenses.

President Simon Holland inquired about the interchangeable use of fund balance and reserve and requested clarification. She stated her concern that inconsistent use of the terms could lead the public to believe the District has a fund balance and a reserve account.

Mr. Mathers explained that while the current policy sets a minimum funding level for the assigned portion of the General Fund balance, it does not set an overall target for the

total balance of the General Fund, which is the fund balance metric used by rating agencies and which Nevada state laws and regulations address. State law sets a 4% fund balance as the minimum fund balance for local governments in Nevada; an agency with an actual fund balance below 4% can be considered to be in a fiscal emergency. The policy proposes a fund balance target of 8% to 10% of expenditures and other uses, less capital outlay.

President Simon Holland suggested that the policy should state the District shall endeavor to maintain the stated fund balance target versus stating the District will maintain the fund balance target. Mr. Mathers replied that he was fine with that change to the policy.

Mr. Mathers reviewed the remainder of the policy which included sections replenishment of funds, on special revenue funds, debt service funds, capital projects funds, and proprietary funds.

Trustee Frenkel suggested that section 3(b)(i) and (ii), governing "conditions for use of revenues," is confusing as written and asked that language be revised to reflect the exceptions for how/when reserves may be used. Mr. Mathers suggested a change.

**On motion by Scott Kelley, second by Veronica Frenkel, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed revision of Board Policy 3051, Fund Balance, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

## **2.07 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED REVISION OF BOARD POLICY 3110, PREPARATION OF THE ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET (FORMERLY ENTITLED "BUDGETING"), WHICH INCLUDES LANGUAGE RELATED TO PRIORITY BASED BUDGETING, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Mike Schroeder, Budget Director, presented the proposed revision of Board Policy 3110, Budgeting. The proposed revision sets the principles guiding the development of the District's annual budget and certain practices and parameters to be followed when preparing the budget.

The policy describes the method by which, over the next three years and beyond, the District will create a structurally balanced budget. Additionally, budget principles are described as best practice to include that decisions shall be made based on data,

programs and services shall be prioritized, and resourcing decisions should be based on the total value created. Some of the governing practices described in the policy include the determination of budgetary priorities, revenue forecasting, and data analysis.

Trustee Frenkel inquired about the use of academic return on investment for core academic programs and if there is a similar mode for return on investment for operations. Mr. Schroeder responded that operational concerns are addressed through benchmarking, key performance indicators, etc. Mr. Mathers added that benchmarking and cost-benefit analysis are used as part of the budgeting process and that it is referred to previously in the policy. Mr. Schroeder suggested adding a reference to key performance indicators to the section.

President Simon Holland commented on the priority based budgeting efforts and restated the changes staff will make related to academic return on investment: Addition of a reference to how operating expenditures are evaluated as well as other programs that have an indirect impact on academics, to include benchmarking and key performance indicators.

**On motion by Veronica Frenkel, second by Malena Raymond, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed revision of Board Policy 3110, Preparation Of The Annual Operating Budget (Formerly Entitled "Budgeting"), with the proposed revisions, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley).  
Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

## **2.08 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED ADOPTION OF BOARD POLICY 3125, BUDGETARY COMPLIANCE AND PERIODIC FINANCIAL REPORTING, WHICH INCLUDES LANGUAGE RELATED TO PROTOCOLS FOR ENSURING THE ANNUAL BUDGET REMAINS BALANCED, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Mark Mathers, Chief Financial Officer, and Mike Schroeder, Budget Director, presented draft Board Policy 3125, Budgetary Compliance and Periodic Financial Reporting. The proposed revised Board Policy 3110, Preparation of Annual Operating Budget, sets the principles guiding the development of the District's annual budget and certain practices and parameters to be followed when preparing the budget. The proposed policy seeks to establish the process for the ongoing monitoring the District's financial position and transactions throughout the year to ensuring that actual expenditures stay within expected revenues and the budget remains balanced.

Mr. Mathers explained that the policy is an incentive tool to keep staff within their budgets and, as possible, to carry over funds from year to year.

**On motion by Scott Kelley, second by Debra Feemster, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed revision of Board Policy 3125, Budgetary Compliance And Periodic Financial Reporting, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

## **2.09 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO RECOMMEND REVISIONS TO AND/OR FORWARD THE PROPOSED REVISION OF BOARD POLICY 7610, PUBLIC INFORMATION AND RECORDS REQUESTS, WHICH INCLUDES LANGUAGE RELATED TO COSTS AND FEES ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH REQUESTS, TO A FUTURE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY APPROVAL**

Neil Rombardo, Chief General Counsel presented proposed changes to Board Policy 7610, Public Information and Records Requests. The policy currently addresses the protocols employed by the District related to the retention of public information and documents, as well as the process by which the general public can request access to those documents. Suggested changes would align the policy to the Nevada Public Records Act (NPRRA) and, on a more limited basis, the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Mr. Rombardo explained that the policy has been revised to allow the District to charge a fee, as allowed by law, for public records requests. This includes an extraordinary use fee for records requests that are extremely cumbersome to fulfill due to the extraordinary use of staff time or technological resources required to complete the request.

