



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Prosser High School Library Workroom

1500 Paterson Rd

Prosser, WA 99350

Join Zoom Meeting: [Click Here](#)

Meeting ID: 896 6606 9876

Passcode: 281163

For a non-video call-in option dial: 253 205 0468

Meeting ID: 896 6606 9876

Passcode: 281163

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 06:00 PM

A. Call to Order - Regular Board Meeting

- 1. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Approval of Agenda**

B. Information Items:

- 1. Classified Appreciation Week - March 11 - 15, 2024**

Classified Appreciation Letter - Kim Casey.pdf (p. 4)

C. Protocol for Addressing Board:

Welcome to the Board Meeting.pdf (p. 5)

D. Hearing of Visitors:

E. Student Representative Reports

F. Discussion Items:

- 1. School Building Reports**

Prosser High School

- 2. Department Reports**

Migrant Department

G. Action Items:

- 1. DECA to International Career Development Conference**

DECA to International Career Development Conference.pdf (p. 6)

2. Consultant Service Agreement: Tri-City Thunder

Tri-City Thunder.pdf (p. 26)

3. Consultant Service Agreement: La Zeiba Events LLC (Prom Venue)

Consultant Service Agreement - La Zeiba.pdf (p. 30)

4. Consultant Service Agreement: Kendra Hilberg

Consultant Service Agreement - Kendra Hilberg.pdf (p. 38)

5. Consultant Service Agreement: Craig Reynolds

Consultant Service Agreement - Craig Reynolds.pdf (p. 39)

6. Mental Health Matters Grant & SaaS Agreement

Mental Health Matters Grant & SaaS Agreement.pdf (p. 40)

7. RFQ 0003-24 - Appraisal

RFQ 003-24 - Appraisal FULL RFQ.pdf (p. 57)

8. First Reading of Procedure 4213: School District Firearms and Use of Force

Procedure 4213 - Draft.pdf (p. 60)

Procedure 4213 - Work Product.pdf (p. 66)

9. Second Reading of Policy and Procedure 1116: Student Representatives to the Board of Directors

Policy 1116 - Draft.pdf (p. 73)

Procedure 1116 - Draft.pdf (p. 74)

Procedure 1116 - Work Product.pdf (p. 76)

1116F Application.pdf (p. 78)

10. 2024/25 School Calendar

2024-2025 Student Calendar FINAL.pdf (p. 79)

11. Vouchers and Payroll

Vouchers.pdf (p. 80)

Payroll.pdf (p. 97)

H. Consent Items:

1. Certificated Personnel

Certificated Personnel.pdf (p. 103)

2. Classified Personnel

Classified Personnel.pdf (p. 104)

3. Approval of Minutes

February 24, 2024 - Special Board Meeting (English).pdf (p. 105)

February 24, 2024 - Special Board Meeting (Spanish).pdf (p. 106)

February 28, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting (English).pdf (p. 107)

February 28, 2024 - Regular Board Meeting (Spanish).pdf (p. 147)

4. Volunteer Coaches

Vol Coaches 03-13-2024.pdf (p. 187)

I. Reports:

1. Director of Business and Operations Dalise Weddle

January 2024 Financial Reports.pdf (p. 188)

2. Assistant Superintendent Deanna Flores

3. Superintendent Kim Casey

4. Board Members' Reports

J. Future Meetings:

Safety Meeting, March 20, 2024, Prosser High School Room #205, 5:00 p.m.

Study Session, March 20, 2024, Prosser High School Library Workroom, 6:00 p.m.

K. Adjournment:

Attachment A – Zoom Chat

- 02:03:02 iPhone: They have had a total of 20 minutes for some time. You all need to pay attention to past meetings.
- 02:04:21 adrianna miller: I've been at several meetings where it went much longer than 20 minutes. It should be stated clearly on the agenda that public comments are limited to 20 minutes.
- 02:05:47 iPhone: You haven't in the past few months where this was discussed. It's been probably 6 months since this has been implemented.
- 02:10:22 iPhone: It was implemented April 2023. So almost a year.
- 02:13:20 parent: The 20 minute notice could hit you in the face, it could be plastered all over the agenda, it could be voiced down directly from God and you would still find a reason to complain or say that it's gone longer than 20 min! Educate yourself & if you're going to make comments make sure it's accurate information. Public comments have been limited to 20 min for months now! If you still feel like it's incorrect you are part of the problem.
- 02:40:58 AG: Thank you for your votes of YES
- 02:41:24 PSD Teacher: So glad my time with this district is ending!
- 02:41:59 Katy McLaughlin: I am disappointed by the political grandstanding that ignores any of the public comment they received.
- 02:43:08 iPhone (38): Reacted to "I am disappointed by..." with ❤️
- 02:44:07 iphone: Reacted to "I am disappointed by..." with ❤️
- 02:45:49 parent: Reacted to "I am disappointed by..." with 😊
- 02:48:21 iPhone: Reacted to "Thank you for your v..." with ❤️
- 02:50:58 parent: Reacted to "Thank you for your v..." with ❤️

Attachment - B

Prosser School Board of Directors

1109 Meade Ave,
Prosser, WA 99350

Dear Board of Directors,

As an alumna of the Prosser School District, I am writing to protest Resolution 01-24 considered by the Prosser School Board in opposition to ESB 5462 and HB 2331. I believe this measure is hurtful to students and sends an anti-inclusiveness message as a community.

While it is within the state's jurisdiction to mandate curriculum, I understand Directors have concerns about the erosion of local control. The broad stroke painted by ESB 5462 seeks to incorporate perspectives of underrepresented communities in our educational system. The mechanisms of local control offered in this legislation are reflected in the creation of a community committee to decide precisely how to implement these histories. School districts retain the authority in designating how to meet these general standards.

There are currently a multitude of bills presented at the state legislature seeking to mandate public school curriculum. Among them include SB 6205, imposing that school districts must provide instruction in the meaning and history of the pledge of allegiance. Or SB 5813, mandating school districts must offer lessons on agricultural literacy in grades 7 – 12. Another example is HB 2037, requiring each public school to conduct or promote age-appropriate educational activities that provide instruction, awareness, and understanding of the Holocaust and genocide education to all students.

If the school board's resistance is embodied not by the content of the bills, as stated in the February 21 Study Session, but rather the principle of overstepping governmental authority, it is curious why ESB 5462 and HB 2331 are the only two bills specifically targeted in this attack. The Prosser community can see beyond the veil of 'local control' and discern natural ties between the bills distinguished in the resolution and statements from Board members, including Frank Vermulm, who wrote on the Prosser School Board Candidate forum posted online on October 31 of 2023, *"I believe there is no place in public schools for LGBTQ curriculum."*

The reality is in handpicking opposition to the two state education bills introducing and protecting inclusiveness, your message is warped beyond appeals of local control. As a school board, you are signaling to students of underrepresented populations their stories will never be worthy of recognition. The pioneering legacies of leaders in historically marginalized communities exemplify a vast richness and can serve as powerful and enduring inspiration for our students.

