

August 30, 2022

Dear Superintendent Jones and SPS leadership, President Matter and SEA leadership, President Hersey and School Board,

Seattle Council PTSA (SCPTSA) understands that the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and Seattle Education Association (SEA) primarily concerns staff and administration issues, which is why there is no formal stakeholder voice for families at the bargaining table. We also see a pressing need to acknowledge that the CBA includes topics that directly impact the educational experience of our students. SCPTSA is offering the following list of priorities that our families have consistently shared with us through email, conversations, last year's Superintendent Listening Sessions, and our regular meetings:

1. Our families want to know that when they are sending their student to school, their student will come home whole in body and in spirit.
2. Every student has strengths, and every student has needs. Our families want our students to have the opportunity to stretch and grow in their individual areas of strength, while at the same time receiving support in their individual areas of need. Our families want best practices implemented, and for our teachers to have the support, training, and time to collaborate that they need in order to make sure that all students have the opportunity to excel as their whole selves.
3. Our families want school to start on time, with excitement, enthusiasm, and stability. We want our students to know that our district and our teachers look forward to connecting with them, and that teaching staff/administration issues will not get in the way of student learning.
4. Our families want open, accurate, specific communication in plain language. During remote learning, many of our families developed increased awareness and interest in what happens in school, and that interest has not waned. At the same time, our families are stressed, exhausted, and frustrated, just like staff and administrators. Our families want emails to be concise, but our families also want to know where to go for more in depth information. Our families do not want euphemisms, as they can feel like manipulations. Instead, our families ask for clarity, evidence, and plans.
5. Our families understand that our teachers and our district want to support our students, and also that these systems have limitations. Our families do not expect perfection, but they do expect honesty.

If SPS and SEA cannot implement best practices for our students, our families would like to know what the barrier is, and who has the power to address the barrier. Some of our families will want to know details, and some will not. Our families want regular updates about progress on removing barriers to best practices.

6. Our families expect our teachers and our district to demonstrate and model responsibility and accountability. When things go wrong, our families want to know what went wrong, and what the plan is to improve. Our families also expect our teachers and district to collaborate productively and proactively on major decisions that affect our students' education.
7. Our families want it to be acknowledged that our children are only children once. That our children are growing up, and that they deserve the best that we as community can provide for them.

In closing, we ask the parties to acknowledge that unpredictability around the start of school causes students and families considerable stress and anxiety. We are hopeful that our students will start school on time and in a joyous, stable and predictable environment. We urge the parties to consider how they will support students during and after this period of uncertainty. As families are asked for grace and understanding, we request that this grace and understanding also be extended to families. We ask that families - and especially students - be supported through any additional disruption. Our children have borne a heavy burden over the past two and a half years, and it is our job as adults to center them and their needs as we work together to support their current experience and future potential. We ask that planning for supporting our students and their families be done with intention, and with budget, and that it be built into the bargain.

Sincerely,

Samantha Fogg and Erin Dury
Seattle Council PTSA Co-Presidents
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