President Simon Holland asked about where the cost of records would be posted. Mr. Rombardo clarified that the District does not currently charge for records. If the decision is made to charge in the future, this change in policy would allow for that change which would be the actual time spent up to \$.50 per page. Additionally, the change in policy will allow the District to begin charging for "extraordinary use" requests.

Trustee Frenkel added that the policy does reference the regulations and/or procedures that will be created and maintained as a result of the policy.

Mr. Rombardo stated that the policy does not define extraordinary use because it can vary on a case-by-case basis.

**On motion by Malena Raymond, second by Debra Feemster, the Board Policy Committee forwarded the proposed revision of Board Policy 7610, Public Information And Records Requests, with the proposed revision, to a future meeting of the Board of Trustees for consideration of preliminary approval** (Yea: Katy Simon Holland, Malena Raymond, John Mayer, Debra Feemster, Veronica Frenkel, and Scott Kelley). Final Resolution: Motion Carries 6-0

### **3. Closing Items**

**3.01 Announcement of Next Meeting:** Tuesday, March 6, 2018 in the WCSD Board Room, 425 East 9th Street, Reno, Nevada.

It was explained that the meeting time for the March 6 meeting may be changed to 1:30 p.m. to allow time for Trustee travel to the Spotlight on Success event that evening.

#### **3.02 Public Comment**

There was no public comment given.

#### **3.03 Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business, President Simon Holland adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

**SUBMITTED AS PUBLIC COMMENT TO ITEM 2.05**

Teri Slade

5045 Canyon Dr

Reno, NV 89519

To whom it may concern,

March 30, 2016

I am writing this letter in support of lacrosse becoming a sanctioned school sport. My son Ethan has played lacrosse since the spring of his seventh grade. Ethan played various sports from age 5 until age 9, at that time he started martial arts. He loved martial arts and that became a full time practice for him.

When he was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade I encouraged him to try out for the school basketball team. I felt very strongly that he needed to play a school sport to keep him invested in the school community. Ethan didn't care much about his grades and I truly feared that he would care less and less about school if he did not get involved in something. Ethan is a gifted athlete and excelled in martial arts, so athletics seemed the most logical choice. However, he did not make the basketball team! At just 12 years old and in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, he was not even given the opportunity to try basketball. I was extremely upset about this; my worst fears of him becoming a disconnected video gamer began to haunt me daily. I have raised two academically gifted and accomplished daughters and I did not see this as the path my son would naturally choose.

Shortly after the basketball tryouts a friend of mine mentioned that her son Jake was going to try lacrosse. Ethan and Jake were best friends so of course Ethan was willing to try it too, and tryouts weren't required, and I found out that he could play in high school and that the teams were school affiliated. I was very excited about this because I felt like we had missed a window of opportunity for him to play most school sports because we had devoted our time and resources to martial arts.

Oh, the amazing and magical journey it has been, from the moment Ethan had his first stick in his hands, it has been his obsession! I can't begin to convey his love of this sport. He has played year round since that very first High Sierra Lacrosse U13 team. During that season after he finished his U13 game, he would stand on the sidelines, fully suited up beside coach Nic Towle, just hoping to get in for a play or two with the U15 team. He then played on the summer select team with High Sierra and then fall-ball.

In December, Steve Tynan asked if Ethan would come out and practice with the McQueen team when they started in January. He did and he ended up playing with that team as an eighth grader for the entire high school season. Steve enforced the grade check rule and of course Ethan's grades improved dramatically. Ethan bonded with the other kids on the team and it was the best thing that could have ever happened for him athletically, socially and academically.

Since then Ethan has played on the Avalanche team and the fall-ball box team with Eric Peacock and Andrew Haas and plays Booth Lacrosse (a bay area team) as well. He has loved every minute of every one of those teams.

This spring, however, he has truly found his home playing for John Funk and Reno High. He loves school and his attitude about school has completely turned around this year. I know that being able to play the sport he loves for his own school has inspired him. He made the varsity team as a freshman and was so

thrilled to be able to wear his jersey to school. He can't wait to play lacrosse in college and is always watching college lacrosse films. I have let my "video gamer" fears go!!

Being able to play a school sport, belonging to a school club, participating in yearbook or leadership, gives teenagers that connection and sense of purpose and belonging that we all need. These connections help to keep them moving in a positive direction and inspire them to accept new challenges. It is my hope that the Washoe County School District will support the sanctioning of lacrosse and any other growing sport in the future. Change and forward thinking gives our young people the support and encouragement to "dare greatly" which always pays off in the end.

Sincerely,

Teri Slade (mother of 3, grandmother of 2!)