

## Public Comments Speaker Transcript March 9,2022

1. Jim Duncan- I am here to encourage our community members to show up on Friday for the 4 City Manager candidates session to meet and greet at the O'Brien Community Center at 6 pm.
2. Will Andrews-I am a high school teacher and member of the WEA; I've taught in the district since 2005 and held many different roles during my tenure in the district. I have been an IA, building sub, alternative program director, and middle school social studies teacher. I am currently one of 2 teachers in the ilab at this point. The ilab is a program I helped design, develop and implement over the last 8 years. The ilab is a very intricate program and needs 2 teachers to be successful. One teacher provides high quality teaching in the classroom and one teacher travels with students to internships, interviews with community members. I am in my third year as senior advisor, helping seniors get ready for graduation, college and post high school life. My license might just say I am just a social studies teacher in the high school, but in reality I am much more than that. In 2005, I chose to do my student teaching at Winooski because I loved what the school district stood for. It was a place filled with scrappy students and teachers all with an underdog attitude that I connected with. We were given the flexibility to be creative and thoughtful, take chances and push limits of what a traditional education looked like. Through the years of working in Winooski, I became one of those scrappy educators. Three weeks ago, I learned my position in the district would be eliminated, I was gutted. The last couple of weeks, I have felt disrespected, scared and anxious, and just straight up exhausted. I thought I would continue to teach here for much longer; it's hard to accept that won't be a reality anymore. I've learned a lot over the past couple of weeks; I have learned the students I work with care a lot about me, my colleagues are willing to fight for my job, and take time out of their busy lives to support a colleague in need. I fear the elimination of my position will be the first of a series of events that will change how the school operates, will have a negative effect on our students and alienate our already fragile staff. This statement has been hard for me to write and clearly hard for me to say, and I might not have said all that I wanted to. If you have questions for me or want to talk more, you know where to find me, I'm the guy saying hello to every student who walks by my classroom.
3. Eliza Willis-I am an eighth grader at Winooski. I am here to talk about the decision to cut the ilab teacher, Mr. Andrews. It came to my attention only Friday night of the principals and Sean's decision to cut the ilab teacher, Mr. Andrews and my math teacher, Mr. Duggan. By making this decision, they are taking away the Winooski high school and middle school students' chance at a good education. An education where we learn and focus on. We need more teachers, not less. When I learned about this decision, I wanted to protect and sit in. Me and some other students got the majority of the middle and high school to sit in. One major question I had was, "Why aren't they including students in this discussion, especially when it affects us most?" The ilab is most critical in the school. I was so excited to go to ilab in 9th grade to learn spanish, especially when it's a class where I can take another language besides french. The ilab will also give me the opportunity to take other classes not offered at Winooski and catch up on work from other classes. I don't understand why we decided to cut math, especially when it's not Winooski's strong suit. Mr. Duggan has been one of the best math teachers I have had in my time at Winooski. He's not just a math teacher, he also does Chill, which is a snowboard opportunity for students. I like how one student at the sit-in put it: "his teaching is organic, he makes real connections with us. He's definitely more than a teacher to all of his students." When

you go to the WSD website, there are videos of students saying Winooski listens to their students, how Winooski has student representatives that go to school board meetings. An alumni said Winooski is very student led and are able to advocate for ourselves here. She also said students are able to make changes here. Right now, there isn't a student representative on the school board and when students force their opinions against the people in power, we are silenced and ignored. I believe the only way to have a student centered school is to reverse the decision to cut Mr. Andrews and Mr. Duggan, along with keeping the ilab open and well funded for the foreseeable future. This fight is not over until it's over.

4. Fayth White-I am a 9th grader at Winooski high school. I would like to comment about the school's decision to eliminate two teaching positions, specifically to let go of a beloved teacher, Will Andrews. I, along with many other students, feel this decision was not made in the best interest of the students. This decision was thought out over a long period of time and student voice was never taken into consideration. Our education is in the hands of people who make decisions based on budget and policy instead of ethics and values. I understand this decision was not an easy one, but it will make more challenges for students who depend on ilab as a graduation requirement. Will is a teacher who has lasting impacts on all students he comes across, he makes class a safe space and teaches in a way most classrooms can't offer. There are already so many staff shortages this year and the students felt the effects of it. This pandemic is causing a lot of inconsistencies in the school in the past two years. Students need the consistency of stable classrooms and teachers they trust. So losing Will raises many concerns; one being what does the future of the ilab look like with one teacher. In addition, what does the budget look like to support students in the ilab in the coming years? These are only a few questions myself and many others have on the situation. When students brought in a sit in, it was called civil disobedience. If students are left out of important decisions involving the future of their education, we should have the right to question those making those decisions without having to repair or accept consequences. So my question is, "How does Winooski school plan to support students in creating effective change in a positive way for students to be heard moving forward?" To conclude my statement, letting go of Will is a huge mistake and is detrimental to our learning and if students have to consider the impact of standing up for their education, when will the adults in power consider that the decisions they make affect students in a way they have not yet seem to understand.
5. Rachel Howes-Hello, my name is Rachel Howes and I am a high school science and iLab teacher in the Winooski School District. I have been in the field of education since 2005 and enjoyed a myriad of opportunities working with young people from Vermont to California. My journey at Winooski began in 2018 as I returned from living and teaching in the Bay Area. Winooski was THE school district I was most curious about due to its commitment to providing an education that was relevant, meaningful, and flexible to each student. At the time, Winooski embraced student voice and choice and allowed students to become excited about topics of their choosing, facilitators of their own learning, and stewards within our community. However, in the small time in which I have been here, this guiding belief has been eroded through administrative decisions which have lacked the voices of stakeholders and chipped away at the very fabric of our proficiency based system. To explore the idea of personalized learning, I would like to begin with the iLab. The iLab is Winooski High School's personalized learning lab that can serve every student in grades 9-12. It is a place where students can study their

