

## Tears in Teaching

Dear School Board Members,

Names were replaced to protect the privacy of students. Crying, Matthew said, "Mrs. West, I am going to make you sad." "Why?" I ask. "Well, I love your class, but I probably need to transfer to another class since Jim will not leave me alone." Jim had hit Matthew over the head with a book. This was one of the first days Jim was transferred into my classroom. Jim's behavior continued to escalate with continued defiance, damaging school supplies, screaming in students' faces, and shouting profanities in the office. This was a Thursday, and there was no administrator available. The Instructional Coach was absent and the Counselor and Family Advocate were on a field trip. I immediately texted admin for support and a plan was made. However, this was one difficult day. This conversation left me sad and immediately made me want to seek out help.

My name is Marie West. I am a first grade teacher at Lewis and Clark Elementary School. My letter is in no way a reflection upon my administration and colleagues. In fact, my building admin and colleagues have been very quick to respond to each and every situation that arises with my student.

I am here tonight to represent our Wenatchee Educational Association Membership on one of our biggest challenges as educators. Over the past two years, an increase in student misbehavior and student mental health concerns has become one of our top priorities for members. The challenge of handling even one student on a daily basis with hostile, defiant and physically aggressive behavior is costing the education of the rest of the class. WenEA has received many requests and information from a variety of avenues for more support and training with PBIS. On the District Learning Team this issue also rose to the forefront from many staff conversations.

WenEA commends WSD on finding ways support students and staff by increasing PBIS professional development, providing a Character Education curriculum, implementing District-wide data-based decision making teams, and providing counseling staff and para assistance. We appreciate the fact that WSD formed community-based partnerships to help with student behavioral health and is willing to explore ways to utilize the ACES survey and include professional development on Trauma-Informed Approaches and Social Emotional Learning. The creation of an onsite clinic at Lincoln and WestSide is a promising step. Members also know that legislation ties the hands of many of our admin on school discipline policies as well as in funding needed positions.

Yet, members feel further action is needed. WenEA would like to see an increase in counseling staff and behavior specialists. District-Wide professional development is needed for all educators on de-escalation and peer mediation techniques, along with Trauma Informed practices. The increase in student behavioral issues has made the weekly absence of administrators from the buildings problematic. Administrators are absent three out of the four

Thursday mornings, and there is no coverage for emergencies in the building. Perhaps alternative meeting times outside the student contact day could be explored.

OSPI provides our state with a Menu of Best Practices when building positive student behavior. I encourage you as school board members to review this document.

Our staff and students are our most precious resources and with the school board's guidance, it is vital that systems are set in place for student and staff success. Thank you for your time.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/SSEO/BehaviorMenu.aspx> (Menu of Best Practice Document Link)