If one of the goals of the school board is to genuinely "foster belonging, instill purpose, cultivate curiosity in ALL students," as noted in the proposed measure, I would urge the board to fail Resolution 01-24 which overtly demonstrates a blatant contradiction of this principle.

Respectfully,

Maggie Elliot

Attachment - C

February 26, 2024

RE: Resolution 01-24: Opposition to SB 5462 and SHB 2331

To: Jason, Frank, Brian, and Michelle:

I apologize for my absence at the school board meeting tonight. I ask this letter be incorporated into the minutes as my comments to Resolution 01-24.

There are many other bills pending in the Washington State Legislature this session impacting education. For instance:

1. House Bill 1915, would add a requirement that all students receive one-half credit in financial education in order to graduate from high school;
2. SSB 6205, would mandate instruction on the meaning and history of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools;
3. Senate Bill 5813, would mandate instruction on agricultural literacy for students in grades Seven through 12;
4. HB 2037 would mandate instruction on the Holocaust and genocide;
5. SB 5505 addresses learning loss by expanding the school year;
6. SB6314 provides for instruction on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander history in public schools;
7. SB 5431 would require the purchase and funding of zero emission school busses.

This is a small sampling of the bills pending in the State Legislature this session concerning public education. If, as a Board we were to address each, it would be a significant undertaking, and frankly— This is not the work, or role, of school board directors. This is the work of state representatives and state senators.

From the number of required instructional minutes per day, number of days of school (180), certifications of superintendents/teachers/principals, endorsement areas of teachers, and graduation requirements: Every aspect of public education is governed by the State of Washington. To engage in the business of supporting, or opposing, legislation is partisan action. As school board directors, our roles are non-partisan, and as such, we should not, as a Board, take action regarding pending legislation.

It is important to note, nothing about SB 5462, and SHB 2331, changes how a school district adopts curriculum. In fact, it is the same process currently in place: A local curriculum review committee consisting of staff and parents reviews curriculum options and recommends a curriculum for the Board to approve/disapprove.

The requirements set forth SB 5462 and SHB 2331 provides publics schools adopt curriculum that includes the histories, contributions, and perspectives of the following:

1. Native Americans;
2. People from various racial and ethnic backgrounds;

3. Women;
4. People from various socioeconomic statuses;
5. People from various religious backgrounds;
6. Immigrants and refugees;
7. People with disabilities;
8. People who are neurodiverse;
9. People who are English learners, or use sign language;
10. LGBTQ people.

Some examples of curriculum pertaining to these groups that are relevant to our community, and region, include: The impacts Chief Kamiakin and Chief Joe regarding the establishment of Native American Reservations; the role of Sacajawea in the Lewis and Clark Expedition; the contributions of Temple Grandin to the livestock industry; and former Washington State Governor Dixie Ray Lee.

I would ask the Resolution be tabled, the Board honor our non-partisan role, and focus on the work of rebuilding the Prosser School District to be among the best in the State of Washington.

Sincerely,

ELISA V. RILEY
Prosser School Board Director No. 3

Selena Swearingen

From: rachel wautomasprings.com <rachel@wautomasprings.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 9:17 PM
To: Jason Rainer; Elisa Riley; Michelle O'Brien; Brian Weinmann; Frank Vermulm; Kimberly Casey; Selena Swearingen; Deanna Flores
Subject: School Board Meeting, Wed 28th.

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Prosser School District Board of Directors;

I'm writing to ask questions that I hope are answered during the discussion of agenda item G,4. I read the resolution, viewed the workshop meeting where the idea of the resolution was first introduced, and read the bills. Yet, I'm still confused - perhaps you can help?

The resolution seems to be about local control. However, these are not the only education bills up this legislative session that would add curricula changes or educational requirements. So I'm confused why just these two bills? President Rainer stressed during the last meeting that it wasn't about the content of the bills but the precedent the bills set, about local control. But any of the current bills - and all of the past educational bills that have been signed into law - relate to his arguments on local control. So can we expect a similar resolution EVERY legislative session? I certainly hope not!

Another confusion I had was that this doesn't seem to be the role of a school board? So I looked up RCW 28A.150.230 - the very RCW noted in the resolution. Nowhere does it say anything about a school board interpreting active bills before they're signed into law. And nowhere does it say anything about school boards deciding to or not to implement elements of a new law before it's been disseminated by OSPI. What it does say is school board directors are to "Establish final curriculum standards consistent with **law and rules of the superintendent of public instruction**".

And you know what is also interesting? By partaking in this argument, and issuing this resolution - on an active bill - you're engaging in politics. The school board is meant to be non-partisan, these are non-partisan positions. The rules read before public commentary state that politics should not be commented on. Do the school board directors not hold themselves accountable?

Which brings me to another question - do you not plan to uphold your public oath of office? By passing and signing this Resolution, you're saying that you're opposed to new education laws/rules. As quoted directly from the RCW, that's part of your role. It's part of the oath you took. That's a pretty big deal. I take oaths seriously - I would hope you all would as well. But you know, it kinda doesn't matter what I think, or even what your principals are because LEGALLY it matters. This would be a basis for a recall, and potentially, personal lawsuits for not upholding your oath of office. And worse, yet - if you took this Resolution seriously and didn't follow the potential (because these are still just bills) laws/rules relating to these bills from OSPI, you'd be putting state funding at risk. Funding we need to run the schools.

I'll be upfront with you - I'm simply someone who resides in the Prosser School District area (and owns land, and pays taxes). I don't have children in PSD. So why do I care about a Resolution?

Because what happens with the school district makes the news. We just got regional news coverage over the concerning mention of adding prayers to school board meetings, and now there's this. I manage a business in town, a business that relies on tourism. This Resolution, which you can pretend is only about local control - but let's not be coy- it drips of casual racism and homophobia, will get news coverage, just as it did from the Kennewick School District. Certain groups of people will not

feel comfortable visiting our community, and others simply don't want to support communities that aren't welcoming.

This Resolution is bad for business. It's bad for Prosser.

I love Prosser, I want it to feel welcoming to visitors - and I want it to especially feel like home to marginalized students who currently are enrolled in PSD.

I encourage you to consider the community, the businesses in town, and the message you're sending to the students. Please fail Resolution 01-24.

Thank you,

Rachel Mercer - *manager*
WAUTOMA SPRINGS
www.wautomasprings.com

Selena Swearingen

From: Kelsi-Lyn Smith Milligan <kelsi.lyn@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 2:30 PM
To: Jason Rainer; Elisa Riley; Michelle O'Brien; Brian Weinmann; Frank Vermulm; Kimberly Casey; Selena Swearingen; Deanna Flores
Subject: Opposition of Resolution 01-24

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Kelsi-Lyn and I am a PSD alumni; PHS class of 2008.

