

BOE Speech On Behalf of CLFOGE

My name is Colleen Bailey and I am standing before you tonight as a mother with children in the EC program, and as a representative of Crystal Lake Friends of Gifted Education, a volunteer-staffed group of parents and educators that support the Extended Curriculum (EC) program.

On behalf of our current membership of over 50 district families actively enrolled in D47, I'd like to formally express our intense dissatisfaction with the cuts being made to EC staff & programming, as well as our concern for how this will negatively impact the quality of academic instruction for not only our advanced learners, but ALL students that receive enrichment from EC teachers.

In grades K-3, the Primary Enrichment Program (PEP) offers higher-level opportunities in critical thinking, Language Arts, and Math for students performing above grade level. Additionally, PEP provides opportunities for the universal screening of ALL students for higher-level enrichment access. This early approach helps identify high-risk and historically underrepresented students, building confidence in their thinking skills and fostering a love for problem-solving and creativity.

The EC team holds specialized credentials that allow them to better assess and serve our high-ability learners. These programs provide a space where students can engage with peers who think and learn in similar ways, allowing them to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Outside of attending to EC and PEP program responsibilities, EC teachers also facilitate book and math clubs for motivated 4th and 5th grade students that show an ability to be screened into higher level courses upon entry to middle school.

We are concerned that with these cuts, high ability learners, whose needs are already not being met on a daily basis, will suffer decreased access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their full potential.

We are concerned that underrepresentation will be exacerbated and our high-risk students will likely get glossed over because they will not be encouraged and identified early through PEP support.

We are concerned about the effect this will have on the quality of middle school EC classes, already being diluted for various reasons.

We are concerned about how these cuts will undermine the competitive edge afforded to our students through EC supports.

We are extremely concerned that we will fail to retain teachers that are properly trained to adequately assess and challenge advanced students and meet their specialized needs.

Gifted students have specialized needs. And although these needs tend to be less expensive and less funded, they ought to be equally provided for. I'd like to present to the board our petition with over 550 signatures from concerned community members, asking you to fully invest

in the teachers and programs in place, to adequately support district 47's gifted students and keep us an academically competitive community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.