

In a world focused on attacking, criticizing, and assuming the worst in everything, it is time **we** took a minute to say thanks to the hard work and significant accomplishments of our very own Washoe County School District. We may be influenced by the caustic nature of a vocal minority using half-truths and misinformation, or the media, typically focused on shortcomings rather than good news. We may even mistakenly believe that what is happening in other school districts is also happening here. Instead, we should be proud of our district and acknowledge the work they are doing to prepare our kids for the future.

WCSD is better than you think and better than most. You may hear about a small number of sign-carrying protestors at school board meetings, or missteps by the superintendent or school board members rather than the plethora of good news that emanates from our district. What you don't hear is that, according to Niche.com, "Washoe County School District is an **above average**, public school district located in Reno." (Rating of B+ and top 20% of the districts nationally).

Some positive things you may not know about WCSD. Our graduation rate was at the national average of 86% in 2019 and up dramatically from 62% in 2010. In 2020, WCSD **ranked 8th in the nation** for Advanced Placement performance, according to the 2020 College Board AP Cohort Data report. Recently Reed High School science teacher Leigh Metcalfe and student Abbygail Nerger were recognized by the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) for excellence in teaching and learning computing. Additionally, WCSD "We the People Teams" ranked third (Reno High) and eighth (Incline High) **in the nation** by the Center for Civic Education, promoting learning about the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Again, plenty of good news despite the challenges.

Speaking of Challenges - adequate funding is at the top of the list. Hard to believe our district has had so much success, despite **nearly 30% less in per-pupil funding** than the national average and more than \$60M in budget cuts over the last three years. According to the National Education Association, Nevada has the worst student-to-teacher ratio in the country and the 3rd worst per/pupil teacher salaries in the U.S. (NEA). The administration of WCSD is just 3.47 per 1,000 students, compared to the national average 40% higher at 4.84/1,000. Add to this over 3,000 homeless students, the teacher and now bus driver shortages, and a pandemic; you wonder how they successfully educate more than 62,000 of our students every school day.

Our economic success is due in part to the leadership of our district. We must also be grateful for the way WCSD managed the pandemic. In September 2020, the district went back to in-person teaching for elementary schools, with hybrid teaching for middle and high school students. This was six months after the pandemic started, long before vaccines, and almost a year before other states even considered in-person teaching. Our district valued student education, and our teacher's union put kids ahead of pandemic fears, unlike other unions across the country. Having our kids in school meant that parents could go to work in person. Having employees available to work in person was critical for businesses like hospitals, manufacturing, and distribution companies, a significant portion of our economy.

So, let's take a moment to say thanks! Over 8,000 WCSD teachers and staff at 110 schools, work every day, underpaid, under-resourced, and underappreciated. They are working tirelessly in a challenging environment, especially during the pandemic, to educate our kids and our future workforce. We can do more by learning more about the district's challenges and successes, while being more tolerant and understanding of their shortcomings. At some point, we need to demand better funding for education

Thank You – Washoe County School District!

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at every level, but in the meantime, let us be thankful and show our appreciation to everyone involved in WCSD. WCSD is our district, our kids, and our schools. Thank you, WCSD!