I am writing to express my opposition of Resolution 01-24 being presented at your meeting this evening.

I have family in the area as well a past classmates, friends and children of fellow alumni in the district.

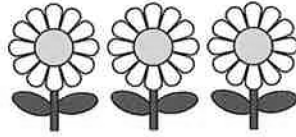
This resolution looks poorly on Prosser and is not representative of the community I was raised in and have come back to as a safe-haven many times in my life.

I stand with a compassionate, welcoming, supportive, non-discriminatory and safety & equality driven Prosser.

Thank you,

 Kelsi-Lyn Smith Milligan, MSW

Attachment - F



Alys Means 13014 S. 1538 PRSW Prosser, Washington 99350 509.832.0336 alysmmeans@gmail.com

February 28, 2024

TO: Prosser School Board Members

FROM: Alys Means, Prosser School District Patron

RE: Prosser School District Proposed Resolution No. 01-24
 Opposition to ESB 5462 and ESHB 2331

Dear Prosser School Board Members:

At last week's work session, board members Jason Rainer and Brian Weinmann stated their opposition to Washington State Senate Bill 5462 and Washington State House Bill 2331. Jason and Brian believe this legislation will diminish local control within the Prosser School District with regard to teaching, curriculum, library materials, etc. Prosser School District Resolution No. 01-24 was then proposed as an official statement of opposition to ESB 5462 and ESHB 2331.

Perhaps this legislation will be approved by representatives in Olympia and perhaps it will not, but I think there is a more important issue at hand. How will the new Prosser School District board use whatever level of authority it possesses to guide the district and serve its 2493 diverse students? Will this authority be used to ...

include or exclude?
illuminate or conceal?
unite or divide?

Time will tell. Keep in mind, each Prosser school student is a unique human being who views the world from an individual perspective, but every student depends on you to provide a safe and healthy learning environment to prepare them for the future. Inclusion, illumination and unity - these are honorable goals worthy of our community's public school system.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

Attachment - G

Selena Swearingen

From: BRAD ELLIOT <lizandbradelliot@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 9:20 PM
To: Jason Rainer; Elisa Riley; Michelle O'Brien; Brian Weinmann; Frank Vermulm; Kimberly Casey; Selena Swearingen; Deanna Flores
Subject: Thoughts from last night's school board meeting

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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Hello,
I am a 4th generation Prosserite with strong ties to the school and community. I have served on the Prosser High School Ag Advisory board for over 20 years. I have loved living in Prosser, raising my children in Prosser and working for a family-owned business in Prosser.

I thank each and every one of you who have taken the time to serve on the board, my mother had served on the Prosser school board in the 80's and into the 90's and I remember the strong commitment she took in serving. She was always reading, studying, meeting and listening. The amount of phone calls she had over the years she served were so numerous, probably more in those years than all other 50 years they lived at that residence. She was truly committed to her job as a school board member and took it very seriously and studiously.

I was at the school board meeting last night and although the vote on the resolution didn't turn out as I hoped, there were surprises as well. A 20 minute time limit for a full room of community members who showed up to be listened to was the first surprise. Not extending the time was the second surprise. Not tabling the resolution when clearly there were more community members who wanted to speak and could have at the next meeting was a third surprise. Being told we could send what we had to say to you in a letter was the fourth surprise when practically the next item was to vote on the resolution.

I thank Elisa for her well written and thoughtful letter. I thank Michelle for all the study, reading and preparation she worked on for the meeting. It was great to hear both your thoughts and concerns for the school district, the children of Prosser and the community. Most importantly that the resolution put forth was not needed and not even something that a non-partisan school board should even consider.

It is apparent that Jason, Frank and Brian do not prepare for school board meetings in the same way the above mentioned board members do. I am very concerned for the school district when we have a majority of the school board members who do not study, read, meet and listen to the community, the whole community, not just the community that has your ear. I am concerned for the school district when we have a majority of the school board members who do not understand their roll as school board members and that it is about running the business of the school and not in the politics of the state. You are a public school district, you get funding from the state, therefore you have to follow state rules. I am very concerned for the children of the district that now know 3 of our 5 school board members are not committed to them and their well-being. Take your school board job seriously and studiously or resign. There are lives at stake.

Lastly, I am concerned having a business that relies on tourism in Prosser. This resolution sends a very telling message to anyone who will learn of this news. It says if you are a marginalized citizen we don't care about you, we don't want you, we will look the other way. Who will come to see us? No one. The public at large are inclusive loving people who do not put up with bigotry. Our hotels will not have visitors, our restaurants will not have customers, our shops will not sell anything, and our wonderful wine industry will be caught with tasting rooms full of wine and no one who will want to buy our products. Prosser will die, it breaks my heart.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Mercer-Elliott

Kimberly Casey

From: Andrea Slonecker <slonecker.andrea@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 9:37 AM
To: Jason Rainer; Elisa Riley; Michelle O'Brien; Brian Weinmann; Frank Vermulm; Kimberly Casey
Subject: Unheard Community Comments 2.28.24
Attachments: SloneckerA_BoardComments_2.28.24.docx

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As I was not permitted to speak last night, even after recording my name on the board provided sheet, I request that the following statement be added to the minutes of the school board meeting (Wednesday, February 28, 2024). In addition, I will be submitting this letter to the newspaper. For ease of reading, I've also attached a copy of the text below:

Dear board members, I'd like to start by saying thank you. What you do makes a difference to our students, and the recent passing of the levies is a testimony to your influence. My daughters participate in athletics, music, drama, and many clubs at PHS. Prosser works together to give our students opportunities that wouldn't be available otherwise. But I have concerns as well.

Last year I participated in Prosser's Strategic Planning Committee. This committee was formed from a cross section of teachers, parents, administrators, students, board members, and the community at large who donated many hours of their time. The overwhelming input from this group was that Prosser Schools needs an increased focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Were we already doing this? Sure. Some. Thanks to our teachers and the guiding hand of Curriculum director Deanna Flores, we've made strides. However, the consensus was that there is much to be done. The final document reflects this. This Strategic Plan is a compact created for, and by our community, a pinnacle of local control. A vow to our students. I'd like to quote several essential points.

Goals: Instruction: Every PK-12 student will experience high-quality standards-based instruction with equitable access to learning opportunities.

2.1 Ensure students have inclusive learning environments that are safe, innovative, equitable, flexible, and accessible for diverse learners.

2.4.2 Ensure school and district teams are representative of our community.

2.4.3 Implement culturally responsive best practices that celebrate diversity in our schools.

This document was created by the polyphonic voices of our people. As a district we must affirm legislation that supports and aligns with our Strategic Plan, not deny it.

Around the same time that the Strategic Planning Committee was meeting, four high schoolers from the Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) addressed our state lawmakers urging that diversity, equity, and inclusion in school curricula be promoted and protected by state law. This is because their local districts failed to provide the necessary supports. Of the four students, the first that spoke was from Yakima School District and the second from Richland High School.

