

EEA Statement to Bethel Board  
10-25-21

Good evening members of the board and Superintendent Sproles. My name is Sabrina Gordon and I am president of Eugene Education Association.

I am here tonight with an urgent message for you. We are only a month and a half into this school year, and educators are not OK. This year has not materialized into the return to normal that we all were hoping for. Instead, the students who've returned to our classrooms need levels of academic and emotional support beyond anything we've seen before, the number of students needing online education is higher than what we've planned for, and an alarming number of licensed and classified staff have chosen to exit their positions - leaving the people still here with an enormous lift.

Pre-pandemic schedules and expectations are being imposed on a system that cannot support that weight, and it is about to collapse. EEA hears daily from members seeking relief. Many of these conversations are full of tears, anxiety, and self-doubt from incredibly skilled and experienced educators. They feel like they *should* be able to meet students' needs and the district's expectations of them, and when they can't, many of them begin questioning whether they can or should stay in this profession.

But here's the thing. We can't afford to lose one more. Each person who takes a leave of absence, retires early, or resigns due to untenable stress is a tragic loss for our students and continues the cycle of increasing the burden on those who remain. Something's got to give. We can't pretend this will end well if something doesn't change.

What do educators need? EEA is in the process of surveying members right now. Along with several other unions across the state, we are seeking to understand educators' level of stress, the factors contributing to it, and what potential solutions would help most. We will share this information with the superintendent and the board.

Based on the many conversations I've had with teachers and other licensed specialists, I can predict some of what we might see in that survey. I think the most needed solutions will be about ***time*** and ***trust***.

We're operating under a full teaching schedule, but with an exponential increase in professional tasks that require time. Teachers need more time in the day to plan for both in-person and online students, time to communicate with colleagues about students with special academic and/or emotional needs, time to talk with parents and caregivers, time to give students extra help one-on-one or in small groups. Simply put, they need more ***time***.

Messages from the district about self-care opportunities need to be coupled with tangible workload relief. One way to do this is to remove unnecessary meetings and tasks from teachers' plates. Tasks such as writing goals for the teacher evaluation process are important, but while

we're operating in crisis mode, you could remove this task and **trust** that educators are doing the best they can in impossible circumstances. **Trust** that educators will practice self-care when the conditions of their job give them time and energy to do so.

I won't spend any more precious time guessing what the results of EEA's survey will be, but as I said previously, we will share the results with you. EEA's goal is to collaborate with you on ways to support educators through the most difficult year we've encountered yet, so that we can help our students continue to learn and grow. They don't get to do school over. This is their time, they need us right now, and we need to work together to give students our best.