passions, design projects that engage and excite them, and where learning can take place outside the walls of a classroom. It is also a place for students to be challenged, to take courses they do not have access to through CCV or online high school - courses such as AP Literature, Chemistry, and Anatomy and Physiology. Additionally, the iLab is a place for students who need a bit more time and/or support to demonstrate proficiency, or finish a capstone project. It is a place for work-based learning opportunities like internships and job shadows. I believe it imperative to highlight that the iLab's equity-centered approach only works if there are two or more teachers supporting the work and students. While I take students on a site visit to the Generator, an interview with a professor at Champlain college, or an observation at a local salon my co-teacher provides high quality instruction in the classroom. Until I heard about the RIFs, I thought it was a place that fully embodied the vision of our district. By cutting a full FTE from the iLab, the administration is cutting this program in half. With such a decision, the district is clearly indicating to students and families that they do not support them in those endeavors. That message is directly out of line with the ends statement as well as our school's vision. Cutting two student-facing positions in no way is in the best interest of our students or our learning community. Thank you for listening and thank you for your time this evening.

6. Lindsey Cox- I started at Winooski in 2012 as the project coordinator for the partnership for change. In 2016, I joined the high school faculty full time as an ilab teacher and advisor coordinator. I live in Colchester, am a mother of a 2nd grader, and have been a member of the Colchester school board for the past 8.5 years. I have so much to share with you tonight: As a teacher, 1. I want to share with you how devastating these RIF's will be to the student's in our district and to the equity-centered, innovative programs we have developed. 2. I really want to tell you about the ilab, the progress we have made, the student's we support, and their projects. There are so many cool things students are doing. I invite you to join us and see for yourself anytime. 3. I also want to explain how confusing it is to be running a program that gets touted as an example of the innovative work of the district and yet, this year, only received 10% of it's previous year's operating budget and is now losing an entire position cutting the ilab teaching staff from 1.9 FTE to .9...which means there is not even 1 full position dedicated to keeping the ilab running for our students. As someone intimately involved in the change work: 4. I wish I had more time to describe the robust stakeholder process we went through in the beginning years to develop the vision for our students, The ENDS statement s one artifact of that work, but so are the Graduate Expectations, Graduate Proficiencies, and the personalized and proficiency based approach to teaching in our classrooms. 5. I want to talk to you about that vision work, specifically the GX's and GP's, have been slowly dismantled over the past 2 years by an insular and non-transparent administrative leadership team that works without sharing processes, timelines, or garnering authentic input, feedback, or collaboration from those impacted by their decisions. And, as a fellow board member: 6. I want to thank you for your service. I know it is not easy to sit in those seats. I deeply appreciate your commitment to our school and community. I also know first hand that the information you receive and make decisions based off of, comes mainly through the lens of the superintendent. I believe the information you received regarding the RIF's to be incomplete, disingenuous, and the true impact have been hidden from you. 7. And while the policy governance structure has many benefits, sometimes, it can be a barrier to getting an accurate picture of the impact of your fiscal decisions. 8. The budgets you put forth to the community are supposed to be a reflection of our values as a school. I hope you

continue to gather additional stakeholder input on these matters, review your fiscal decisions, and ensure that the work you are doing truly supports the vision of our district's future. Thank you for listening.