These are the students our own kids see in sports, FFA, DECA, in Band, and in church. We share a common landscape; we are nourished by the rich land that runs between us. Here in this confluence of the Yakima and Columbia rivers, we are building young leaders, but we fail them in vital ways. We insert language in our Strategic Plan that says we value diversity, in all its incarnations, and then deny it by proposing resolutions that disavow our promise.

As school board members you carry the weight of each child that flows through this district. The choices that you make have a direct impact on their future and wellbeing.

I am against book banning, especially when it disproportionality affects historically underrepresented groups like LGBTQIA+ students, BIPOC students, students from minority or underrepresented faith traditions, immigrants, and many others. I support diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools, while appreciating the burden it brings for teachers and administrators to adopt new curriculum. Thank you,

Andie Hanson Slonecker
948 Court Street,
Prosser, WA

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Andie Hanson Slonecker
948 Court Street,
Prosser, WA

Andie Stonecker

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Kimberly Casey

From: Maria de los Angeles Duarte <angelesd1271@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 29, 2024 10:34 AM
To: Jason Rainer
Cc: Elisà Riley; Michelle O'Brien; Frank.Vermum@prossercschools.org; Brian Weinmann
Subject: Last night meeting

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Good morning Mr Rainer.
Hope this message finds you well.

The reason of this message is the development and decisions taken last night in our local school board meeting. We choose you as a representative of Prosser community for academic purposes, our common goal is our students, their preparation and success. Last night vote, won't help them to thrive in an already competitive and diverse world. I'm part of the Hispanic sector, didn't have the chance to use my voice when there were used 18 of the 20 minutes assigned for public comments; my understanding is you as our leader have a specific role, didn't think you had to be reminded of your duty as a public person and member our school board. We need parent and community engagement, the attitude I saw last night is a clear message of no invite for us, even when we are more than half of the population in Prosser . Hope you consider our youth in future decisions, School Board Meetings aren't the proper forum for individual political beliefs.

I appreciate your time and dedication, wishing you a nice rest of your day.

Sincerely

Angeles Duarte
Prosser resident

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

Selena Swearingen

From: Alice Early <aeary@sas.edu.sg>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2024 10:38 AM
To: Jason Rainer; Elisa Riley; Michelle O'Brien; Brian Weinmann; Frank Vermulm; Kimberly Casey; Selena Swearingen; Deanna Flores
Subject: Still sad about Feb 28th Prosser School Board Meeting

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Dear Prosser School Board,

I know you will read this because one of your jobs is to actively engage with your community.

At the Feb 28th Prosser School Board Meeting I was begging you to vote against resolution 01-24 because in choosing ESB 5462 and SHB 2331 you ARE NOT sending the message that you want more local control. YOU ARE sending a message of exclusion which is hurtful and harmful. It's hurtful to all students, past and present, that you want to perpetuate the culture that keeps our marginalised alumni out of town. Hurtful to students who are harassed now -there was a hurtful episode yesterday - because they are "different." You've given power to the harassers. It's hurtful to the majority of the community who have different views from you. It's harmful to all Prosser bussinesses.

My mother was on the Prosser School Board for 10 years. Those were a busy ten years for our family: she had her own study time, took calls during dinner (which was unheard of for our family before and after that), she called people who she knew had different views than her own to understand these views, she listened, she explained what she could, she learned from others and did the super hard work of **rearranging** her own thinking. THIS IS WHAT seems to be MISSING with the majority of the board. You are elected to do many things - I realise, and have studied the summary below. I do however want to point out the following statements: The Prosser School Board plays a vital role in governing and shaping the Prosser School District's educational policies and operations, and they actively engage with the community to ensure transparency and collaboration in the decision-making process. Community Participation: The Prosser School Board actively encourages community participation in educational matters. They hold open board meetings and invite interested individuals to attend.

Did you go out and talk to the people in your geographical areas about this resolution? I wasn't asked an opinion by anyone. Nobody was gathering information from the public that I'm aware of SO when there was such a large turn out at the meeting it seems CURIOSITY should have been your most important trait that evening. Actively engagement means that sometimes we have to listen enough to really let others thinking find a place in our heart and brains. It often takes time. It takes more dialogue - questions and more questions to help form new thoughts. It's a beautiful thing and was tip top of my last 30+ years of teaching! It's growth and we can all grow! Elisa asked you to table the conversation, what a lovely idea to give an impression that you're all willing to listen to the residents - or to actually seek out conversations with people in your geographical areas and do your best to understand their thinking before a vote. There were a huge number of people yearning to support our marginalized humans on Thursday. I'm so sad I didn't get to hear what they had to say. I learn from all comments: I'm especially curious to hear from people who think like Brain, Jason and Frank because it was never explained clearly from these three board members - maybe someone in the community could have enlightened us all.

I've been on various volunteer boards over the years (Puyallup, the Dominican Republic, and a few in Singapore) and know that it takes more time than you think you have in a day sometimes - the study and preparation individually is so important so that when boards come together they have facts and figures to talk about, so I **Thank You** for volunteering your time being a member of our school board. This has been a good reminder to **put in the study time** it takes to understand the full picture like Michelle, Elisa and Noah did. I found it astonishing from the study sessions when nobody had any idea of other bills but yet you choose these two. It was stated twice that concerned citizens need to look past the particular bills you're making your stance on. This is especially odd as these bills state local boards can make their own decisions. The bills Jason, Brian and Frank choose to take a stance on expresses negative feelings towards marginalised peoples. I sincerely hope that there will be a place in history for the concerned citizens to let our students (and alumni) know we care so much for each and every person. We hope for a safe learning and social environment where everyone has a true sense of belonging. We commend and thank all our beautiful teachers, bus drivers, staff who show up to support ALL of our students every day. I hope for a place in history where Jason, Brian and Frank could make amends with everyone they have hurt.

Sincerely,
Alice Early

21 Linda Lane
Prosser, WA

Under this summary is the rest of the message that wasn't digested from the three minutes I had the fortune to speak at the Feb 28th Board Meeting.

Here is a summary of key information about the Prosser School Board:

- 1. Composition:** The board consists of five members, each representing distinct geographical areas within the Prosser School District. These members are elected by all the district's voters and serve four-year terms.
- 2. Core Mission:** The primary mission of the board is to develop and assess broad policies governing the operation of the school district. They are responsible for making important decisions related to the district's operations.
- 3. Legal Responsibilities:** The board has several legal responsibilities, including:
 - Establishing general policies for the school district.
 - Adopting and revising the annual operating budget.
 - Exercising the authority granted by the state legislature to administer schools.
 - Keeping the public informed about the needs and progress of the education system.
- 4. Community Participation:** The Prosser School Board actively encourages community participation in educational matters. They hold open board meetings and invite interested individuals to attend. These meetings are generally open to the public, with specific exceptions for executive sessions that deal with sensitive matters.
- 5. Accommodations for Disabilities:** Individuals with disabilities who require accommodations to participate in a meeting are urged to contact the Superintendent's Office in advance. This ensures that necessary arrangements can be made to accommodate their needs.

