

Upcoming Board Meeting

My Mac <bkthiele@comcast.net>

Wed 10/6/2021 3:00 PM

To: Jonathan Light <Jonathan.Light@springfield.k12.or.us>; Naomi Raven <naomi.raven@springfield.k12.or.us>; Todd Mann <todd.mann@springfield.k12.or.us>; Emilio Hernandez <emilio.hernandez@springfield.k12.or.us>; Kelly Mason <kelly.mason@springfield.k12.or.us>;

Cc: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Dear SPS board members,

I am a current SPS employee. I teach Kindergarten at Page and have just started my 24th year being employed by SPS. If you recall, I was the "voice of SPS" this last winter when I was interviewed by the "Good news Guy" about returning to in-person learning. I am now at risk to loose my paid status in SPS due to the vaccine mandate. Dustin Reese accepted my religious exception, however on October 19, I will receive the accommodation of being placed on unpaid leave for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year.

I was contacting you about a few questions I have regarding the upcoming SPS board meeting to be held on October 11, 2021. In anticipation of a highly attended meeting, I have heard the board meeting is still going to be held in the board room. In order to maintain transparency, it seems essential to hold the meeting in a larger venue so all voices can be heard.

There are several concerns I have regarding the implementation of unpaid leave for over 50 employees which include teachers, educational assistants, bus drivers, cooks, maintenance workers, speech pathologists, occupational therapist and more!

1. This will make a current staffing shortage even worse.
2. We are going to loose great staff, many who have received very specific training for their current role.
3. Unpaid leave, without the option to use our accrued paid leave, is NOT a reasonable accommodation.
4. Hiring student teachers from UO by issuing an emergency license should not be an option.
5. This decision will have a larger negative impact of those living in poverty.
6. Reasonable accommodations, which other districts in the state have implemented would be better for the greater good of SPS. (KN95 masks, weekly testing, etc.)

Thank you for your time,
Karri Thiele

SPS Covid Employee Mandate Exceptions

Nathan Bofto <nbofto@gmail.com>

Wed 10/6/2021 4:16 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Hello SPS School Board,

My name is Nathan Bofto and I am a PE teacher at Ridgeview Elementary. This is my first year at this school and I am ecstatic that the district has made it a priority to have PE specialists at the elementary level.

When first announced in August, I was a little concerned about what the mandate would mean for me in my situation. I hold a deeply sincere religious belief that prevents me from getting the vaccine. When I saw other districts around the state and within Lane county providing reasonable accommodations and steps for approved exceptions for their staff, I was hopeful and optimistic our district would do the same.

Upon submitting my OHA religious exception form last week, I got a reply within a matter of minutes saying it was approved. I was a little shocked, since I thought it was a more extensive process for review. I also thought that there would be a list of reasonable accommodations that the district has thought out and provided to their staff who qualify and are approved for their exception circumstances.

I was stunned to see the only "accommodation" I was being offered was unpaid leave. The mandate states that employees must provide reasonable accommodations unless it provides an undue hardship. When I asked follow up questions, I was not given any context of HOW I was an undue hardship. In fact, I offered to provide examples of how I am not a hardship or a risk to students based on my circumstances and CDC definitions. I also provided 7-8 different accommodations that were pretty extreme I would agree to in order to prevent contraction and spread. For instance, as a PE teacher I am either outside (weather permitting) for my lessons, or spaced out in the gym. I am never within 6 feet of students for more than a few seconds at a time, unless they have a specific question and I cannot hear them. Our gym is very well ventilated, and I have all my doors open to increase air flow. I see the same kids once every 3 days, so I am not exposed to the same group daily. These are just some examples of how I am NOT an undue hardship, based on the CDC definitions for close contact and potential exposure.

When I offered to provide these examples to the district, it wasn't even acknowledged or discussed. This was not an interactive process in any manner, and there was no dialogue about an appeal process or what else could be provided. Unpaid leave with no access to sick leave, unemployment, or employment as a sub elsewhere is not an accommodation, nor is it reasonable.

Early in the year, my administrator shared with our staff how our superintendent wanted to make it a priority to make SPS THE place to work for educators and a place people were proud to work at. I was devastated and heartbroken to see this is how the district has decided to handle approved exceptions and how they are treating their employees, some of which who have been in the district for decades.

We will potentially lose dozens and dozens of well qualified, educated employees in our district who have given their careers and so much time to this community. There just has to be some middle ground here and something the district could possibly do for approved exceptions other than unpaid leave. I know several in my situation who are willing to go above and beyond with their own accommodations to make sure everyone is safe.