7. John McKelvy- Dear School Board Members, Firstly, thank you for letting me speak today. I'm going to begin with a brief introduction of my own role and history in the district. (I promise it's relevant). I've been a social studies teacher here in Winooski since 2008. In terms of longevity, that puts me just behind Marc McQuinn, who teaches US History and Government, and just in front of Will Andrews. I have taught civics, world history, cross-cultural engagement, and many other disciplines that fall under the category of "Social Studies," and I take pride in that body of work. I mention my background because the professed reason for terminating Will's position is this: we were told we don't need a third "Social Studies" teacher in the High School. To be blunt, this justification is absurd. Although Will holds a Social Studies endorsement, his professional role is neither mine, nor Marc's. The Ilab meets a need for a nontraditional space where students can follow their own interests on the path to graduation. Ilab Instruction is multi-disciplinary by design. Therefore, the qualifications to teach in the ilab bear no logical relationship to any particular endorsement area. Will Andrews pioneered the Ilab. He put in the hard work to make the Ilab not only a success, but the crown jewel of our "flexible pathways" to graduation. To terminate Will's position because he happens to hold the same license as myself makes no sense whatsoever. This proposal directly contradicts our goals as a district in an arbitrary and senseless manner. I urge the board to reject our superintendent's decision, to allocate funds we already have to fully support the Ilab with two full time positions, and to honor the vision we have held since embarking on school reform a decade ago. If we value truly transferable skills, especially critical thinking, we owe our students nothing less.
8. Andrea Wheeland-My name is Andrea Wheeland. I am a middle school ML teacher of 19 years (16 here in Winooski), a Winooski resident, a parent of a 6th grade and 8th grade student and member of the WEA. Winooski is a place that consistently says yes to the needs of our community. School and city budgets have passed on the first attempt for 15 years in a row. We have a history of working collaboratively to solve problems as they arrive. This is why I was shocked to find that our district's budget proposal involved the cutting of two student-facing positions. The iLab has been a place where many students have found success outside of the traditional classroom and community-based and proficiency- based learning has made huge strides. Our math department is already underfunded and under-resourced and lacks an interventionist to work directly with students, a request made by on the ground faculty for many years running, despite an influx of federal dollars meant specifically to boost student performance and prevent staff shortages. If, at this time, there is the type of budget crisis that would suggest a drastic move such as cutting two teaching positions, we as a school community have not been informed or asked to be flexible in any other ways. In the past, faculty and community were an integral part of the budget process and the need to eliminate positions were handled in a collaborative and solemn manner. In this case, there has been, at the time of this writing, no administrative communication to faculty, families or students about the need for or impacts of these cuts. I would suggest the administration look at other line items in our budget and consider the alternative options put forth by the WEA to save these two valuable positions. The Ilab in particular came into being through a highly collaborative process of community and student engagement. The transformational work we've championed over the years only

happened because the administration was willing to take risks and engage collaboratively with multiple stakeholders to do what is right for all learners. Unilaterally cutting positions when the district is receiving millions of dollars in relief funds is a rebuke of that good faith effort and it is indicative of the type of decision-making process that exists now: where very few have any input or say other than those at the top. This is in direct opposition of the Board's ends statement. As a parent, I think about my own WMS 8th grade student, who tends to struggle with the "why" of traditional school. We have always encouraged him that the education received in Winooski will serve him well in whatever field he chooses and he has looked forward to engaging in iLab in a more in depth way than is offered in middle school. If the high school is shifting away from the flexible, student-centered learning it is known for in the region and will not have a rigorous, fully-staffed math program, parents need to be aware of this to effectively evaluate programming with and for their learners, such as school choice. For my family and me, living and working in Winooski has been an intentional choice because of the community we have found and the values it represents. The decision to eliminate two teaching positions especially at a time when student need is at its highest feels contrary to the mission and the vision the board holds stewardship over. I am certain you can find the time and collective will to right this wrong. Thank you for listening.

9. Andrea Boon-My name is Andrea Boon. I am a middle school math teacher and a member of the WEA. I am also a parent and resident in the city of Winooski. This is my 7th year teaching at Winooski Middle School. The reason I choose to continue to work in Winooski is because of the strong relationships I have formed with our students, and the flexibility and resiliency of my colleagues. I have intentionally chosen to teach in Winooski as a math teacher, despite teaching in an under-resourced department, and despite earning lower wages and accruing less sick time than other school districts in Chittenden County. The decision to stay has very real financial impacts on my family but every year, I choose to stay because WSD and this school board value the same things that I value - forming strong relationships with students, seeing and valuing students as individuals, and finding creative ways to engage students in their education. I am not alone in this decision; every educator that works in this district is here because they are passionate and dedicated to this community. After the stress of the last few years, I was shocked to find out that our district's budget proposal included cutting two full time student facing positions. Students often find the most success in classes like iLab - where we can create personalized learning experiences and connect students to the community. We are also severely lacking resources in Math - we do not and have not had a math interventionist in the middle school in my entire 7 years of teaching here. To cut a student facing position from this department is short sighted and is not in line with our shared vision. In addition, funding and evaluation assessment for special education is changing next school year. Under Act 173, legally, our district will need to focus on building a strong multi tiered system of supports to help our students. We will need to be prepared to offer a layered system of instruction, including strong classroom level instruction, specialized instruction in math and reading, and interventions. To cut resources from departments when we should be actually building up capacity for interventions does not serve our students. To say that eliminating two student facing positions is the only option to reduce spending in our district is misleading. Our own union has proposed multiple other pathways to meet the budgetary needs without losing our dedicated teachers and without impacting our students' experience. Please consider how your budget,

boosted by millions of dollars of relief funds, can reflect the true meaning of the board's mission and vision for this school district. As a community member, I have reached out to the board many times over the last couple years. I have found that this current board is responsive, communicative, and supportive of our concerns. I am hopeful that you, as the board, having the opportunity to hear other perspectives surrounding this short sighted, and frankly, unilateral decision, will help change the outcome and right this wrong. Thank you.