6. Meeting Schedule: The board holds regular monthly meetings in the Prosser High School Library Workroom at 6:00 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month. Study Sessions are also held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. in the Prosser High School Library Workroom.

7. Meeting Information: To stay informed about meeting schedules, access the Board Meeting Calendar. For board policies and meeting materials, including agendas and minutes, visit the "Agenda and Minutes" tab on the board's website.

The Prosser School Board plays a vital role in governing and shaping the Prosser School District's educational policies and operations, and they actively engage with the community to ensure transparency and collaboration in the decision-making process.

My name is Alice Early, I live on Horse Heaven. I have been a proud Prosser 1984 graduate- enjoyed serving as ASB president. I got my teaching certificate from WSU then taught 4th grade two years in Puyallup.

Then I taught a more diverse group of students in the Dominican Republic which really opened my eyes to racism- Americans were disliked in the DR at the time which was very uncomfortable and gave me an inkling of the negative feelings that people who don't fit the cultural standards feel. But there was also such a social class difference - which made me realize we have that here in the US and Prosser as well, sometimes it takes stepping away to get a broader perspective .

Then we moved to Singapore where we stayed 30 years and I continued to learn about social class, religious, LGBTQ, and skin color racisms. I learned about Tulsa and other atrocities. I loved the diverse culture in Singapore at the American school I taught in. Students appreciated all of our DEI curriculum and so did I.

When two friends and 1984 Prosser classmates of color and one LGBTQ friend didn't attend our last class reunion I reached out and asked why they didn't attend. They each let me know how uncomfortable Prosser made them feel. This makes me embarrassed and sad.

When the beautiful diversity of the world is not welcomed here by some it continues to shock me because the majority of Prosser residents are caring and compassionate people!

In my retirement I work part time at two wineries and our guests are positive delightful people. Some are part of the marginalized groups mentioned in ESB 5462 which makes it clear that our students should know of all Americans contributions and histories for our community visitors and more importantly our marginalized students. This honors all humans for who we are and what we contribute to society.

I've been on various volunteer boards over the years, so I Thank you for volunteering your time being a member of our school board. This has been a good reminder to put in the study time it takes to understand the full picture. I found it astonishing nobody had any idea of other bills but yet you choose these two. It was stated twice that concerned citizens need to look past the particular bills you're making your stance on. This is especially odd as these bills state local boards can make their own decisions- just like the freeway example from your last meeting. The state is helping to make sure all districts are safe (because safe is having a sense of belonging) while still protecting you to make decisions for your community. The bills you choose to take your stance on expresses negative feelings

towards marginalized peoples.

Please do not pass resolution 01-24.

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Selena Swearingen

From: Kimberly Casey
Sent: Sunday, March 3, 2024 4:51 PM
To: Selena Swearingen
Subject: FW: Prayer at Board Meetings

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Kim Casey, Superintendent

Prosser School District
1500 Grant Ave.
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-3323 x2009
Work Cell 509.781.8628
kim.casey@prosserschools.org

From: Rachel Reese <rachelreese84@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 3, 2024 2:52 PM
To: Kimberly Casey <kimberly.casey@prosserschools.org>; Frank Vermulm <frank.vermulm@prosserschools.org>; Brian Weinmann <brian.weinmann@prosserschools.org>; Jason Rainer <Jason.Rainer@prosserschools.org>; Elisa Riley <Elisa.Riley@prosserschools.org>; Michelle O'Brien <michelle.obrien@prosserschools.org>
Subject: Prayer at Board Meetings

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School Board Members,

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation for the decision to include prayer at the beginning of each school board meeting. It is truly heartening to see the commitment of the board to uphold and embrace the Christian values that have been an integral part of our country's foundation.

In a world that is often marked by rapid changes and diverse perspectives, it is reassuring to witness a steadfast dedication to the principles that have guided our nation since its inception. The inclusion of prayer not only provides a moment of reflection and unity but also serves as a reminder of the values that bind us as a community.

Your leadership in standing up for Christian values is commendable, and it reflects a commitment to fostering an environment that respects and cherishes the rich heritage that has shaped our great nation. I believe that incorporating prayer into the school board meetings not only aligns with our

historical roots but also contributes to creating a sense of harmony and moral grounding within our community.

As a member of this community, I am grateful for the efforts made by the school board to promote values that resonate with the cultural and spiritual fabric of our society. It is my hope that this practice continues to inspire a sense of unity and purpose among board members and the broader community.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to upholding Christian values and for fostering an environment that encourages reflection, unity, and respect. Your leadership is instrumental in preserving the essence of our nation's founding principles.

Wishing you continued success in your roles on the school board.

Sincerely,

Rachel Reese

(541)571-2166

Selena Swearingen

From: Kimberly Casey
Sent: Sunday, March 3, 2024 4:51 PM
To: Selena Swearingen
Subject: FW: LGBTQ+ History DOES NOT BELONG IN SCHOOL

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Kim Casey, Superintendent
Prosser School District
1500 Grant Ave.
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-3323 x2009
Work Cell 509.781.8628
kim.casey@prosserschools.org

From: Rachel Reese <rachelreese84@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 3, 2024 2:45 PM
To: Jason Rainer <Jason.Rainer@prosserschools.org>; Elisa Riley <Elisa.Riley@prosserschools.org>; Michelle O'Brien <michelle.obrien@prosserschools.org>; Brian Weinmann <brian.weinmann@prosserschools.org>; Frank Vermulm <frank.vermulm@prosserschools.org>; Kimberly Casey <kimberly.casey@prosserschools.org>
Subject: LGBTQ+ History DOES NOT BELONG IN SCHOOL

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Dear Prosser School Board,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposal to include LGBTQ+ history in the public school curriculum. While I understand the importance of fostering inclusivity and diversity in our educational system, I believe that the introduction of LGBTQ+ history may not be appropriate for various reasons.

First and foremost, I firmly believe that parents should play a significant role in shaping their children's values and beliefs. The introduction of LGBTQ+ history in public schools may infringe upon the rights of parents to guide their children's moral and ethical development. It is essential to respect the diversity of perspectives within our community and uphold the principle of parental rights in educational matters.

Furthermore, the inclusion of LGBTQ+ history in the curriculum may raise concerns about age-appropriateness. Children of different ages may have varying levels of maturity and understanding. Introducing complex and potentially controversial topics at an early age may not be conducive to the overall well-being and development of students.

Additionally, there is a risk of unintended consequences such as potential disagreements or conflicts arising between students, teachers, and parents due to differing opinions on this matter. It is crucial to maintain a harmonious and

respectful learning environment that accommodates diverse perspectives without causing unnecessary division.