Our students have been through enough these last few years. Just as we are getting back to normal, they are about to have another rug ripped out from underneath them. Unqualified teachers, revolving doors of subs, and expanded class sizes are not the answer both short and long term.

Our employees, our students, and our community deserves better than this. I know the district has to follow the mandate, and I fully understand that. However, having staff members with approved exceptions on alternative accommodations is ALSO in compliance with this. Other bigger districts are providing reasonable accommodations for their employees. Why aren't we? Why aren't we living up to the vision of being a place where people WANT to be at and where there's a culture of trust and transparency?

I am in full support of my fellow staff, families, and community members who have chosen to be vaccinated. But why are staff members like me being punished and being denied income and the ability to provide for our own families just for our sincerely held religious beliefs?

10/11/2021

SPS Covid Employee Mandate Exceptions - public comment

I absolutely love this school and want to be at this district for the long haul. SPS seems like a great district that fosters a family atmosphere. However, it feels as if the district wants nothing to do with me, and has zero interest in trying to work with me, and others in my situation, on this issue. Is this really what is best for kids? Or is this what is best for the decision makers in the district?

I strongly urge you and the rest of the board members to reconsider this stance, and work with staff members in our situation to find alternative ways to be there for our students, and serve our district.

Thank you for your work on this board, and in this community, and also for your time.

Nathan Bofto
SPS Employee

Vaccination Mandate

Jeff Cardwell

Fri 10/8/2021 12:34 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

Dear Board Members,

My name is Jeff Cardwell and I teach Health at Thurston High School. I also coach wrestling. I was recently granted a religious exception to the Oregon Covid-19 Vaccination Mandate. As part of my exception, I was "accommodated " by being put on unpaid leave for the remainder of the year. I do not believe this accommodation is reasonable! In our MOA, wearing an N-95 mask and/or weekly testing were listed as options. Why can't I do one of those two options?

We are currently experiencing a teacher shortage in Oregon as well as everywhere in our great Country. Is taking 7 teachers away from Thurston High School really the best option? Our students are going to be the ones that suffer!! I am not asking you to change the law, I am asking that you look more closely into reasonable accommodations as provided by Governor Brown's Mandate. Other school districts such as Lowell, Pleasant Hill, Roseburg and Sweet Home are finding ways to keep their teachers/staff and focus on helping our students navigate this pandemic.

I thank you for the hard work that you are performing for Springfield Public Schools. Please consider putting this issue as a point of high importance for your October 11th meeting. Thank you.

Jeff R Cardwell
Thurston High School

Please consider this email as confidential...

Honoring Religious Exception with Reasonable Accommodation

nickwing33@gmail.com

Sun 10/10/2021 9:50 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Springfield Public Schools Board,

I have continued to hear that Springfield Public Schools is just simply following the state mandate and that nothing can be done in order to prevent a large number of our staff from being placed on unpaid leave. I wanted to make everyone aware that the mandate assumes that staff with valid medical and religious exceptions are able under the law to still work with students. Section 7 (a) states:

(7) After October 18, 2021:

(a) School-based program staff and volunteers may not teach, work, provide care, learn, study, assist, observe, or volunteer for a school-based program unless they are fully vaccinated or have provided documentation of a medical or religious exception.

For this reason many other districts in our state have given reasonable accommodations to keep their staff with religious exceptions working with the students they love. I sincerely hope that SPS will change course and save our city and schools from a staffing shortage that will most likely lead to very real consequences for our community. In case you are unaware, we already have a staffing shortage in our schools and are already unable to fill positions. Placing amazing, hard-working staff on unpaid leave will greatly compound the issues that our schools are already facing as we try and return from distance and hybrid learning. This decision will naturally lead to staff burnout and I would expect to lose more staff after this year if we continue in this direction.

Please consider making a change to the current policy by providing a reasonable accommodation that keeps all our staff working with students. Again the mandate is clear that those with medical and religious exceptions are able to work directly with students.

Thank you,
Nick Wing

Vaccine Mandate

Greg & Anita <gabblackwell@gmail.com>

Sun 10/10/2021 10:31 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Springfield School Board Members:

We would like to voice support for the school district employees to make their own choices about the Covid-19 vaccine. Their decision should not affect their ability to work, put pensions at risk, or eligibility to receive unemployment benefits if needed. Employees who have served you faithfully in the past should be respected in their sincerely held convictions and not be fired or put on unpaid leave. To make such an extreme decision based on the "everchanging" data and science of the vaccine's safety, and more recently it's effectiveness, does not seem to be in anybody's best interest. It is our belief that each person needs to mitigate their own risk and follow their own conscience. In September, Jessica Wilson 37 yrs. old of Seattle, went against her personal conviction, and now she leaves behind a husband and children. Consider the fact that someday you also could be given a similar choice regarding something you feel strongly about. We ask that you find a reasonable solution for all employees and the school children.