10. Maeve Poleman-My name is Maeve Poleman. I am a math teacher at Winooski Middle and High School and a member of the WEA. Last year Will Andrews and I co-taught a pod of 11 seniors. Will was the greatest role model that I, a first year teacher, could have asked for. He helped me connect with students, encouraged me to try new teaching ideas with confidence, and he ENSURED that I took care of myself and protected my time and energy. Most importantly, he made sure that we put our students first, every day. Will and I were able to form incredible connections with our students BECAUSE there were two of us. We could capitalize on our differences and simultaneously teach different content and meet different needs. Will could teach civics and talk sports and make music with the students, then take the antsy ones outside while I provided math instruction and fresh eyes on college essays. Alone, the job would have been a failed juggling act. Together, we were a consistent and knowledgeable support system in a tumultuous time. Cutting Will's I-Lab position in the high school and leaving the program with one solo teacher would mean less opportunities for our students to connect with adults in these unique, meaningful ways that center around student interest. That, to me, is clearly the LAST thing that our students need. This year, I teach and co-teach three different levels of multilingual math, catering specifically to the strengths and needs of our students who have had interrupted and varied math experiences. The small class sizes allow us to differentiate our instruction and provide students opportunities to cook meals, shop at thrift stores, create sports fields, and play games through the math they are learning. Cutting a math position would likely mean bigger class sizes and an even greater spectrum of student need than we already have, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Our students need more math intervention and specialization, more math educators in each room, not less. In the past two years, my students, colleagues, and I have benefitted immensely from two unique educational situations: small, personalized classes and co-teaching. If our school eliminates two teaching positions, both of these beneficial situations are endangered. I find it so disheartening that at a time when our students need the most support we can possibly provide, we are taking it away. The WEA stands together behind the students, staff, and the vision of our school. We hope the board still believes in this vision, too. Thank you.
11. Luke Dorfman-Hello everyone. I am Luke Dorfman, a math teacher at Winooski High School and a 2019 Rowland Fellow. My time at Winooski over the past five years has transformed my practice and perspective as an educator, and the soul of Winooski's multicultural community continues to inspire, challenge, and motivate me. I am here to speak with you tonight out of my love and care for this community. I hope I can help you better understand the climate and needs in our school. The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted teaching and learning, and the Capital Project's construction has **not** made it any more manageable. The cumulative effects of unpredictable absences, extended school closures, and general weariness and exhaustion from living through a global pandemic – in addition to the banging and jackhammering, alarm testing, leaky roofs, makeshift breezeways, and frequent switching of classrooms – have taken a

significant toll. Even more, the school has made major changes and shifted priorities to cope with them. Two years ago, we upended our system to transition to remote learning. Last year, we transformed again into a hybrid model, which included a large reduction in math instruction. A colleague and I were told to serve the math needs for the entire high school on a total of 1.5 FTE. We had to make critical decisions about who received direct instruction and who had to manage with asynchronous feedback. This year, our return to in-person learning has been punctuated by the noise and imposition of construction. I started teaching in an overcrowded and deafening gym, and I have since moved between five different classrooms. As a staff member, I have felt disoriented, overwhelmed, and burnt out. Now imagine the impact these conditions have had on the learning and wellbeing of students. In the math department, we have seen a stretching of student needs to an extent we have never experienced before. I was shocked to hear about the proposed cut to two student-facing positions, including one in math – especially knowing the district has received over \$11 million in federal COVID-relief funds intended specifically to manage the challenges amplified by the pandemic. The district has the responsibility to support students and staff recover and heal from the tumult of the past two years. Any decision to do otherwise is out-of-touch with the reality of our school and places undue burden on the extraordinary resilience of our community. I ask that you review your budget and ensure it reflects the values and needs of our school community. And I ask that you examine the ways you seek input and feedback that guide your policymaking. It is important you hear from those most impacted by your decisions – those who are often furthest from power. Reflect on how and why decisions are made, and consider what it looks like to build relational trust. My Rowland Fellowship aimed to help our school create structures for these modes and mindsets of Liberatory Design, and my sincere hope is that you can do your part to realize a more inclusive and just future for our school community. Thank you for listening.

12. Tom Payeur-Hello Winooski School Board. I am Tom Payeur, a math teacher and coach in our middle and high school, a member of the Winooski Education Association, and the 2019 Vermont Teacher of the Year - a reward and recognition that I never would have received had I not been encouraged, supported, and invested in by the exceptional Winooski learning community. I began teaching in Winooski ten years ago, fresh out of grad school and inspired by Winooski's newfound purpose in the Nellie-Mae Grant, now codified in the Board's mission statement to ensure that all "WSD students will lead healthy, productive, and successful lives and engage with their local and global community." It was a truly energizing time bringing that mission to life through frequent collaboration between teachers, students, parents, board members, and community members. For years we agreed to take novel risks together, resulting in a robust personalized and proficiency-based system guided by our locally developed Graduation Expectations and Proficiencies, championed by the instructional practices in our iLab and math department - both of which this Board has agreed to cut positions from in the upcoming school year through the guidance of your superintendent. There was agreement from the start that this journey would not be perfect. It would take time, it would result in failures, but through committed effort we would rise beyond the traditional top-down model of directing what and how we teach our youth and enter into an enlightened place of true collaboration with all stake-holders. Cutting two vital positions - one an educator of 16 years with a distinctly unique ability to bring out individual students' true passions, another an eager, new-to-the-district educator who sees hope and opportunity in our approach to math - cutting these two positions,