I would like to propose that, instead of incorporating LGBTQ+ history into the standard curriculum, schools could offer optional courses or extracurricular activities that explore various aspects of history, including LGBTQ+ contributions and experiences. This way, students and parents who are interested in delving deeper into this subject can choose to participate, while others can opt for alternative educational experiences.

In conclusion, I urge the school board to carefully consider the potential implications of introducing LGBTQ+ history into the public school curriculum. Striking a balance between inclusivity and respect for diverse perspectives is essential for maintaining a positive and effective learning environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rachel Reese
(541)571-2166

Selena Swearingen

From: rachel wautomasprings.com <rachel@wautomasprings.com>
Sent: Friday, March 1, 2024 5:59 PM
To: Jason Rainer; Brian Weinmann; Frank Vermulm; Elisa Riley; Michelle O'Brien
Cc: Kimberly Casey; Deanna Flores; Selena Swearingen
Subject: Unread statement, meeting 2/28

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

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School Board Directors,

I submitted a letter prior to the meeting with my concerns that I had hoped would be addressed during discussion of Resolution 01-24. Extremely troubled that my concerns, which were raised by numerous members of the community, including two Board Directors, and a Student Rep, were not addressed by those that voted for this resolution.

Although the Resolution has passed, I felt the importance of sending what I had planned on saying during the meeting, as I'm not only speaking for myself, but for another community member.

My statement:

Hello. My name is Rachel Mercer. I currently live in the boundaries of Prosser School District, I manage a business in Prosser city limits. I obtained my BA from a Washington State Public College. I graduated from PHS. My father graduated from PHS. I'm a 4th generation Prosserite and a 5th generation Washingtonian.

I'm here in opposition to Resolution 01-24 on tonight's agenda. I apologize for the lengthy introduction, however, there's a narrative from other School Districts who have voted on very similar resolutions, that the bills targeted are supported by activists, outsiders. Not locals. I support these bills mentioned in the resolution. You may call me an activist - i'm not - but that's okay. I'm your local activist. Born and raised, baby!

I was going to speak from my own words but a person who does not feel comfortable presenting tonight asked for someone to read what they wrote. Unfortunately, this is still a reality in this small community. People do not feel safe to voice their opposition. I agree with their words and am happy to use my own voice on their behalf.

They wrote -

I would like to ask the following question: if you are wanting to make this proposed Board statement because of your desire for local control, have you responded to all state educational requirements similarly in the past and do you have a plan to always do so in the future? I know many of you were upset with the Health curriculum requirements last year. Did you pass a similar "Where As" statement to ask for a repeal of the legislation. If you have not done so before, it would almost seem that there is something about this proposed

legislation supporting marginalized groups that you don't like and that you are using this demand for local control as a bit of a smoke screen.

End of statement.

By bringing politics into the Prosser School District, you are intimidating our community members. More and more will feel disenfranchised. And it does not go unnoticed, as pointed out by nearly everyone who was allowed to speak; these bills that were targeted are about marginalized groups, equity and diversity. That is our community. I, a white cisgender straight woman, who has lots of family and connections in this town, am happy to address these issues. I will stand up for others. I know my privilege - I know this affords me so much.

I also know this is not the case for many in our community. And it's a shame that the three white cisgender straight men on the school board could not even bother to hear from their constituents, let alone show an ounce of empathy.

Rachel Mercer - manager
WAUTOMA SPRINGS
www.wautomasprings.com

March 4, 2024

Board of Directors
Prosser School District
Prosser, Washington

RE: School Board Resolution 1-24

Members of the Board:

Lynda and I are writing to express our disappointment with the board's decision to limit remarks to the board by visitors at last Wednesday's regular board meeting to 20 minutes and to adopt Board Resolution 01-24.

I intended to orally address the board during the regular board meeting Wednesday, February 28, 2024, to express my opposition to the board's proposed resolution opposing Engrossed Senate Bill 5462 and Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2331. However, because of a late afternoon commitment in the Tri-Cities I was unable to arrive at the board meeting until approximately 6:50 pm. Consequently, I, along with a number of others who wished to address the board with respect to the proposed resolution, were prevented from doing so by the limitation of the time allotted for Agenda Item "D. Hearing of Visitors" to 20 minutes, in spite of the standing room only attendance of visitors in the board meeting room and an at least equal if not greater number of visitors who were present in the outer, library area. Requests that the time be extended for Agenda Item D or that Agenda Item G. 4, "Resolution 01-24: Opposition to ESB 5462 and ESHB 2331" be continued to a later board meeting to accommodate the submission of written statements from those who had been prevented from addressing the board were summarily rejected and the board shortly thereafter voted to approve the resolution. The board chairman's suggestion that written statements could be submitted to the district office was largely pointless in view of the board's approval of the resolution.

The board's approval of the resolution, notwithstanding, however, we hope that the following comments will be helpful to you in understanding our concern about the consequences of your decision.

We have lived in Prosser since 1975 and have been proud and supportive patrons of Prosser schools. Our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have attended, and some are currently attending, those schools. Lynda is an RN graduate of the University of Washington and for 32 years worked extensively with students at all grade levels and district administration, teachers and staff as the district's school nurse. I am a graduate of the Duke University School of Law and worked for 37 years, practicing law for 14 years and, for the last 23 years of my legal career serving as a Benton and Franklin Counties Superior Court Judge. For over 20 years I have been and remain a member of the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission and have

worked extensively on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion within Washington's courts, particularly including its juvenile courts and their programs and services. Our family is multi-racial, including children and grandchildren who are African Americans and/or Hispanic Americans. Both Lynda and I, throughout our professional work, have observed and experienced the critical importance in the successful learning and development of ALL children of seeing, hearing and learning about the histories, contributions, experiences and perspectives of historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

I also attended the board's study session on Wednesday, February 21st, at which some board members commented that the board's opposition to the senate and house bills was not based upon the substantive provisions in those bills, but rather was based upon concerns about the diminution in the board's local control that would result from their enactment. During the board discussion, in response to an inquiry by a student advisory board member about what the board's plan would be if the bills were not enacted, the board chairman stated that "it's not what's in the bills and you gotta get past that" and "I need you to get off what's in the bill...."

We are concerned that the insistence by some of the board members that Resolution 1-24 is "just based on keeping power locally" and is not based upon "what's in the bill" is pretextual, designed to mask concerns and objections board members may have about the specific, substantive provisions in the bills. It is noteworthy that of the multitude of bills introduced in the current legislative session that address the state's preeminent responsibility for providing public education and, in various ways impact the "local control" of school boards, our school board has chosen only these two interrelated bills to formally oppose. We believe, as do many others, certainly including students and their families who are within historically marginalized and underrepresented groups, that the board's decision to select and publicly oppose these two bills promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in instructional materials and curricula sends a clear message to everyone in our community that it in fact opposes "what's in" those bills. That message is contrary to the district's expressed value and recognition of the importance of providing ALL students with rich and diverse instructional programs that honor and address students' varied needs, interests and backgrounds as reflected in the district's Policy 2133, Policy 2020 and Procedure 2020P and as reiterated in the concluding paragraph of Board Resolution 01-24.

