



## Community Voice

### KFEI Member Shares Context and Recording of BOE Public Comments Not Captured by KSD

On March 14, 2022 I spoke at the KSD Board Meeting to share public comments about my experience with KSD over the past few years. Technical difficulties resulted in the beginning of my comments not being recorded by KSD but **my complete audio recording is available [here](#)\***.

My goal in this short “speech” was to correct the record on a few things and to ask for accountability from our KSD leaders. Accountability and transparency are what I (and many others) have tried to work productively toward for almost **three years**. But countless meetings, emails, phone calls and even a professional mediation with parents and KSD leaders have resulted in almost no productive dialogue. It is hard to even explain how much of a wall I have experienced, and I know that my experience is not unique.

Some people in the community have asserted that parents like me are against KSD, have not tried to work with the staff, administrators and board members and do not support them, are narrow-minded and want our own beliefs pushed in the schools, and/or do not understand how education systems work. **Each of those claims is false.**

I have been very involved with the KSD schools and I am grateful for our Kirkwood community and experiences. I have served on numerous committees, in multiple volunteer capacities and as PTO president. I am familiar with the policies. I am familiar with the curriculum and serve on the Curriculum Review Council. I have attended or viewed every Board meeting for the past two+ years and many prior to that. I try to get to know my children’s teachers and I appreciate what they do. I do not say this to seek approval or validation, but to rebut the claim that I am uninvolved or uninformed.

My request since these conversations began under the previous superintendent has been for **neutrality** (I have even drawn pictures trying to explain to KSD leaders what that means; this is not about “sides”!), respect for **parental rights** and our roles in our children’s lives, **balance** and **age-appropriateness** when controversial issues are involved, **accountability** to policies and procedures, and **quality academics** for all.

I do not hate anyone. I do not want my personal views pushed on anyone. I do not want to ban books. I want the public schools to stay in their lane. I want the public schools to

follow the rules. I want the public schools to truly be for *everyone*. I have numerous friends and acquaintances who have pulled their kids from KSD or even moved out of this District because they felt they had no choice. Their experiences are heartbreaking. This is unacceptable for a public school.

Two key things I shared in my recent public comments are:

- 1) The superintendent had **tangible action items in September 2020** to look into concerns surrounding resource procedures, selection and availability in KSD. **This was not done.** Seventeen months later the discussion is finally happening, but now under the public guise of so-called book banning. This book banning narrative and claim are false. [Listen](#)\* for more context. This is just one example of the issues we have tried to discuss.
- 2) A troubling response has repeatedly been given when concerns about policy violations, or even potentially illegal practices, have been brought to the administration's attention. The superintendent and administrators have repeatedly said that they "need to hear about them from more people" in order to be willing to look into concerns. **This is a very irresponsible approach to leadership, particularly when children are involved.** If KSD is doing something wrong, it is the administrators' and board members' responsibility to look into it. They should not wait for a public uproar to warrant further consideration. If something is wrong (such as a policy violation or potentially illegal hiring practices), *it is wrong*. It doesn't matter how many people publicly state concern or express that they are upset by it. This is not about personal opinions or popularity.

With that context, I would also like to share about my experience and involvement with **Kirkwood for Educational Integrity ([KFEI.org](https://www.kfei.org))**. I am a part of the leadership of this group and I am proud of our work and efforts. There have been claims that we are transphobic, homophobic and/or racist or linked to other groups. We are none of those things, and if you explore the website with an open mind, you will hopefully realize that what is being called out is not any personal worldview, religion, lifestyle, etc. **It is KSD's mishandling and lack of transparency and accountability that KFEI is sharing.**

Many friends who know how exhausting and frustrating these past few years have been ask why we still have our kids in Kirkwood schools. It's because **there is so much good.** There is diversity, and opportunity, and community, and amazing staff members who know and care for our kids in ways we can never repay. We celebrate and appreciate the good. But we have asked for the wrong to be acknowledged and addressed, and if leaders cannot do that responsibly then they are not effective leaders.

I have heard from some that it is frustrating that names are not listed on [KFEI.org](https://kfei.org). This is not an effort to be sneaky. This is an effort to protect all. KFEI was introduced to the public by a parent at a Board meeting and we hosted a public meeting. We will have conversations with anybody who requests it. We are not trying to hide. And in response to questions about why there are not more identifiable details about which school, staff member, etc. certain accounts involve, it is because we are aiming to protect *all* individuals (administrators, teachers, staff members, parents, kids). Our goal is to work *with* the District toward productive change, not to cause damage to any individual's reputation.

If you've read this far and have 3 minutes to give, take a listen to my recent public comments [here](#)\*. And please consider this: if you are not concerned about the District being held accountable to procedures, policies and laws because the leaders are conveniently in line with your personal beliefs, are you going to be okay with what might happen if the leadership balance shifts to a "side" with which you do not align? Public schools should be for everyone. Neutrality and balance are essential in order for that to be achieved. The Board and Administration must be held accountable and lead responsibly.

Thank you for your time in reading this and for your commitment to Kirkwood. Kirkwood is a wonderful community, and I know that together we can build on KSD's strengths and address its weaknesses in a productive way that helps all children thrive.

*\*The audio recording of the referenced Board meeting public comment is available [here](#). Mobile users may need to click "view" rather than "download" after clicking on the link.*

*The printed notes are available [here](#) or below the KSD YouTube recording of the meeting [here](#).*

All examples and narratives that KFEI shares are **verified**.

If you would like to submit an experience or resource that you think the KSD community should be aware of please do so [here](#).

Sources of examples will be protected as confidential, but all accounts must be fully verified and supported by documentation and/or firsthand experience. The integrity of this effort is critical and KFEI reserves the right to use discretion when choosing what to share.