or any student-facing positions, as we crawl our way out of a pandemic is ill-informed, unwise, and lacks creativity. I am deeply concerned that this is a final step in a steady dismantling of open communication and good faith that our district once championed. I fear you have not been engaged in an honest conversation about how such a massive disruption to learning will be something we will have to grapple with for years to come. Put simply, more needs plus less teachers equals a decaying and destruction of everything we have grown to date. I heard the President of the United States last Tuesday when he told us all that relief funds should be used to retain and attract high quality teachers. You have a responsibility to dig deeply into the decisions being made about this influx of millions of dollars, to question who and how and why they were made. You have a responsibility to advocate for and uphold the Ends Statement of this district through your budgeting and policy review. You have a responsibility to ensure that student needs are met. My sincere hope is that you are able to, in as quickly and efficiently a manner, reassess the budget that has been passed and find space for these vital roles to exist next year. My sincere hope is that you once again find it within your power to engage multiple stakeholders to bring to light a future that is equitable and just for the Winooski learning community. Thank you for listening

13. David McNally-Good evening. My name is David McNally. I am a high school science teacher and WEA member. I am here tonight to talk about the financial investments in the Winooski School District and the high school in particular. In the 8 years I have been here, there has been a wide range of initiatives, investments, and challenges. From changing educational strategies, shifting educational computer systems, to the Covid pandemic, to a construction project...it is easy to get lost in the turbulence, and arguably we have all been somewhat traumatized by all of this chaos. One thing, however, has not changed. That is the dedication of staff and their support to the needs of our students and by extension the families of Winooski. I am concerned about the rapid expansion of expenditures in the District. Teachers are not the only, or most valid voice by any means in the discussion about allocation of resources, but we do know the students very well. By this I mean, we have taught them, supported them, and helped them through their crises. We are on the front lines of the reality of where our youth are in Winooski and in society. When you read about teachers considering retiring, burnout, or exhaustion - know that this too is real in Winooski. Teachers have stepped up to sub for one another, to support administration, to lead at times where there was a need. In this turbulent time, I would just ask that you seriously consider what are the real priorities to fund at the high school. How do we best support and educate our students? We wear shirts with the slogan "Winooski Strong" and the emblem of joined hands in a circle. By letting go of 2 key staff - one in our only personalized learning program, and the other in the core academic area of math - we would be making Winooski less strong in my opinion. Let's work hand in hand to keep the circle unbroken and strong. Otherwise, I think it sends a chilling message to all staff during a transitional time in this school's evolution.
14. Brent Litterer My name is Brent Litterer. I am a high school teacher and a member of the WEA. Last year, the Hybrid COVID year, changed my life. During this chaotic, stressful year, I was asked to shepherd a room full of seniors to graduation. I spent the year supporting students with math and English, breakups and COVID, colleges and careers. While this all day, single room approach to learning might seem unconventional, it is quintessential WInooski: small, individualized, student focused, and compassionate. At Winooski we know that relationships



and flexibility are the key to helping students meet the district's promise of career and college readiness. As a result of my experience last year, along with a colleague, I received a Rowland Fellowship to design more opportunities for students to find a place in this school that fits who and where they are. This program was supposed to be another way to provide a quality education, complementing our existing proficiency-based classrooms, our quality math and reading interventions, and our innovative iLab. All of the modes of instruction matter if we are truly striving to make good on the district's promise.. With this vision in mind, it's disorienting and demoralizing to think that we would eliminate an iLab position and a math position. These positions help students directly, meeting them where they are, providing the necessary skills for students to explore their passions in order to be career and college ready, fulfilling the district's promise. Cutting teachers harms students. In a time when we know we need more teachers to make up the gaps from COVID, when we need more teachers to maximize their relationships with students, and when we need to be more creative to help students meet their goals, the administration is choosing to offer less. The board has been misled because we have the money to retain these positions. Though we have a 7 million dollar grant, designed to support students and retain teachers, the administration is still choosing to cut teachers. Though we have personnel leaving the district who do not need to be replaced, the administration is still choosing to cut teachers, thus harming students. I urge the School Board and administration to use the Esser III funds and the unfilled positions in our school to restore the cut positions. The WEA stands together behind the students, staff, and the vision of our school. Thank you.

