



Public Comment Responses Received During the WPS BOE Meeting on 2/1/2021

Below is the public record of public comment responses received during the 2/1/2021 BOE meeting.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - Comments are posted exactly as they have been received.

First and Last Name	Address	Please state your comment/question regarding non-agenda items
Joseph Nader	36 Westfair Dr	<p>This past Friday we learned that Long Lots principal has resigned, and will not serve the remainder of the year. This comes right after more than 300 parents had signed their support for Dr. Dunn.</p> <p>We will be promised a new excellent leader to fill in Dr. Dunn's shoes. Unfortunately, the last three principals at Long Lots were placed on administrative leave, and this won't be a good selling point to get the best candidates.</p> <p>The other Westport elementary schools have had their principals since 2010, 2015, or 2016. In comparison, Long Lots will have four principals since 2015. The fact that no leader had served enough time to start to make an impact is troublesome.</p> <p>We can't keep doing the same thing over and over and expect different results.</p> <p>I urge the Long Lots community to join the call for an independent review by voicing their concerns and signing the online petition.</p>

netta levy	11 blue ribbon drive westport	<p>I am writing to you about Holocaust Education at our schools and our formal and informal recognition of the holocaust. Last Wednesday marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day - unless you are Jewish (and even if you are) you may not have realized that. On this day, people globally commemorate those murdered by the Nazis, their supporters, and the bystanders. But remembrance means little without education, and this year, as far-right extremism reached new peaks domestically and internationally, the need to educate is more significant than ever.</p> <p>I emailed the principals of the middle school and the high school early that day, asking how the day was being recognized and got practically the same word for word response from both, about the Holocaust curriculum and the PTA DEI committee helping to identify nationally-recognized days of observance and how to best honor those days in the school. To me, that was too passive of an approach. I have seen time and time again in our schools that we wait for an event to happen and then we discuss it after the fact in an assembly (when those were a thing) or connections class at the high school.</p> <p>We have an opportunity and an obligation to educate these young adults proactively, not retroactively. Last week was a missed opportunity. Not saying or doing anything can be misconstrued as not caring, and I don't think that's the message we were trying to send as a district.</p> <p>A January, 2020 Pew Research Center survey found that most U.S. adults know what the Holocaust was and approximately when it happened, but fewer than half can correctly answer multiple-choice questions about the number of Jews who were murdered or the way Hitler came to power.</p> <p>In general, education, visiting a Holocaust museum, and knowing someone who is Jewish are strongly linked with Holocaust knowledge. The schools can obviously only control the education part. Last year when I raised this same question with Lauren Francese, I learned that we don't REALLY teach about the Holocaust in a meaningful way until 9th grade.</p> <p>Opportunities to enrich and extend what is formally learned in the classroom exist all around us, and last week's Holocaust Remembrance Day provided one such opportunity. I will be following up with you regarding available educational resources on this topic in the near future.</p>
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John Horrigan	60 Easton Road	<p>Dear BOE members While we have had some productive meetings with Superintendent Scarice and central office administrators concerning measures to make the full-in model safer and more manageable, we want to make it crystal clear that the WEA membership has not changed our position from our Jan 14th letter.</p> <p>We cannot support any full-in model until such time as we have access to the vaccine and appropriate efficacy period. Stay safe and warm.</p> <p>-WEA leadership team</p>
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DISCUSSION

1. **Health Update** - No public comments were received on this item.
2. **Teaching and Learning Update: Youth Arts Collaborative** - No public comments were received on this item.
3. **FY 2022 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools** - Comments are posted exactly as they have been received.

First and Last Name	Address	Please state your comment/question regarding FY 2022 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools.
Lindsay Shurman	88 Kings Highway South	<p>Writing in with grave concern that we, at KHS (and neighbors at SES), are once again at risk of losing a 0.5 Assistant Principal. In 'typical' year, a regular education AP's responsibilities are imperative and robust and as we know, additional responsibilities have been taken on given the pandemic. Not to mention the increase in SpEd students - making responsibilities even greater for the remainder of this year and moving into the foreseeable future. If we suffer a cut to either AP role (regular or SpEd) the chain of events will negatively affect all children at our school - the second most populated elementary in the district - offering less educational and emotional support at a time when it is needed most.</p>

<p>Hannah DeQuadros</p>	<p>26 Eno Lane</p>	<p>To the Members of the Board of Education, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed cut to the K-2 spanish program. Learning a foreign language is so important and all the research indicates children absorb so much more at a young age. If we want our children to be proficient or even fluent in another language, it is imperative to start from a young age. My son is a kindergartener at KHS and already making progress despite learning via zoom for the first part of the year. He attended a private kindergarten last year and also had spanish classes. I know if the program is cut, he will lose everything he learned these past two years and the teachers will have to start from scratch in the third grade. This seems like such a waste of time, resources and opportunity to lose these precious and important years of learning a foreign language. I hope you will reconsider this cut to the budget.</p> <p>Regards, Hannah DeQuadros</p>
<p>Michelle Barman</p>	<p>32 Whitney St</p>	<p>Please do not eliminate yet another elementary Assistant Principal. The district already has (at least) one less than it needs. You should achieve parity by bringing CES and GFS back up to 3 APs, not by lowering the bar and reducing the number at SES and/or KHS. The demands on our Principals and Assistant Principals have been growing, not shrinking. Among their MANY roles, Westport's Assistant Principals serve as SPED coordinators. The District has added 50 Special Education students to its program this year. These students, and the regular education students, cannot get the attention they all need, and deserve, if you reduce the AP numbers even further. The elementary Assistant Principals touch the lives of every student in their schools, and they have a real impact on their educational experience. Reducing their numbers will have a tremendous negative impact on our students, at a time when they need all the support they can get.</p>
<p>Rosie Curtis</p>	<p>4 Heritage Ct</p>	<p>The CES Overview of the Administrative Structure for Special Services from Jan 2018 made a recommendation to maintain the current building-level special education administrative structure as a viable model for providing special education services at each individual school within the district. We understand the budgeting process is very painful, but why should we make cuts in areas that would have a ripple effect on our most vulnerable students? We fear that reducing 0.5 AP at KHS when we are the second most populated school would only cause more pain than gain. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.</p>