Respectfully,

Greg & Anita Blackwell
Vaccinated residents of Springfield

Public Comment Business Meeting – October 11, 2021

Nathan Bofto <nbofto@gmail.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 8:06 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Hello SPS School Board,

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When first announced in August, I was a little concerned about what the mandate would mean for me in my situation. I hold a deeply sincere religious belief that prevents me from getting the vaccine. When I saw other districts around the state and within Lane county providing reasonable accommodations and steps for approved exceptions for their staff, I was hopeful and optimistic our district would do the same.

Upon submitting my OHA religious exception form last week, I got a reply within a matter of minutes saying it was approved. I was a little shocked, since I thought it was a more extensive process for review. I also thought that there would be a list of reasonable accommodations that the district has thought out and provided to their staff who qualify and are approved for their exception circumstances.

I was stunned to see the only "accommodation" I was being offered was unpaid leave. The mandate states that employees must provide reasonable accommodations unless it provides an undue hardship. When I asked follow up questions, I was not given any context of HOW I was an undue hardship. In fact, I offered to provide examples of how I am not a hardship or a risk to students based on my circumstances and CDC definitions. I also provided 7-8 different accommodations that were pretty extreme I would agree to in order to prevent contraction and spread. For instance, as a PE teacher I am either outside (weather permitting) for my lessons, or spaced out in the gym. I am never within 6 feet of students for more than a few seconds at a time, unless they have a specific question and I cannot hear them. Our gym is very well ventilated, and I have all my doors open to increase air flow. I see the same kids once every 3 days, so I am not exposed to the same group daily. These are just some examples of how I am NOT an undue hardship, based on the CDC definitions for close contact and potential exposure.

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Early in the year, my administrator shared with our staff how our superintendent wanted to make it a priority to make SPS THE place to work for educators and a place people were proud to work at. I was devastated and heartbroken to see this is how the district has decided to handle approved exceptions and how they are treating their employees, some of which who have been in the district for decades.

We will potentially lose dozens and dozens of well qualified, educated employees in our district who have given their careers and so much time to this community. There just has to be some middle ground here and something the district could possibly do for approved exceptions other than unpaid leave. I know several in my situation who are willing to go above and beyond with their own accommodations to make sure everyone is safe.

Our students have been through enough these last few years. Just as we are getting back to normal, they are about to have another rug ripped out from underneath them. Unqualified teachers, revolving doors of subs, and expanded class sizes are not the answer both short and long term.

Our employees, our students, and our community deserves better than this. I know the district has to follow the mandate, and I fully understand that. However, having staff members with approved exceptions on alternative accommodations is ALSO in compliance with this. Other bigger districts are providing reasonable accommodations for their employees. Why aren't we? Why aren't we living up to the vision of being a place where people WANT to be at and where there's a culture of trust and transparency?

I am in full support of my fellow staff, families, and community members who have chosen to be vaccinated. But why are staff members like me being punished and being denied income and the ability to provide for our own families just for our sincerely held religious beliefs?

10/11/2021

Public Comment Business Meeting – October 11, 2021 - public comment

I absolutely love this school and want to be at this district for the long haul. SPS seems like a great district that fosters a family atmosphere. However, it feels as if the district wants nothing to do with me, and has zero interest in trying to work with me, and others in my situation, on this issue. Is this really what is best for kids? Or is this what is best for the decision makers in the district?

I strongly urge you and the rest of the board members to reconsider this stance, and work with staff members in our situation to find alternative ways to be there for our students, and serve our district.

Thank you for your work on this board, and in this community, and also for your time.

Nathan Bofto
SPS Employee

PUBLIC COMMENT BUSINESS MEETING Oct. 11, 2021

Bob & Pam Englund <bpenglund@q.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 10:27 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Dear Board Members,

I am a VERY concerned (former) parent and now grandparent of school age children. It seems that the Portland and Lake Oswego Schools ARE HONORING Religious exceptions, so I would like an explanation as to WHY you are not?