15. Annie Schnieder-Hi, my name is Annie Schneider. I'm a teacher at Winooski High School and a proud member of the WEA. All is not right in the Winooski School District. I'm not talking about the pandemic and how exhausted and full of grief we all are. I'm not talking about the endless construction that has disrupted learning and created an unstable environment in a time when we all need stability. When I say all is not right, I'm talking about a culture where teachers and students are isolated from information, where we are not being taken care of or taken into account by our administration, and where we, who are desperately trying to hold this school together, are given no way to have our voices heard or our concerns attended to. We are here today to have our voices heard because we have no other option. This RIF of our two teachers is the tip of the iceberg of issues that you aren't aware of. There are countless reasons why you need to reconsider these RIFs, but the main one is that you have not been given all the information. If you listen to us, you will hear that all is not right in the Winooski School District. You have been misled, and you do not understand the impact that losing more teachers will have on our community. This year, I have been in a position where I was asked to lead a pilot program, with another staff member. The staff member quit early in the year but the position was never posted. The administration told me that there is a worker shortage and that no one would apply if it was posted. This resulted in some of that employee's responsibilities being shifted to me, despite never explicitly being told this. I have asked "Is this something that I am supposed to do now? I don't know how to do this." and have been given no direct answer, but left to do the work if I want my students to succeed. I am telling you this because I am not alone in this. Many of us take on work that is not part of our job responsibilities simply because we love our students and our community, and we want to make this school the best it can be. All of the staff members I work with at Winooski go above and beyond every single day. It is unconscionable to eliminate any teaching positions at a time when our students really need, really deserve, more

staff and more support. By eliminating these positions, you are really asking all the remaining staff to take on even more, and we are already stretched to the breaking point and don't have much more we can give.. As a teaching community and a larger community, our school relies on all of us as the fabric that holds us together and makes it possible for students to graduate Winooski and become successful. Our jobs are the embodiment of this board's mission and vision statements to reduce our numbers is to reduce the reality of what you are trying to uphold. I urge you today to rethink these RIFS and retain the two teaching positions and to rethink the process that brought you to this point. It is an important thing you can do to keep our community intact as we struggle to keep our students healthy, safe, and learning new things every day. We are here for the students....we need you to be here for us. All is not right in Winooski, and you can make it better. Thank you

16. Nellie Maley-My name is Nellie Maley and I am a multilingual teacher in the high school and a member of the WEA for the last 10 years. This past year has brought so much uncertainty in our professional and personal lives, yet one constant has been steadfast, the commitment to students among our collective community. A few weeks ago this was highlighted in a class activity. Our class was doing an introduction to storytelling and students created prompts and then randomly chose one to write freely about. One of the student generated prompts was "One good thing about Covid..." The responses all went something like this- One good thing about Covid was the teachers reaching out and helping me. The students cited teachers going above and beyond to reach out and check in with every student's well-being during the crisis. This did not come as a surprise to me because, This is Winooski. We have empathetic, motivated educators that go above and beyond because we know that in order for students to be successful they need to feel cared for and have trusted adults in their academic sphere. The emphasis on community and student centered learning is clearly outlined in our mission and vision and that is why when I discovered that the plan for next year was to cut two educators with direct student contact, I was in disbelief. It just did not make any sense to me. At a time when we know students are struggling socially and academically, why would we remove two student facing positions? Winooski is not like other schools. Once you have a teacher, that teacher is an advocate for you for the rest of your high school experience. Our small size allows for this. We see each other in the hallways, pop in to other classrooms to check on students, reach out to current teachers to ensure students are still on track for success. For many years the administration supported and encouraged this environment, engaged in the innovation that brought this to life by searching for what worked best for our students and building upon those successes. But now, cutting two positions so suddenly when millions of dollars are flowing our way seems to go against everything we have always done so well here. I ask you to reconsider taking away these trusted adults. As an educator and a parent, I know consistency and nurturing can go a long way. The educators at Winooski excel in these two categories. On a final note, we pledge equity for our students, but this is going in the opposite direction. This is the time when our students need the most support to get prepared for life outside of this school. We are in a unique financial situation where it is not necessary to cut positions and I would urge you to reconsider taking away educators whose job it is to provide a caring, supportive and rigorous learning experience.
17. Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver-My name is Caitlin MacLeod-Bluver. I am the reading specialist at the high school and member of the Winooski Education Association. I have taught in Boston,

Alaska, and chose to teach in Winooski because I thought the district valued what I also value: high quality personalized education. I am appalled at the decision to cut two positions at the WMHS. This past year has been one of the most difficult years nationwide to be a teacher. Article after article has documented the massive burnout that teachers are experiencing and the mass exodus of teachers from the profession. As teachers, we have worked tirelessly the past two years to teach remotely, to teach in a hybrid setting, to teach when many students are absent, to cover classes when our colleagues are out sick. The list goes on and on. Here at Winooski, we have navigated all of this, while working in a construction site. To say it has been hard is to put it lightly. As you can imagine, morale is pretty low. To learn of cuts to two valuable positions is incomprehensible given this reality. These decisions, however, go far beyond just hurting the morale of an already depleted staff. They have drastic implications for students, for their learning, and for their potential to be successful in their future. First, cutting a math teacher after nearly two years of disrupted learning due to the pandemic is ill-informed. In the high school, students had very limited math instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. A large majority of our students are testing in need of urgent math intervention. Further, ample new research shows that if students are not successful in Algebra 1, their chances of being successful later in life are vastly diminished. Winooski's decision to cut a math position is in direct contrast with the vision statement of the school district. Second, cutting Will's position as an iLab teacher demonstrates how little the administration and school board understand about the realities of being a teacher and the needs of our diverse student body. iLab is a unique learning experience that encompasses our deep beliefs as a school about learning: personalized, authentic, independent, and powerful learning experiences for each student. Yet, making this work is a daunting task for a teacher. To put it simply, there is no way that one teacher could facilitate these learning experiences for our high school students. Further, Will's expertise and passion for this task is not something that can simply be replaced. These are not just positions, but these are people in our building that our students trust, our students depend on, and our students look for daily for affirmation and guidance. In an already traumatic period for our students, losing two teachers who students need is unfathomable. It is also even more hard to stomach when there are many administrative positions that have been added to the school. I question the administration's commitment to our mission statement if these cuts are approved. I urge you to review the budget and find space to retain these valuable educators and commit to never making a mistake this drastic again.

