

January 21, 2015

School Board Members, Dr. Enfield, Community Members

My name is Sherry Edwards. Teachers in the Highline School District have been put in an untenable position. **Dr. Enfield**, you and the people directly under you have increasingly put demands on teachers' time that have now reached the point of oppressiveness. We are staggering under the weight of these demands.

At the elementary level, we are required to spend many hours beyond our contractual workweek doing the following without any extra pay. This is certainly not an exhaustive list for each grade level, but I have only been given four minutes for this speech!

Here are just **some** of the tasks we teachers are required to do in addition to actual teaching:

Gathering, analyzing, and reporting data of all sorts—with its endless accompanying meetings for training on the requirements for its production... Yet it does little to inform **our** practice as teachers, but rather, is meant to fill a slot required by the administrators at ERAC for their use,

Administering and analyzing Math “probes”—you on the school board may not know what they are, but they are yet another assessment given to us by our school administrators recently to gather yet more data so they can report on the Annual Action Plan to the district—this, in addition to giving district-mandated HBAs, Math in Focus unit tests, and teacher-produced formative assessments, all of which will result in seven assessments given to students on the same standard,

Administering and analyzing the dubious kindergarten WA Kids assessment, very little of which is useful to these children's parents,

Requiring kindergarten teachers to attend monthly meetings with pre-school organizations in our area,

Preparing for required coaching/teaching cycles,

Attending meetings on how to teach ELL students English so that we may “confer” with them during teaching time,

Finding our own materials to teach and assess Common Core standards in Reading as nothing has been given to us,

Trying to understand a confusing, ineffective Writing curriculum the district has insisted we adopt,

Gathering and uploading artifacts to prove we are teachers of merit.

This is all in addition to preparing deep, thoughtful lessons for students, researching best practices, and conducting personal professional growth such as reading trade books and attending workshops.

Therefore, we now find ourselves in a dire situation. As conscientious educators, we work hard to attend to these spurious activities we have been mandated to perform, and we also work hard in what we came to the profession to do, namely teach! We are mired down with the myriad requirements of continually "weighing and measuring the sheep", "weighing and measuring the sheep", "weighing and measuring the sheep", leaving very little time to the actual "feeding of the sheep".

Because there are just so many hours in a day or week, our health, and relationships with our families, are suffering due to the impossible workload you have set out for us—and it's a situation that is just not sustainable over time. Teachers are at capacity, and beyond.

The children—the ones we are supposedly here for—are the ultimate losers in this current situation. They are showing signs of feeling the pressure of the rush-rush, hurry-hurry, the no-time-to-talk-with-you-as-a-person mindset, and as an individual with a name, strengths, and needs... because their teacher is overloaded with performing tasks having very little to do with teaching, and learning.

Please put a halt to this predicament you have put us all in—before there is massive teacher burnout and a resulting teacher shortage. We won't be leaving the teaching profession—the teaching profession has left us.

Thank you for your time.