As noted by the Oregon Health Authority , Chapter 333, Division 19 entitled "Investigation and Control of Diseases: General Powers and Responsibilities :

"After October 18, 2021:

b)...The teachers or school staff are fully vaccinated against COVID -19 OR have a documented medical or religious exception."

Apparently you missed the "OR." Please be counted as making the RIGHT and HONORABLE DECISION TONIGHT.

Thank you, Pamela Englund
Springfield, Or. 97478

Public Comment Business Meeting-October 11, 2021

NICK WING <nkwing@msn.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 10:31 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Springfield School Board,

I am very concerned about the future of our school district. It seems to be hanging on currently by threads that feel as if though they could be cut at any point. This mandate was left open by the Oregon of Department of Education to the school districts deciding for themselves what they wanted to do with the religious and medical exemptions. It saddens me to think that very talented, veteran teachers and other talented staff will suddenly be on unpaid leave over one vaccine. I thought our district was better than that. I thought we could work together to find a solution for both sides so ultimately the staff isn't thrust into a devastating situation that affects them in every way possible and ultimately also affects the students which they love to teach and serve. This is not working together. This is not valuing every person for where they are at in their religious beliefs and medical reasons. This is kicking them to the curb with no real plan for how to carry on without them and once again the students suffer. We are already coming off a year of distance learning, students need structure and love. They need care and connection. How can they have this if you are unwilling to compromise with their teachers? Everyone suffers, the staff leaving, the staff remaining, the students, the parents, the community. We all are feeling the weight of this, and you have a chance tonight to do something about it. Yes, you are the board and have a say. So please carefully consider your position you were elected for that holds everyone's livelihoods and please make the right decision to let these teachers and other staff stay with masks, with testing. Other districts in our state have allowed them to continue to teach with these precautions. We all can look and see that this is a Springfield decision. So, we come to you asking you do the same as other districts and allow them in the classroom, which mostly consists of unvaccinated students.

Thank you for your time,

Kim Wing

Fwd: Public comment for business meeting -- October 11, 2021

SAfER CALC <safer1214@gmail.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 10:50 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

 1 attachment

email to school bd.10.11.21.docx;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Dear School Board members,

Good evening. Today is Indigenous People's Day, in the City of Springfield and the State of Oregon. It would be great if the Board acknowledged this day and if it were observed in schools throughout the district. We are on Kalapuya land. Beginning board meetings with a land acknowledgement would be a significant step. I imagine that leadership at the Chiffin Center could help with crafting one that would be appropriate.

Let me call your attention to this recent action by the Oregon Department of Education and specifically to the resolutions section in which the ODE "urgently requests" local districts to clearly communicate their commitments. Will this School Board respond?

The Oregon State Board of Education Resolution Encouraging Support and Solidarity in Support of Students' Identities -- https://www.oregon.gov/ode/about-us/stateboard/Documents/Resolution%20Encouraging%20Solidarity%20and%20Support%20for%20Student%20Identities.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to students and community. I look forward to receiving a response.

Sincerely,
Marion Malcolm
(Member of SAfER Action Team)

Public Comment Business Meeting-October 11, 2021

Halle Wing <hallejwing@gmail.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 11:13 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Hello! I want you to know I am against the mandate that is taking away many teachers and SPS staff. I know that SPS staff who have chosen not to get vaccinated for religious and medical reasons are very devastated and sad that they may lose their jobs. I understand that other school districts are allowing people who are granted religious or medical exceptions to stay and teach which is the whole point of the exception. However, SPS is granting religious and medical exceptions but not letting them teach which is extremely deceiving for everyone. People in charge are saying it is unsafe to have unvaccinated staff working for the district, which makes no sense to me because a majority of the students are unvaccinated, and the science says that the vaccine will only help you with covid. It does not prevent the spread of Covid. This is what the scientist are saying so why must unvaccinated teachers lose their jobs when they choose not to get vaccinated? I acknowledge that the schools are already low on staff and losing more will not help the students which is the last thing I want and I believe our community wants.

-Halle Wing

Public Comment Business Meeting – October 11, 2021

Sammy Alcantar <citywide@calclane.org>

Mon 10/11/2021 11:15 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Good afternoon School Board Members,

My name I Samantha Alcantar and I am a product of the Springfield school district and currently have a brother enrolled in the district. I would first like to start by reminding you all that today is Indigenous People's Day, the Mayor made a proclamation about it last week. I would like to ask what about the district? It is important to acknowledge the land we take space in. A suggestion I have to do so is how about the Board beginning meetings with a land acknowledgment? In addition, I would also like to ask what is the school board's current plan for creating a DEI committee? Have they reached out to community members and groups? What is your plan to ensure you reach BIPOC folks and youth?