18. Mohamed Diop (jobe)-My name is Mohamed Diop. I am a behavior interventionist, member of the committee for hiring and retaining teachers and administrators of color, and a member of the Winooski Education Association." With the toll of the pandemic on our students who have already been behind in their academics, and the entire world scrambling to fill some positions to serve their communities better; now is just not a good time to cut a position off. Our district guided this board has always sung beautifully to the public about retaining their staff and caring for their well-being so our students can succeed, cutting teachers' positions, or laying any staff members off does certainly not demonstrate such commitment. I've been worried for so long that many if not most of our students are struggling not only in math, but in other subjects as well; for many reasons. Amongst those reasons, take a look at our multigrade math classes setting, many students in a classroom of 22 - 25 students are lost in their day-to-day tasks; because it is hard for one single teacher to provide them the individual assistance they need in

a timely manner to stay motivated and succeed. Some students have already given up on their math classes, they don't even ask for help anymore; because they feel embarrassed not knowing, or grasping the basics. It feels like teachers are set up to fail, no matter how good they are at their job. If our students were set in appropriate math grade levels and spread out in different classrooms in which they feel that is where they belong academically, forget about placing students by age, they would not only succeed, that would also make our teachers even more effective in their teaching. Cutting either one of our current math teachers and our only iLab teacher's position off where our students can actually feel independent and work effectively on their Gps does absolutely not support our students' success. To really work towards our students' success in math at the high school level, there is actually a need to hire at least two more math teachers to overcome the achievement gap we're currently experiencing; instead of eliminating one of our current math teachers. I wonder if you/ the Board is aware of this reality. Something along the lines of: "It is unfortunate that the members of the school board are not aware of this need and shows that the stories you are basing your decisions on do not capture the full truth of what is happening in the school. I sincerely hope that you will be able to review your budget and find space for these/our educators to continue working in their much needed roles."

19. Judith Edelstein-Good evening. My name is Judith Edelstein. I am a paraprofessional in the high school and a member of the Winooski Education Association for three years. Winooski is a unique district in Vermont, especially with the number of multilingual students improving their English. As this is the country's language of work, this is important for all students, regardless of the English fluency they come to school with. Throughout every discipline, this skill is monitored so that we can effectively share learning with every student in the district. I was distressed to hear that a math and an iLab position are to be cut for next year. The iLab is a place of self-directed learning, which deepens students' ability to set and follow their own goals and monitor their own progress. Math is an essential skill and higher math ability increases opportunities for the future. Removing any staff in these positions will deeply affect the language ability of the entire school, especially as we emerge from the massive disruptions of the Covid pandemic. Every adult that students encounter will have a slightly different method of communication and a different area of expertise, which increases the diversity of language that is available for students to learn. Fewer faculty and staff positions will limit the opportunities for all students to progress. I urge the board to reconsider the positions being cut. At a time when schools around the country are struggling to find and retain staff, we should not be making cuts. It is not necessary. It is not beneficial. The WEA stands together behind the students, staff, and the vision of our school. We hope the board still believes in this vision, too. Thank you.
20. Matt Gile-Cutting two HS faculty positions is not in the interest of our students, and is a gut punch to the morale of a faculty that has gone to such lengths and endured so much these past years. With the immense math needs of our district, cutting a math position is not in the interest of our students. And the iLab is the pride of the district, it was the first stop when sen sanders visited! Not only is the iLab popular among students, the flexibility it provides is essential to the functioning of our proficiency based system, and cutting iLab staffing in half will compromise the integrity of that system. It will also mean that a teacher, Will Andrews, who has served this district for 15 years, will be laid off. Will has mentored students in music production and forged deep bonds with students over that shared passion. The music produced by our students under

Will's guidance is a treasure of this community. And frankly, this is a personal loss, a friend is being torn from our school community. Thank you.

