

## Email Inquiry from Committee Member

Sent by Suzanne Clark to Dr. Karmin Williams, February 27, 2025

Dr. Williams,

Thank you for your presentation last night at the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Distribution of Donations for Staffing. I would like to ask you some follow-up questions and wonder if you would have time for a brief 15-30 min Zoom call.

I'm interested in hearing more about the the following:

- Thoughts on the positive or negative impacts that providing non-Community Schools with privately-fundraised FTE would have on Community Schools, if any.

- Do existing Community Schools currently need additional FTE to operate successfully?

- And do Community Schools have sufficient SpEd staff?

- Is there a negative potential for Community Schools to be considered less academically focused than non-Community schools?

- Given that there are currently 20 community schools, how far could \$1 million for FTE expand that reach or make the current impact more effective?

- Is there a way that \$1 million could be used as a one-off, or would this need to be recurring funding?

- How might the PAC committee consider some of the community schools' collaborative decision-making models to include youth and families in the PAC discussion and decision process?

If it's easier, please feel free to respond in writing. Thank you again for your time.

Regards,

Suzanne Clarke

PAC Member

Roosevelt HS parent

Ockley Green MS, Beach ES former parent

Email Response

**Reply From: Dr. Karmin Williams, Mar 2, 2025**

Hello all-

Because I am unable to attend this week's meeting, I wanted to send along my responses. Please feel free to share with the collective.

-Thoughts on the positive or negative impacts that providing non-Community Schools with privately-fundraised FTE would have on Community Schools, if any. **Because the current community schools are Title 1 and lost 20%+ of their funds for next year, I think there would be negative implications. With that said, nearly all schools were hit pretty hard by the funding cuts.**

-Do existing Community Schools currently need additional FTE to operate successfully? **Yes. They rely on a community school site coordinator. In other more robust (and successful) models, there is this position as well as a teacher lead. Happy to talk more about this!**

-And do Community Schools have sufficient SpEd staff? **If you ask them, I bet they'd say no. But I think most would say no.**

-Is there a negative potential for Community Schools to be considered less academically focused than non-Community schools? **Yes, if messaged incorrectly or misunderstood. The aim is to support all students so that they are able to access available opportunities, thrive academically, etc. In a community school setting, these needs could be addressed through partnerships, family/community engagement/collaboration. Equity is central to this model. In many community schools across the US, the students do much better academically because they are better able to access instructional opportunities, and the instructional opportunities are more engaging/interesting/relevant. In many spaces, project-based and place-based learning is elevated.**

-Given that there are currently 20 community schools, how far could \$1 million for FTE expand that reach or make the current impact more effective? **The funds definitely couldn't fund more than a 0.50 position in each school, so the school communities would probably lean toward basic needs supports. Maybe there is an opportunities to support the sites with basic needs support, as well as other endeavors? The current grant that supports our community schools ends in 2027. I/we are currently working to find a sustainable source of support for the site coordiantors in each of these schools. In 2027, 20 Title 1 schools are slated to lose their social workers (who are acting as site coordinators).**

-Is there a way that \$1 million could be used as a one-off, or would this need to be recurring funding? **Basic needs support could be a one-off. I believe funding positions should always have a multi-year, sustainable plan. I always had this as a principal. It is really detrimental to a system to bring in staff/individuals/support, create systems and aim for stability and coherence around this, then rip it away. We are seeing this across the system and will see much more next year if funding stays at its current projection.**

-How might the PAC committee consider some of the community schools' collaborative decision-making models to include youth and families in the PAC discussion and decision process? **Fantastic question! A steering committee made up of equal representation of stakeholders, with consensus model decision making is a fabulous framework. Also, I would encourage a Needs Assessment of each school community, including focus groups with stakeholders. Happy to chat more any time about this!**

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Dr. Karmin Williams

Director of Community Schools

Portland Public School District

Office of Student Support Services

971.517.7341

[What is a Community School?](#)

"Without community, there is no liberation.." ~Audre Lorde

## **Email Inquiry from Committee Member**

**Email from Ayla Ercin to Robyn Faraone, March 5, 2025**

Hi Robyn,

That was a great meeting, lots of interesting discussion. Thank you for organizing it and for all the hard work you do for PPS! It can't be easy herding these cats, but we appreciate it so much!