Kindly,
Samantha

Public Comment Business Meeting - October 11, 2021

Jared Taylor <tasha_jared@hotmail.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 11:23 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Springfield School Board Members -

I, along with many others in this community, are deeply concerned about the stance SPS has taken in response to the mandates regarding unvaccinated employees. Many Oregon school districts (Junction City, Lake Oswego, & Portland Public Schools to name a few), as well as the University of Oregon, have created REASONABLE alternatives for staff whose exemptions have been approved.

On October 18h, we stand to lose a number of fabulous staff across the district. Our administrators, teachers, classified staff, and students will suffer if those at the District level and this school board continue down a prideful path. It is not too late for Springfield Public School District #19 to join with other districts in creating REASONABLE alternatives to support its staff.

PLEASE SAVE OUR SCHOOLS. SPS EMPLOYEES DESERVE MORE OPTIONS.

Respectfully,

Tasha Taylor, wife of a dedicated SPS employee and mother of 2 THS students

Public Comment Business Meeting – October 11, 2021

Mike Schellenberg <mancsch@yahoo.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 11:36 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

As a parent of Springfield school district students, I am quite aware that my two cents matters little to the 'powers that be', but I will share my opinion anyway. I am concerned about the decision that was made to place staff on unpaid leave if they requested a health or religious accommodation (both allowed by law) rather than receiving the Covid shot. This may be in the best interest of someone, but it is not in the best interest of the students. According to the Oregon Health Authority, "There is emerging evidence that people infected with the Delta variant have similar viral loads regardless of vaccination status suggesting that even vaccine breakthrough cases may transmit this variant effectively." So if vaccination does not keep a person from getting or spreading Covid, why require all staff to receive it? It especially makes no scientific or medical sense to require anyone who has already had Covid to receive the shot. They already have immunity that is just as good if not better than what the shot provides. When our boys were young, they were not asked or expected to receive the varicella immunization because they had already had chickenpox. Why is this being treated differently? I would not be surprised if those who made this decision feel that they are doing their part to promote the common good, or something like that, but it is not logical or practical. Removing quality staff will be more disruptive to our students than if some of them get sick from an illness that is not a serious problem for those in their age group. Please consider the best interests of the students over being politically correct or bowing to the wishes of those who have their own selfish agendas. True leaders are servants, not tyrants.

Hoping for a quality education for our students, Andrea Schellenberg

Vaccine Mandates

blogforme77 <blogforme77@gmail.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 11:55 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S9, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

Our family, which boasts 5 Thurston Graduates, would like to extend our support to the Springfield School district for their stand in requiring staff to be vaccinated for Covid19. We understand that some staff are choosing to be placed on unpaid leave rather than meet the requirements for employment and that those teachers are encouraging their students to rally for their cause via videos.. We disagree with those teachers and want you, the school district members, to know we support you, not the handful of teachers who have taken that position.

Thank you for all you do to keep the kids safe.

Don and Marie Wilson 541 953 0904

Public Comment Business Meeting – October 11, 2021

Steven Thompson <arrow_steven@yahoo.com>

Mon 10/11/2021 11:57 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Hello,

I am writing regarding the laying off of several of the best teachers in the district. I have two students at THS, a junior and a Senior. Both of their high school educations have already been massively disrupted by reactions to the Covid scare. While the reaction in the immediate aftermath of the breakout and to some extent the reactions last year were understandable from an abundance of caution standpoint, further disruption this year based on anti-scientific hysteria and government overbearing mandates is ridiculous and dangerous to the futures of this entire cohort of students.

To be clear, there is no scientific reason to mandate vaccinations. Personally, I had two doses of vaccine, but that was to protect me. It does not protect anyone else, and possibly makes me a slightly more dangerous potential carrier to everyone else than a non-vaccinated person is. The closest thing to a natural experiment regarding vaccination and prevention of the disease seems to be the national data from Israel. From their data, a vaccinated person is 4.2 times less likely to be hospitalized than a non-vaccinated person, but a person with natural immunity is at least **13 times less likely to need to be hospitalized** than a vaccinated person, and there are theoretical but unconfirmed reasons to suspect that vaccination after acquiring natural immunity may be less than harmless.

This attempt by government officials to force the teacher layoffs, is definitely not supported by science and appears to be mostly an exercise in tantrum throwing because reasonable people refuse to be bullied by their heavy handed pontifications and power grabs. Please, do not support these tantrums; please do not lay off some of our best teachers, please do not participate in the further degradation to my children's educations.