<p>John & Amy Herrera</p>	<p>3 Sandhopper Trail</p>	<p>The task of budgeting for a normal year amid a pandemic is daunting. If Covid is miraculously behind us for the 21/22 school year we will be navigating a “new” normal. One that most assuredly will require additional resources to remediate some of the learning and social emotional deficits caused by Covid. We strongly advocate for retaining all of our talented resources as we continue navigating this period of uncertainty. Any modifications to the budget should not impact the special education program that has only grown this year, nor should it impact any Assistant Principal position when without them we would not have had the bandwidth to support the distance program so effectively this year.</p>
<p>Sivan Hong</p>	<p>62 Lyons Plains Rd</p>	<p>I am the Chair of the SpEd PTA and am writing to advocate for a full time Transitions Coordinator at Staples. In our current model, students who are eligible for a transitions program, are sent to other programs instead of staying at Staples. Many of our neighboring communities have an internal transitions program, even though their schools are smaller than ours. Our students deserve the same. By cutting the Transition Coordinator to half time, the previous administration gutted our program. We need a full-time person in this role to rebuild and create a program that really works for our students. Doing so, has the potential of reducing costs going forward and gives us the ability to provide a much higher level of education. Please consider restoring the .5 FTE Transitions Coordinator position to our budget. It is a critical role for this population of SpEd students; they need our community’s support. Thank you.</p>
<p>David Herling</p>	<p>312 Bayberry Lane</p>	<p>I was made aware today that the elementary school APs role with special education students is being threatened. A similar measure was brought up last year which was met with overwhelming disapproval within the community and was ultimately defeated. The SpEd community is vocal, active, and well represented by the SpEd PTA Committee. We treasure our AP’s and the tremendous value they bring to our children’s success. I urge the BoE to abandon this course of action. In the future please utilize the perspective and expertise of the SpEd Committee prior to considering changing such a foundational aspect of our most vulnerable student’s education.</p>

<p>Sandhya (Sun-the-ya) Kale</p>	<p>24 Hickory Drive</p>	<p>As both a parent of a WPS special needs child and a provider at an elementary school, I have recognized the importance of the position of an Assistant Vice Principal ("AP"). First, from the view of a parent, a single focal point is extremely important to understand the special ed procedure and where my child is in their learning process. Absent an AP, I as a parent would feel the need to turn directly to the head of Special Education to deal with issues, even though that person would be far distant from the day-to-day functioning of my child. Second, the role is extremely important to the work I do as a service provider. Without the AP, parents would deal directly with the service provider, regarding their concerns and any conflicts related with logistics of special education law. While I can easily deal with parents' questions regarding my area of expertise, I have found that without a focal point, parents take it on themselves to communicate to other service providers for their children. Currently, I can simply refer such parents to the AP. The additional stressors the lack of an AP would create would impair the work of the team. Finally, being able to run ideas by a knowledgeable AP who is present in my school also contributes to my work efficacy, my morale and alleviates anxiety.</p> <p>We have excellent APs and elimination of the AP position would have a negative impact, in my view, both as a parent of a special needs child and as a service provider.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
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4. System for Public Comment - No public comments were received on this item.

5. COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Program - Comments are posted exactly as they have been received.

First and Last Name	Address	Please state your comment/question regarding COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Program.
Karen DeFelice	WEA Co-President	The WEA leadership would have to seek advice from CEA about implementing Surveillance Testing, and we will do that.
David Greely	7 Caccamo Lane	Why aren't we focusing on randomly testing students? It seems the teachers would be more likely to get tested themselves if asked, especially as testing is a free community service through the state at numerous testing sites. Pooled saliva testing of up to 25 individuals is extensively used in numerous other educational settings as a general screening method. If pooled saliva testing is used, entire classrooms could be screened. If I understand correctly, if a child has a fever, the only guideline is for that student to remain home for 24 hours post-fever and no covid testing is required before re-entry to school. Further, it is the children who have unmasked periods of time indoors during the school day, not

		the adults.
Maureen Asiel	2 nutcracker lane	There may be value in routine testing for staff members that have interaction with a large number of students

DISCUSSION/ACTION

- 1. FY 2021 – FY 2022 Capital Soft Costs Appropriation Request – Asphalt** - No public comments were received on this item.
- 2. Discussion of Capital Projects in Rank Order of Priority** - No public comments were received on this item.