

Good morning,

My name is Doug Bundy and I have been a part of the Beaverton School District since I was six years old. I have been a certified teacher for 18 years, and I currently have two children who attend the district. Through the eyes of my children I see many of the wondrous things I remember from school as a child, like the commitment of a teacher who places a perfect book in the hands of an eager reader. Through the eyes of my children I also see something I do not remember from my own childhood: a seemingly unending, unknowable economic landscape that creates chaos as it rides slightly behind the often dramatic swings of the larger economy. I am here today to share two stories that I hope will give you some insight into the experience of teachers and students as we navigate this current reality. In the end I want to ask for something, and I want you to say yes.

The first story is about teaching

Three years ago, reeling from the effects of the economic downturn which rocked so many districts, and after several consecutive years of already brutal financial cutbacks, the Beaverton School District took extraordinary measures. Whole programs and hundreds of positions were cut. The district endeavored to save as many jobs as possible, but nearly 400 teachers were transferred or otherwise displaced. Not one of our 51 schools stayed intact. Many programs that were the hearts of schools and communities disappeared. Teachers found themselves teaching ages with whom they had no experience, and/or teaching subject areas that they may have been licensed for, but had no business teaching. Students saw class sizes surge into the 50s in some cases in the high schools, and in the 40s at the elementary level.

Although we are grateful for the recent efforts and additional funding from the state level, it has taken a local option levy and a bond passage to bring about even the hope of a positive recovery from this catastrophe in Beaverton. It will take years to bring about healing in many places, and although many teachers have returned to much better fit positions, it will take many more years to try to regain momentum that has been lost during this time. Without the generous support of our community, we would still be sideways in the wind, watching as waves of our kids navigate a completely unacceptable experience.

Although especially extreme, perhaps the most tragic thing is that this most recent financial episode is actually consistent with what I have experienced for most of my 18 year teaching career. Nearly every year of my career I have watched as principals tear their hair out from the stress of not knowing until the last minute how or if they can staff their buildings and support their students. Our students and community members look to us as we look vacantly at each other, unable to even answer simple questions about the directions of programs or teachers. The negative impacts for our students are palpable. As educators we expended so much of our human capital trying to hold things together that we stand the chance of losing our ability to look ahead and innovate.

We know that Beaverton is not the only district to have weathered very heavy seas over the past years. We also know that not every district is fortunate enough to be able to ask for and

receive funds through a levy to help to mitigate many of the negative impacts of the downturn. As fortunate as we are, we are braced for the reality that unless this funding schema evolves, we may well be right back at this terrifying place when the levy runs out.

The irony was not lost on me that our system has become so dysfunctional that we have reached back out to our local community to right the ship with local option levies, one of the very things that centralizing funding for schools via Measure five was supposed to avoid.

The second story is about learning

My daughter Zoe is currently in 5th grade and my son George is in 1st. The financial crisis happened when Zoe was in 3rd grade. As a direct result of the cuts she had 39 students in her math class. There was no time for questions, not enough bandwidth to make sure that kids were mastering material. Even the herculean efforts of her teacher were not enough to soften the impact of the negative perceptions that emerged in the mind of my child that year. In an era where we are so vitally aware of the importance of encouraging young women in math, Zoe, like so many of her classmates, lost traction in this crucial subject. She cried every single morning. She hated school.

It has taken the better part of two years to rebuild her confidence in math, which thankfully, she has. She also has advantages that not every kid gets - like parents who are teachers, and enough to eat. Not every kid is so lucky. Ten years ago students eligible for free and reduced lunch made up about 20% of Beaverton's school population. Now, ten years on, nearly 40% of our students qualify. One out of every 30 students in the District is homeless, and Beaverton has the highest number of homeless students in the state. Like so many districts, we are navigating the increasing needs and challenges that come from kids living in poverty. It is hard to imagine the impact that our society may feel years down the road as the fallout from this latest economic episode comes to bear on this already impacted population.

Providing high quality public education is a civic responsibility.

Providing every child equal access to this education is an ethical imperative.

Over the entirety of my teaching career I have watched teachers and administrators double down and work harder. Watched as community members let go of programs that give their children a reason to get up in the morning. Watched as our children are afforded less opportunity and less consistency, at the same time they are expected to do more academically. Watched as more of our kids are struggling to navigate poverty, and watched as we decry our state of financial affairs but just can't seem to get it together. Watched with great consternation when we know that what we are doing as a system is not meeting the needs of our kids.

Zoe and George are my children. And they are your children.

I want you to know that educators are a determined group. We are relentless on ourselves when it comes to getting better. We lose sleep when our students stumble. But we never

lose hope that what we do matters. To draw out, to educate, that's what education means...to bring out the potential inside every child. It is an aching, neverending pursuit.

This is what I am asking for:

I ask for your commitment to give us the financial stability we need so that we can move away from a state of constant triage. Much more than just keeping us afloat or moving our rankings up a few notches, this consistency will allow us to act and think anew, to innovate and provide every child with a future ready education. We ask for a solution that, as much as possible, shields our kids from the unpredictable swings in funding that have unfortunately become the norm.

I want to ask you if this solution will be in place by the time George reaches third grade.

And I want you to say yes.

Zoe and George are depending on us. Very soon we will all be depending on them.

Thank you for your time.