Sincerely,
Steven Thompson
BS Aerospace Engineering (yeah, I can read scientific data!)

Public Comment

Laura Farrelly <farrellylt@gmail.com>

Wed 11/10/2021 6:23 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

November 9, 2021

Dear Members of the Springfield School Board,

My name is Laura Farrelly, and I am an English Language Arts teacher at SHS. I am writing this letter to help clarify the reasons teachers are feeling burdened this year as well as to request your help. If you are not actively working in a classroom with students, the severity of this issue may not be readily apparent.

Many of the challenges that teachers currently are grappling with stem from inequities which have become normalized in our nation's public schools. Due to the pandemic, these problems (large class sizes, ever-increasing workload, unsafe working conditions) have worsened and can no longer be ignored.

Teaching during a pandemic is extremely difficult. Wearing a mask for eight hours a day, while facilitating and directing safe and interactive classes for 30+ students is exhausting. It is not possible to give the students the one-on-one attention that they need and deserve while policing cell phone use, misuse of school-issued devices, and improper mask-wearing on top of the other misbehaviors present in a student body grown unaccustomed to in-person schooling. Additionally, when many of our students are in quarantine or returning from quarantine, teachers are giving up their preps and lunches in order to help their students catch up on missing work.

The ongoing staffing shortages are exacerbating teachers' already untenable workload. One teacher in my building loses fifteen minutes of her lunch everyday because she has to accompany her students to and from the lunch line. Ordinarily, an EA would cover this duty. Besides this, she had to give up her prep because she had to act as one-on-one aid to a student receiving special services.

The staffing shortages are also a safety concern. Since we do not have enough campus monitors, teachers now have to discipline students that are not even in their classes. Students have taken to wandering the halls without masks and disrupting classes. A colleague shared with me that a group of students ran past his classroom and threw rocks into it while class was in session. Luckily, he and the students were not injured. I frequently have to leave my own class to help maintain order and safety out in the hallways, but because we don't have the human power to staff lunch detentions, after-school detentions, facilitate other disciplinary measures, or the time to establish meaningful relationships with students, our efforts are in vain.

Clearly, we are in crisis. We need your help and support in order to help our students be successful. In order to teach, we need time to plan effective, engaging lessons. We need time to collaborate with our colleagues. We need

time to grade formative and summative assessments while giving detailed, meaningful feedback in a timely manner. Finally, we need the administration to develop systems, so we and our students feel safe on campus.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

Laura Farrelly

"Public Comment Business Meeting - December 13, 2021.

nickwing33@gmail.com

Mon 12/13/2021 11:35 AM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

This message is from a non-SPS email address. Please use caution and only click links and attachments if you are sure they are safe.

Elected SPS Board,

The poor decision to put unvaccinated staff (many with natural immunity) on unpaid leave (with approved exceptions) has continued to put an undue hardship on staff and students. I am asking the board to approve a policy that would allow unvaccinated staff to come back to work with weekly testing. This would be a real step towards healing the damage that has been done. Weekly testing is an approved accommodation by Oregon Health Authority and The Oregon Department of Education. Of course, many staff have already moved on and are currently working for other districts that provided accommodations that were offered by OHA. The longer the board refuses to step in and create a policy that would bring some staff back the worse off staff and students will be. Many of us pleaded with you in September and October to step in and save us from the disaster that almost all of us on the ground saw unfolding. We were not listened to and the result is this mess. This year already had great challenges with a full time return to the classroom but the district's decision to rid itself of over 100 good employees and the board's complicit inaction which allowed it has put great stress on our schools, children and families. It is time to make the necessary changes. I believe every person on the board is a person of goodwill. Therefore, I encourage you to regularly visit the public schools you lead. Could you make yourself available one lunch hour a week to sit with staff and listen? This would need to be done without district leadership supervision as you would want staff to speak to you freely without fear of retaliation. I wish you the best this holiday season and hope to be back serving kids in Springfield soon.

Best regards,

Nick Wing

Good evening Springfield School Board,

Springfield Education Association recently sent a survey out to certified staff in order to gain an understanding of the experience of our educators so far this year, with an awareness of the increased demands and challenges related to the pandemic and the impacts of ongoing staffing shortages. SEA wanted to make sure you all were included in the sharing of this information, which has also already been shared back with certified staff, as well as with district leadership.

