

The Stranger refused to publish our op-ed, so we're releasing it ourselves.

To Whom It May Concern,

We are teachers at Dunlap Elementary and Emerson Elementary in the Rainier Valley neighborhood, representing a combined total of 282* years of experience in the classroom. We are Seattle Education Association (SEA) members, but our views in this letter do not represent those of SEA as a whole. We are Seattle Public School (SPS) employees, but our views in this letter do not represent those of SPS as a whole. We are, more than anything, Concerned Public School Teachers. We are writing to you, The Stranger Election Control Board, in order to kindly request that you reconsider your endorsement for Liza Rankin in the recent "The Stranger's Endorsements for the November, 7, 2023 General Election."

We know that she was also your endorsed candidate back in 2019, running against Eric Blumhagen. Back then, we were willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. But in 2023, after years spent teaching through the pandemic, slogging through "re-opening", and now pushing through "routine" displacements that have left our classroom communities in disarray, the only viable candidate for District 1 School Board Director is Debbie Carlsen. Rankin may have had the endorsement of rank and file members of the union back in 2019, but that support has evaporated in 2023. Carlsen has the support and endorsement of SEA, along with many others.

Carlsen is the candidate who understands that the funding fight needs to be taken to the state, an area where Rankin has gone on record saying that she will not search for more support. Carlsen, unlike Rankin, knows that school closures should be used as an absolute last resort when searching for a solution to the district's budget crisis. Rankin supported meetings about "Well-Resourced Schools" which were nothing more than idealistic pie in the sky conversations about mystical institutions that will never manifest into reality, as long as our public schools continue to be under or improperly funded. Our "students furthest from educational justice" cannot afford to wait and hope that the magical Funding Fairy will appear and fix this deficit. Do you know what gets results in the classroom, more than almost anything? Small class sizes. We need a candidate who will fight for our students, and that candidate is Debbie Carlsen.

Our schools were some of the 40-50 (actual number unknown because the board has not released this information in an cohesive way) schools that were required to displace teachers and/or reconfigure classrooms. We were told that we were losing two teachers because we were under-enrolled by 24 students. The two teachers who were displaced at our school found out they would have to officially leave two days before they were required to pack up their classrooms. And five days before they had to start at a different school.

Students lost their teachers with whom they had spent weeks building relationships. Classrooms were ripped apart. Academic time lost because new classrooms had to restart their year. Frustrated students and educators had to put in even more work to get back to learning. Parents reported feelings of uncertainty and/or anxiety that they and their children experienced because of the looming new classroom and the loss of a teacher. And our entire community grieved this loss while actively trying to support students' varied emotional states. Now our classrooms are reaching capacity with new students arriving throughout October. We need to support a candidate who will fight when inexcusable reconfigurations like this are forced upon us. And we know that's not Rankin.

In the spirit of transparency, which is something that we would like to see more of from the school board, and also something that Debbie Carlsen is making a priority in her campaign, we want it to be known that one of us was initially approached to write this piece by a parent who knows Carlsen personally. That parent has a child in one of our classrooms. That child, and every other child in each and every school who felt the effects of these displacements, knows just how disruptive these supposed routine adjustments can be. We are writing this not because we feel obligated, but because we can't stand by while school board members talk out of both sides of their mouths, trying to appease everyone while letting down those truly the furthest distance from actual educational justice. Vote Debbie Carlsen.

Signed,

Matthew Burtness
Ashlye Allison
Megan Lee
Christopher Glenn
Annabel Garcia-Andresen
Nicholas Barr
Michael Ogburn
Kiana Harris
Marites Perez
Terese Metz
Tricia DeVille
Molly Blair
Wil Depusoy
Sheri Fujisawa
Glen Clisham
Sarah Warren
Anonymous Educator x2

* - Current total as of writing on 11/10/2023