21. Jennifer White-My name is Jennifer White and I've been a parent of children in the school district since 2008. I, like many others, am here in support of Will Andrews. Equally as important, I am here to ensure my children have a voice that is heard. Some qualities of a good teacher include: skills in communication, listening, collaboration, adaptability, empathy, patience, and a passion for teaching. Will displays all of these things and more. He provides an engaging classroom, a value in real world learning, and encourages a lifelong love of learning. A good teacher can make a world of difference in a student's life, impacting everything from their classroom learning to their long term success. Think back to your favorite teacher; what pops into your mind? It probably isn't learning about decimals or verbs. It's more likely how that teacher made you feel, the support, encouragement and connection. So what do education budget cuts really say? They say teachers, the most important link connecting our children, schools and education are expendable. Defunding teachers like Will Andrews will rob children of a future. A great teacher like him would have helped a lot.
22. Lydia Bourgeois-First I would like to say thank you to Will. Thank you for all you guys in the ilab. My senior is a senior because of you guys. In light of the recent decisions to allow our Superintendent to take a paid leave of absence and to pay an interim superintendent, along with stipends for admin or staff filling in for Sean, it would be perceived as heartless to reduce any teacher or staff member in the upcoming school year. If there was a need to save money, perhaps the leave of absence and additional funds to support this decision should not have been granted. Why are teachers and support staff the first option to save money? We are an admin-heavy school: we have two principals for the middle/high school; we have multiple positions that I would consider more than math and ilab. You also have a lot of money in that administration, let's talk about that. It's a small enough school, you would think that would be the first area to consider. Instead, you are going to make us continue without an amazing teacher. We want to hang on to Will and teachers like Will so our children will be ready for the real world, like our mission statement says. My dad was on the school board for six years in Winooski; correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't the school board in charge of the superintendent and not the other way around? Years past has shown me that Sean is the master pulling all the strings. The faculty and staff of WSD have shown up daily in the past two years to meet the needs of our students during this pandemic. Reducing positions in the middle/high school is how the superintendent, again on a leave of absence, recommends to you, the board, as a way of thanking them for risking their lives daily. Why is there a need to reduce positions when the taxpayers just approved a 26 percent increase in this year's budget? If the board decides to eliminate positions, what will the money be used for? Expanding our preschool? Why? So the children can get the best of our school? Meanwhile, our middle/high school is left behind, underfunded and bear the brunt of budget cuts. Most families leave, they don't stay. Speaking of our students, I am so proud of them for the sit in they did this week. I have 17 minutes of audio from that sit in. They were respectful and peaceful. So respectful that I could hear the student's talk and I knew exactly who it was. Why are my kids, along with many others, given consequences for exercising their American right to peacefully protest and not agree with the decision to remove a pivotal teacher. For years, I've squaked at how secretive the admin can be, how they pick and choose what information is allowed out, want to spin attractive stories and

blame others such as the horrible cake walk episode. PTO was blamed by our admins who were the ones that sent out that letter. If they don't want something out, they will threaten parents or staff, especially if they talk to each other. Sean speaks community and then insinuates no one can talk to each other, ask questions or there will be consequences. That's our leader. My senior is barely hanging on to graduation because of math, this is real for us.

23. Albina Rai-I am an 8th grader at Winooski middle school. I don't know Will Andrews, but from what I hear from students who had Mr. Andrews, they see him as more than just a teacher. They see him as a friend. Mr. Duggan was hired last year, I was at his interview. It was pretty cool to meet a teacher that I didn't know but that could possibly be my teacher at school. I didn't know him but he seemed like a great teacher, and he is an amazing teacher. The students who have Mr. Duggan see him as more than a teacher, they see him as a friend. Mr. Duggan took time out of our math class to talk about black history month. We took about 15-20 minutes out of class to talk about it. When we were talking about BHM (black history month), Mr. Duggan told us he was a white man in power and was there to listen and we could freely talk about our opinions. We need more teachers like Mr. Duggan who are willing to take time out of class to talk about stuff like this. Cutting teachers that students care about greatly is a mistake. I really hope you reconsider. Thank you.
24. Ivy Resmer-I am an 8th grader at Winooski middle school. I am here on behalf of 183 students who can't be here. For the past 2 days, I have been handing out petitions to middle school students who believe cutting Mr. Duggan and Will Andrews is something that should be reconsidered. That being said, someone being taught by Mr. Duggan currently and who is meeting briefly with Will Andrews, I can say they are 2 of the best teachers I have ever had and ever will.
25. Klara Bronz-Russo-I am an 8th grader in WMS. I believe getting rid of Mr. Duggan and Mr. Andrews would not be in the best interest of the students in the school. Mr. Duggan has been doing a very good job as my math teacher. He has been challenging me when I finish my work early, he has been helping me do more than any other teacher has and I would love the opportunity to use the ilab when I get into high school.
26. Eve-I am a Winooski high school student who has used the ilab. Will is the most sincere and dedicated teacher I have ever known. He is a teacher I feel comfortable with and helped me a lot with my project. One of the reasons Will's position is being cut off is because of him being a social studies teacher which isn't his profession therefore it's not a valid reason to cut him off. It would really be a shame to let go of such a teacher and a friend. The school has gone on and on about the student voice and how strong it is. Now that students are giving their opinions on what is happening in the district, why are we being silenced?