Some highlights from the results follow:

- **445 responses** (as of 9:45pm, Nov. 12th)
- **76%** feel their work-related stress level is causing them to feel overwhelmed
- **Almost 40%** report stress so severe that it is **impacting physical and emotional health**
- **89%** say that workload is more extreme this year than in any previous year
- **95%** say that their stress level is more extreme this year than in any previous year
- **98%** are working hours beyond the contract day; many are working more than 20 hours extra per week
- **212 educators** are “**seriously considering**” **exiting the profession** in one way or another (leave of absence, early retirement, or resignation). Our schools could not function if this many people left. **299 more reported that they are “possibly” considering these actions.**
- The greatest contributions to stress and workload have been attributed to **heightened student needs, and added work requirements, and lack of time to plan/prepare**

Thank you for taking the time to read through and consider this important information,

JG

Jonathan M. Gault (he, him, his)
President, Springfield Education Association
scaprez@comcast.net (541) 343.1151

“Alone we can do so little; TOGETHER we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

Letter to the School Board

Kyle Johnson

Sun 11/14/2021 6:00 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

 1 attachment

Letter to School Board - Kyle Johnson - Google Docs.pdf;

Please see attached letter.

Kyle Johnson
English Language Arts Teacher
Springfield High School
541-744-4700

Please consider this email as confidential...

November 12, 2021

Dear Members of the Springfield School District School Board,

My name is Kyle Johnson, and I am an English Language Arts teacher at Springfield High School. This is my sixteenth year working as an educator in Oregon, and my sixth with Springfield School District. I love working with my colleagues and students at SHS; it is the best job I have ever had. Today, I am writing to add clarity around why teachers are feeling so burdened this year, and to ask for your help.

For those who do not work in a school building every day, it may be difficult to imagine what it is like to teach during a school year like this one. Many challenges that teachers -- and students -- face have worsened due to the pandemic, and yet, in so many ways, teachers are being asked to proceed as if it is 2019. Since the beginning of the pandemic, many students have lost any meaningful connection to school, and to ignore these challenges and pretend that everything is "back to normal" is harmful for both students and staff. Many of these obstacles are not minor at all, because they directly relate to teachers being able to do their jobs and students being able to learn. Challenges such as large class sizes, teachers having more responsibilities with less time to do them in, and an unsafe school environment have intensified, and while these obstacles certainly directly affect teachers, they also negatively affect every student who walks into our building.

Teaching during a pandemic is arduous. Teachers are wearing a mask for their entire work day, while delivering instruction to large classes. We all know that one-on-one relationships and supporting of students is essential, and yet, it is impossible to provide that for all of our students while trying to successfully manage inappropriate technology use, incorrect wearing of masks, and other unsafe behaviors. By this point in the school year, many students have had to quarantine for multiple weeks at a time, and in order to help those students get caught up when they return, teachers are frequently sacrificing their prep time and lunch.

You are undoubtedly aware of the staffing shortages our district is currently facing. These shortages make it logistically impossible to provide legally required services to some of our students. In our special education department, we have less than half of the necessary EAs to support our students. Classes that used to have two educators in them now often do not. Some of our students on IEPs are legally entitled to one-to-one support, and these shortages make that impossible. Without these legally required services, many students are struggling. Teachers are overextended to attempt to make up for these shortages. For example, special education teachers have found themselves covering lunch supervision; some students have IEPs and behavior plans necessitating staff escorts from location to location, and that burden has also fallen on special education teachers, despite being incompatible with their assigned teaching duties.

Additionally concerning to me is that these staffing shortages are leading to unsafe environments for staff and students alike, since we do not have enough campus monitors. Teachers have been asked repeatedly to help supervise hallways during passing periods, but those ten minutes are often crucial for building connections with students, assisting students getting caught up from absences, or even a simple restroom break. Additionally, supervision concerns are not limited merely to passing periods -- the lack of hallway supervision during instruction time is a growing and scary concern. A colleague in my hallway had a student run by his classroom and throw rocks into it during one of his classes. During my prep period, I have often encountered groups of students in hallways having loud, disruptive, and profane discussions with their masks removed. There has been clear evidence of items being thrown over stairwells. Many of my colleagues, myself included, have had to stop in the middle of teaching to address behavior concerns happening in the hallways. Furthermore, we do not currently have the staffing necessary for lunch detentions or other disciplinary measures, let alone the necessary time to build meaningful relationships with students, so these efforts often feel frustratingly futile.

