

February __, 2026

Dear Superintendent Shuldiner,

Welcome to Seattle Public Schools! We are a group of urban Native, Somali and Spanish-speaking families writing to share some important background information about our and our students' experiences in SPS as you begin your tenure. We hope that this letter will be the beginning of an ongoing partnership and dialogue with you to improve the way SPS engages with our students, our families and our communities.

While there are many supportive individuals who work for SPS, we have consistently found that the system overall creates many obstacles to the success of our students. **We as their families are often made to feel unwelcome in schools because of cultural, language and trust barriers.** An impossible burden is placed on us to overcome these barriers, and as a result our children suffer in multiple ways because we are prevented from advocating for them effectively:

- Our students report feeling **unseen and unvalued** by staff who do not try to understand their diverse lives and experiences, such as living in an urban Native, multilingual or immigrant household, or experiencing housing or food insecurity and poverty. Supports provided to similarly situated families in other districts, such as Know Your Rights trainings for immigrant families, are rarely made available to SPS families.
- **Native students in particular** are severely undercounted in SPS and treated as invisible, their educational and basic needs ignored and unmet. Recently, SPS abruptly removed an award-winning Native director from its Native Education program with no explanation, and has systematically excluded the Indian Parent Advisory Committee (IPAC) from participating in key conversations and decisions around Native Ed. SPS has also failed to engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation with local tribes on Native education, and has consistently failed to implement the John McCoy (lulilaš) Since Time Immemorial curriculum as required by State law.
- When our students experience racism from teachers or from fellow students, our **families justifiably fear retaliation** for reporting it. There are in fact no established processes or procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of racism in schools. Families encounter major challenges in transferring their students out of schools in which they have experienced racism, and are given little support or understanding at the receiving school on the occasions when they are able to do so.
- Our students are often **singled out for discipline** by teachers or administrators, and disciplinary procedures are not explained to us properly and are often not followed properly.

- Some of our students experience **language barriers** to their education because of a lack of appropriate language support.
- Many of our BIPOC students with IEPs **do not receive the services they are entitled to**, and in some cases, this lack of support has resulted in physical harm.
- Bureaucratic decisions are made at high levels **without our students' interests in mind**, such as assigning three elementary students from the same family to three different schools because of “enrollment” or “transportation” with no further explanation or recourse.
- When we have a problem, **we don't know where to turn**, and we can never be sure that what we've heard from one staff member will be honored by others in the system.

We have been told that SPS prioritizes authentic engagement with families to address problems like these, but that has not been our experience. The burden has usually been placed on our families to try to fit into existing ways to engage with the system, such as going to school board meetings or “drive-by” engagements in times of crisis. These engagement methods are mostly inaccessible for our communities, whether because of language barriers, transportation or work hour barriers, or just the failure to develop **the foundation of trust and accountability that would make these engagements meaningful.**

We are encouraged by your extensive background working in leadership in diverse school districts. We hope to develop a productive and regular working relationship with you to address these ongoing issues of access and trust so that all of our students can thrive. Our Family Navigators along with SESEC would like to invite you to join one of our solidarity sessions with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Those sessions are rich in cross-cultural learning, collective wisdom and opportunity to support one another. **Please let us know an evening in the next few weeks that works for you so we can organize the families we serve to welcome you for an opportunity to listen and learn.**

In partnership,

[Signed]