Surely, such a diverse and inclusive learning environment, ensured and enhanced by the provisions of ESB 5462 and ESHB 2331, is at the very core of our shared, essential responsibilities to educate our children, all of our children, for living and participating in a free and democratic society in which they can thrive. Surely, that must be one of the basics of the public education provided to our students.

Very truly yours,


Dennis and Lynda Yule

Selena Swearingen

Subject: FW: Board meeting of February 28

-----Original Message-----

From: Kimberly Casey <kimberly.casey@prosserschools.org>
Sent: Friday, March 8, 2024 4:01 PM
To: Selena Swearingen <selena.swearingen@prosserschools.org>
Subject: FW: Board meeting of February 28

Kim Casey, Superintendent
Prosser School District
1500 Grant Ave.
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-3323 x2009
Work Cell 509.781.8628
kim.casey@prosserschools.org

-----Original Message-----

From: mdseymour@mail.com <mdseymour@mail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 7, 2024 6:01 PM
To: Frank Vermulm <frank.vermulm@prosserschools.org>; Elisa Riley <Elisa.Riley@prosserschools.org>; Kimberly Casey <kimberly.casey@prosserschools.org>; Jason Rainer <Jason.Rainer@prosserschools.org>; Michelle O'Brien <michelle.obrien@prosserschools.org>; Brian Weinmann <brian.weinmann@prosserschools.org>
Subject: Board meeting of February 28

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I was disappointed with the conduct of Directors Rainer, Vermulm, and Weinmann at the February 28 board meeting. Resolution 01-24 was passed despite significant opposition and a request to table it for further discussion. The three directors were concerned about the erosion of "local control" and Rainer said that submitting the resolution immediately would encourage Governor Inslee to reject SB 5462 and HB 2331. I suggest instead that it was not tabled because Rainer realized that further debate would reveal the extent of opposition to their resolution.

If erosion of "local control" was their concern the three directors would also have opposed HB 1915 and SB 5813 mandating graduation requirements for financial and agricultural literacy, respectively, on Washington schools. They did not, and while it is naive to suggest that a resolution from the Prosser School Board would compel a liberal democratic governor to repudiate legislation drafted by liberal democrats in the legislature, it is insulting to suggest that the resolution was motivated by perceived erosion of "local control". The three board members may favor the mandates imposed by HB 1915 and SB 5813, but they are nonetheless mandates that erode "local control". Rejecting mandates from Olympia for that reason would require the board to reject ALL mandates, not just the ones they don't like, and it is disingenuous to suggest otherwise.

I can only conclude that Resolution 01-24 was motivated by partisan politics rather than concerns about "local control ". We elect a state government to debate and draft political priorities for the state, and we elect school board members to advocate for educational opportunities for students. If the board members are opposed to legislation they can exercise

their displeasure INDIVIDUALLY at the ballot box like the rest of us, but they are emphatically NOT entitled to represent their political views as those of an entire community.

Marcus Seymour

Sent using the mobile mail app

Attachment P

March 3, 2024

Dear School Board and Superintendent Casey,

We are writing to thank you for your time and support of the education of our students in Prosser. At the School Board Meeting last week we were very pleased to see the majority of the Board stand with our community values and needs of students.

The recent decision of the state legislature with Senate Bill 5462 creates new requirements to include LGBTQ history education in our schools which does not align with the needs of students in Prosser.

LGBTQ students at Prosser High School have a designated club to give support to their specific needs. General LGBTQ information is included in the Sex Education curriculum used in Prosser and that seems the appropriate place for it to be taught as the state added several new requirements in the past few years.

Our government officials meeting in Olympia should not have the last say on what individual school districts are required to teach in public schools. The way our state is populated allows for many more representatives to vote on the west side of the mountains. There are dramatic differences between communities in various parts of the state and this is the reason School Board members are elected locally; they understand the distinct values and needs of their own communities.

Each board member was elected because of the values they said they believe, which align with the voters in Prosser. We pray that you will continue to bravely take a stand against anything that tries to take away local control. We have put our trust in you for the protection and oversight of thousands of students.

As a previous high school teacher at PHS, Dyslexia instructor at HMS, and current substitute teacher, I (Desiree) regularly see students who do not have grade level skills. Please continue to focus on the most important aspects of public schools-safety and post high school preparation. We need to put all of our energy into preparing students for life after graduation.

Please keep your focus, you have our support.

TJ Mains & Desiree Mains

Selena Swearingen

From: Kimberly Casey
Sent: Sunday, March 10, 2024 3:26 PM
To: Selena Swearingen
Cc: Jason Rainer; Elisa Riley
Subject: FW: SB 5462 -(2023-24) - An agenda driven bill, please do not adopt. LTR for board packet

Importance: High

Here is another one that needs to be added to the minutes.

Kim Casey, Superintendent
Prosser School District
1500 Grant Ave.
Prosser, WA 99350
509-786-3323 x2009
Work Cell 509.781.8628
kim.casey@prosserschools.org

From: Elisa Riley <Elisa.Riley@prosserschools.org>
Sent: Saturday, March 9, 2024 7:27 PM
To: Kimberly Casey <kimberly.casey@prosserschools.org>
Subject: Fwd: SB 5462 -(2023-24) - An agenda driven bill, please do not adopt. LTR for board packet

Elisa V. Riley
Director No. 3
Prosser School District
Elisa.riley@prosserschools.org

WARNING

This email is NOT confidential.

Pursuant to RCW 42.56 any email, and response(s), sent to this email address (elisa.riley@prosserschools.org) are public records, as such, are discoverable under the Washington State Public Records Act.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Elisa Riley <Elisa.Riley@prosserschools.org>
Date: March 5, 2024 at 11:30:13 AM PST
To: Ryan Mcdonald <ryanmcdonaldcrna@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: SB 5462 -(2023-24) - An agenda driven bill, please do not adopt.

Ryan-

proficiency rates in core concepts, this legislation promises to divert efforts on helping the chronically underperforming learners.

Next, but perhaps more important, is the pernicious messaging found throughout the Diversity Equity and Inclusion agenda and the perverted approaches taken to insert it into the pedagogy; especially through state legislation and judicial edict. While this letter cannot go into the past century of the dissension of liberty, tireless efforts of those who would remove our liberties, and accompanying mutations associated with the same agenda, we desire that you, as elected representatives, undertake the necessary efforts to guard the instruction of our youth and ultimately the development of our future neighbors.

Please reject any efforts for distant control over our community curriculum.
Please reject distant control and imposition of DEI doctrine into public education.