Not addressing these issues will only worsen them. Teachers need time to plan meaningful lessons with their colleagues. We need time to grade assessments and give feedback to our students. We need staffing so that students on IEPs receive the services that they are legally entitled to. We need supervision and discipline plans that do not require teachers to stop teaching in the middle of a lesson to address behavior concerns with students they may not even know. Perhaps most importantly, we need help creating a school environment where all staff and students can feel safe.

Thank you for your time, and thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,
Kyle Johnson

Public Comment Business Meeting – November 15, 2021

Pauline Pham

Sun 11/14/2021 6:38 PM

To: public comment <public.comment@springfield.k12.or.us>;

November 14, 2021

Dear Members of the Springfield School Board,

My name is Pauline Pham, and I'm a special education teacher at SHS. This is my fourth year in the district, and my 14th year teaching. I write to you in order to shed light on the crisis taking place at our schools and to implore you to take effective measures to relieve some of the burdens teachers are carrying.

The most significant factor impacting student success is the staffing shortages we are experiencing. We need more educational assistants to provide required accommodations and specially designed instruction to our students with disabilities. Many of our classrooms went from having two adults to one, and the impact of that loss has been severe. Some students have told me they no longer attend certain classes, because they're not getting the support they need and are likely to fail anyway. Other students who attend say there's no one to ask for support from because their teachers are too busy helping the numerous other students that need help. Some students who are used to one to one support are having to adapt to a constant change in staffing. When I asked a group of students how the year was going, one student asked, "Why did they make us come back full time if they aren't ready to help us?" The academic and behavioral supports provided by our educational assistants are not only ethical obligations; these are also legal obligations that our students are entitled to in order to be successful.

We also need more campus monitors to provide and maintain a safe and healthy place of learning. There have been an increased number of physical and verbal conflicts among students, particularly in the hallways that don't have enough supervision. Just last week, students came to my class talking about "oh, just another fight" that took place, as if violence has become the norm at our school. We also need more transition specialists. Our freshman, who haven't had a normal year of school since the 6th grade, are struggling immensely to transition to the demands of high school. Some of them can barely sit through an entire class period without experiencing an anxiety attack. We need more custodians. The physical space of our school is a reflection of our school climate, and right now it's not uncommon to see trash and old food littering our hallways. Imagine what that scene communicates to our kids about the importance of their education.

Without these vital members of our school, teachers have taken it upon themselves to fill these roles. Some teachers have dedicated time before and after school, lunch hours, and even their precious prep time to provide more academic and emotional support for kids. We're often in the hallways monitoring student behavior, trying to prevent fights and begging kids to return to class. We're providing therapeutic support (for which most of us aren't professionally trained) in and out of classes for there has been lasting trauma from this pandemic. We're bringing in our own supplies and cleaning our own classrooms to keep the school from looking like a total dumpster. It's no secret that teachers have always worked beyond their paid duty hours. Except this time, the stakes are higher and

the needs are greater. It's not an exaggeration to say that teachers are working at least 60 hours a week and are still unable to accomplish what we need to do for kids. And students not getting what they need are not attending, not engaging, and not succeeding.

I implore you to help us fill these gaps in our schools. I don't believe we have a staff shortage problem. I believe we have a staff recruitment problem. What are we saying as a community if Taco Bell's starting hourly rate is \$17.25 and our starting hourly rate for an educational assistant is \$15.25 with no guarantee of a full time position and full benefits? Surely we care more about our children than we do a chalupa craving box. Our students deserve more than teachers and administrators who are stretched too thin; they deserve a fully staffed school that is functional, supportive, and safe. Another way to do this is to give teachers more time to address the lingering effects of unfinished learning from the past year. We've only just begun to really assess where students are and what they need. Now we need more time to find creative ways to solve some really complex problems. Also, please reduce the additional responsibilities that only serve to detract from the most pressing issues at hand: the wellbeing of our kids. Lastly, I believe it's important for teachers to hear directly from you that it's okay to prioritize caring and connecting with students and to adapt our curriculum to meet students where they are at, whether that means abridging materials for kids who are quarantined for 3-4 weeks or starting from scratch for the kid who missed an entire year of instruction. We cannot pretend this is a normal school year and ignore how the pandemic continues to affect so many parts of our lives.

Before signing off, I'd like to clarify that the hierarchy of people I interact with directly have done their absolute best to be supportive and solve problems. But the reality is that they can't produce new employees or give us time that isn't theirs to give. I work with some of the most brilliant and compassionate people who want the absolute best for our students, but we will not be able to effectively serve our kids without additional support and more time.

Sincerely,
Pauline Pham
Special Education/English 9&10/Ethnic Studies

Please consider this email as confidential...