

Statement of Tracey Drum

I don't envy your job. You are in the position to make decisions that are not going to make people happy. These decisions are life changing. They have an impact. And we elected you to make these decisions.

I know that you only want what's best for our kids. I know that. We share that. We have that in common. I wasn't at the last school board meeting, but I heard that the views expressed demonstrates that many board members are leaning towards approving an agreement to allow Mary Walker SD to be the "democratically elected" board to take public dollars to allow Highline's other area students to continue going to Rainier Prep. I know that you're faced with the possibility of these 200 or so students having to return to schools from which they chose to leave, and from what I hear, they don't want to go back. And I know you're torn. I know you want to just let them finish out their year. But there's a problem with that line of thinking, they're still not going to want to return to their neighborhood school after this year's up. And that's why I came to speak to you, because I think that's the real problem. I think the question we should be asking is why don't these families want to go to their neighborhood schools. I came from one of these schools. Our original projection to have four sixth grade teachers was reduced to three because so many of our students left.

We find ourselves in this situation because leaders have caved under pressures to allow our schools to transform into institutions that churn out data points and not children who love learning, who have time to explore and discover, and learn about things that matter to them, do projects, be creative, and not walk down halls holding bubbles in their mouths.

These kids have left schools where music teachers are pressured into teaching writing, music concerts are cancelled for test prep, science is taught only on Fridays, where teachers get into trouble for doing research projects with their students that involve current science because they fall behind the pacing recommendation in the literacy frameworks.

Entering into a shady deal with a district that's in financial trouble, to skirt a law that our supreme court has clearly said -charter schools are unconstitutional - is not the answer.

This is like bailing water from a sinking ship with a spoon. It is a distraction that avoids the real issue. Our schools stifle what we most value about learning. You can change that. Use this as an opportunity to apply the pressure that is needed to urge our legislators to do their part and fully fund education for our kids. We need leaders to be courageous and lead. And we need leaders to recognize the real issue. It's a shame that it's the kids who are caught in the middle.