

Good evening School Board members and Dr. Waltz. My name is Bruce Smith and my address is on file with the clerk.

Members of the School Board. I know that some of you have worked in Public Schools in Prince William, but most of you have not. So, I thought it might be helpful to reflect on my experience in the classroom.

Thinking about social studies, which I taught in middle and high school, I am reminded why I switched to teaching reading. In reading classes, I had professional literature and state regulations mandating small classes. That way my time and attention could be focused on teaching an essential skill to students who most needed it.

Since retiring, I have visited the classrooms of several excellent social studies and English teachers whose teaching was frustrated by overcrowded classes. They had designed excellent, inter-active lessons over the summer. Students could turn their desks to work with each other in small groups so the teacher could move between them to work with each group. But that had to go.

When class sizes reached 30, 32, 34, or more, students desks were so tightly squeezed that the teacher was stranded in front of the room. Students who need extra help might get it from another student, or they might just sit there and hope no-body notices how far behind they are. There are many ways for students to hide in a such a classroom and very little teachers can do to help such students when the teacher can't get close to them.

Overcrowding classes also means that teachers have more work to do after school and at home, correcting and commenting on student work. Adding just two more students per class gives a teacher about 14 more papers to grade each night. At just five minutes per student, more than an hour added at home every time an assignment is given.

While bringing class sizes down to a level that will maximize teacher effectiveness while minimizing teacher burnout will take some time, other changes can take place more quickly... Changes like eliminating excessive before and after school meetings and not taking teachers' personal lunch times with PLCs or covering other classes.

And stop requiring teachers to stay late supervising students because buses are late. Pay bus drivers more, and more drivers will be available when they are needed at schools.

The shortage of teachers, **bus drivers**, or other employees in public schools in Prince William County should not be a mystery. The pay and working conditions just aren't worth it when workers can find plenty of less demanding work around here at decent wages, forty hours a week, and several weeks of vacation with nights and weekends for ourselves and our families.

A few years ago, after being challenged by a neighbor, I added up all my after school hours to see how long it would take to cover the time we had

away from the classroom in the summer. That time was covered by mid October.

Prince William County has dug a pretty deep hole. The Board has a daunting job trying to figure out where to put all of our students... in a way that will allow as many students as possible to succeed and not drive employees away from work in public schools. **This begins with treating all employees with respect, value, and justice. It's About Time PWCS leadership improves the situation for our employees and students.**