Respectfully,

Ryan & Abbi McDonald

--

Ryan McDonald, ARNP-CRNA
509.823.7756
Abbi McDonald, MS, ASLP
509.823.7762

Attachment R

To Jason, Frank, and Brian:

After witnessing community discourse on the topic of the resolution opposing SB 5462 and HB 2331, I am deeply distressed for the well-being of LGBTQ+ students in the Prosser School District.

On February 28 School Board Director Frank Vermulm expressed his concern “that a lot of the curriculum that has been passed,” referring to LGBTQ+ curriculum, was not “age appropriate” for students.

The statement represents a misconception grounded in the assumption that if children are taught about LGBTQ+ relationships, individuals, or histories, surely physical intimacy must be threaded through the discussion. This is false and harmful, and reflects a perspective often rooted in the idea that same-gender relationships are inherently sexual, while heterosexual relationships focus on love and romance. In reality, when students are taught about LGBTQ+ relationships, they are simply learning that a relationship between two women or two men can be just as loving, fulfilling, and normal as a relationship between a woman and a man. Concerns about ‘protecting children’ merely reflect decades of homophobia which contrasted promiscuous, sexual gays with wholesome, loving straight people.

I also want to address the apparent conflict between religion and LGBTQ+ acceptance—as though these two elements are inherently contradictory.

In truth, there are many religious parents who love and accept their LGBTQ+ children, and many more LGBTQ+ people who are religious themselves. Religious LGBTQ+ people often struggle with what they perceive as a contradiction between their sexuality or gender identity and their deeply-held religious convictions—and declaring or implying that these two identities are incompatible will only hurt them more. Above all, it is fundamentally incorrect: many religions openly condemn homophobia. Growing up in an environment students know will accept them serve as central constructs of a child’s mental health and self-esteem. Schools have a duty to educate and raise generations of people to accept minorities in society.

Support and tolerance for the LGBTQ+ community is entirely age-appropriate for children and in no way implies the existence of sexual or adult content. Additionally, it is not anti-religious for children to take these lessons, as teaching religious tolerance for minorities may encourage LGBTQ+ people to retain their faith.

As 80% of Prosser School District is composed of students within a historically marginalized group, I am heartened by the fact SB 5462 and HB 2331 are sitting on the governor’s desk. The profound impact of inclusive curriculum is well-documented, with a kaleidoscope of studies indicating participation in diverse curriculum materials is significantly related to an increased likelihood of passing state standardized testing and an increase in high school graduations. Time and time again, research reveals the voices and perspectives of underrepresented populations in history do not divert or dilute studies. Instead, the inspiring stories of our shared humanity enrich them.

I do agree with School Board member Frank Vermulm on one point. On the Prosser School Board Candidate Forum, Frank quoted President Truman: *“The only new thing in the world is history you don't know.”*

I am thrilled SB 5462 and HB2331 will help secure this reality for our students.

My sincerest regards,

Katie Spiese

For more information about diverse curriculum:

Serving on your Local School Board, A Foundation for Success by WSSDA

<https://www.wssda.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ServingOnYourLocalSB.pdf>

“While overall test scores have increased, significant gaps exist for African-American, Hispanic and Native American students and students from low income families. The Washington State School Directors’ Association published a comprehensive report called Closing the Achievement Gap: A Policy Action Guide for Washington State’s School Directors.”

Closing the Achievement Gap: A Policy Action Guide for Washington State’s School Directors. by WSSDA

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521664.pdf>

“The achievement gap is defined as: The difference in academic achievement between African American, American Indian and Hispanic students and their white and Asian peers and the difference in academic achievement between students, whose families are of low-income, and their peers from middle and upper income families.”

“As documented in numerous state reports and national studies, not all children are reaching higher levels of achievement at the same rate. In districts across Washington, large groups of students are not meeting standards, creating a gap in achievement that is evident by group. Poverty and race are substantial reasons for this gap.”

“Inequities persist in our society and in education, and school boards must accept a leadership role in mitigating these inequities and closing the achievement gap that exists at all grade levels and in school districts of all sizes and locations in Washington state.”

“Curriculum and teaching practices must recognize differences in ethnicity, language and culture.”

“Students of color and students from poverty often bring experiences and an understanding of history and knowledge that they do not see represented in the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom. For example, relevancy of curriculum for American Indian students is questioned when they do not see their culture and languages represented in the curriculum.”

“Attitude plays a key role in how individuals interact with each other. Biased attitudes of particular cultural and socio-economic groups significantly alter a school’s learning environment. A negative attitude breeds a negative school climate, and positive attitudes send clear messages that all are valued. Care must be taken to not let biased attitudes establish different achievement expectations for students from different backgrounds.”

Welcoming Schools Annual Report 2023 by Human Rights Campaign

https://reports.hrc.org/welcoming-schools-annual-report-fy23?_ga=2.261351757.1783003723.1710270636-985120439.1710270636

“LGBTQ+ students and families live in every county and every zip code of this country. We’re multi-racial, multi-lingual, and have different abilities and talents. We deserve classrooms and school communities where we are welcomed for who we are and all we have to offer. “

How Schools Are Building a More Inclusive Curriculum by Teach for America

<https://www.teachforamerica.org/one-day/ideas-and-solutions/how-schools-are-building-a-more-inclusive-curriculum>

“All students benefit from learning a full and accurate accounting of history and about diverse groups and perspectives. But these courses are especially crucial for students in historically marginalized groups. For Black and Indigenous students and other students of color, a lack of representation—and misrepresentation—in curricula and lessons can be hurtful and even traumatic, and make learning much more challenging. Research shows that ethnic studies courses help address these painful inequities while also having wide-ranging positive impacts on all students. Studies indicate that culturally relevant courses and programs increase academic engagement, improve test scores and attendance rates, and close the opportunity gap.”

“Ethnic studies in San Francisco public schools increased high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and the number of credits earned by high school students, all while decreasing absenteeism in the classroom”

“Research shows that Mexican American studies classes and other ethnic studies courses sharpen critical thinking skills and improve academic engagement because students identify more with the academic material.”

“[The classes] taught me that if I can make engaging lessons that students relate to, they’re going to feel more heard and want to participate more,”

What The Research Says About Ethnic Studies by National Education Association

<https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/What%20the%20Research%20Says%20About%20Ethnic%20Studies.pdf>

“An established body of research affirms what educators have long known intuitively: interdisciplinary ethnic studies, or the study of the social, political, economic and historical perspectives of our nation’s diverse racial and ethnic groups, help foster cross-cultural understanding among both students of color and white students and aids students in valuing their own cultural identity while appreciating the differences around them. These studies also confirm that students who participate in ethnic studies are more academically engaged, develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy and personal empowerment, perform better academically and graduate at higher rates. Research tells us that well-designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula that teach directly about racism produce higher levels of critical thinking and have a positive impact on ‘democracy outcomes,’ particularly when they include cross-group interaction and especially on White students.”