I am following up because I wanted to flesh out the idea I was just beginning to grasp at during the end of the meeting. I feel that, if we are going to achieve our two goals - sustainability of future donations, along with a communitywide impact, that we should invest in laying the groundwork for future fundraising. I think we should invest in you ;)

Is there a way that you could give a presentation on the possibility of the Fund for PPS using some of the available funds this year to invest in making the Fund for PPS a sustainable and effective fundraising tool for the future? If we are just deciding where a million dollars goes with no future prospects for more, it doesn't seem very inspiring. I'd rather invest in something that can keep itself going.

For example, if you used some of the \$1,000,000 to throw two galas (east side/west side? Elem./High?) and did a direct mail piece, or whatever much better ideas you come up with, could we make enough (and save enough of the existing 1 million) in two years of fundraising to hire a half time EA for every school (presumably approximately 2 millions because you mentioned that a full time EA would be 4 million)? Then could we ramp it up to earn \$2,000,000 every year to keep the half EA's going?

I leave it to you to (hopefully) give us your thoughts on something that is possible, but I would like to hear more about ways to make fundraising sustainable at PPS for future years and in a way that will keep donations coming in from the entire community.

Thank you!

Ayla



DATE: March 4, 2025  
FROM: James John Elementary School PTA  
TO: Parent Advisory Committee for the Distribution of Donations for Staffing  
RE: Allocations from the Fund for Portland Public Schools

Dear Members of the Parent Advisory Committee,

**James John Elementary School PTA appreciates your hard work** to recommend how to allocate donations for staff in the Portland Public School District. Setting a distribution formula for directing *district-wide* funds to support staff at *individual* schools is a massive undertaking—our kids, our community, and our future will bear the imprint of your efforts.

**The teachers and staff at our Title I school are also working hard**, educating our kids and embodying our commitments as a Community School. They are carrying on the proud tradition of our school's and neighborhood's namesake, James John. When he died, he left his entire estate to the kids. It's on his land that our school sits—the beating heart of our neighborhood. James John Elementary School is home to 372 K-5th graders who are instructed by 18 classroom teachers, led by an incredible principal, and supported by an awesome PTA. We are the James John Lions, and we are the Pride of St. Johns. Yet the days of wealthy benefactors are long gone, and fundraising at the scale of schools in wealthier neighborhoods is impossible. Sadly, our school clears the higher 2024-2025 thresholds for Parent Fund Awards from the Fund for PPS by a wide margin. If only things were “just” that dire at James John Elementary School, and “just” 40% of our students identified as combined underserved (try 75%), and “just” 25% of students were eligible for free meals by direct certification (more like 56%).

Still, **we are hopeful**. After suffering from decades of state disinvestment in public education and from widening inequities embodied in the local school foundation model, the Fund for Portland Public Schools is now poised to help every Portland Public School kid succeed.

We recognize that all PPS schools need more staff. But until the Fund for PPS has abundant funds to allocate (and we stand ready to help reach that brighter tomorrow!), your Committee bears a heavy responsibility to **do the next right thing for our neediest kids**, starting in 2025-2026. That is why **we are writing to ask you to please consider funding three requests for staff at our school during the upcoming school year**, in ranked order of need:

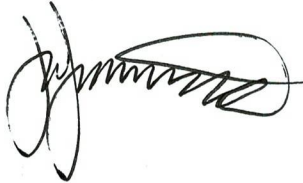
1. 2nd Grade Teacher (29 student class size projected)
2. 4th Grade Teacher (36 student class size projected)
3. Library Media Specialist @ 1.0 FTE (currently 0.8 FTE; bilingual Spanish/English; note also that St. Johns Public Library is closed through Spring 2026)

**Turning to your broader mandate:** as you develop your proposed formula for distributing donations to individual schools, we urge you to remember your commitment as Committee members to **engage our Principals**, reminding them of the new funding framework and actively soliciting their frontline feedback. **The same goes for PTAs**—we are relying on you to help us navigate this transition, and we trust that you will be relying on us to share our ideas, wisdom, and energy to help “galvanize the community toward future fundraising efforts” (PPS slides, 2/12/2025 PAC meeting). And we also need you to remind PTAs and local school foundations about the **equity rules** built into the PPS Board Policy on Districtwide Advocacy and Fundraising, ensuring that “all members from the benefitting school or program who wish to participate in a fundraising event or activity have an avenue to participate.”

Thank you for considering our input, and we look forward to continued partnership as you develop your recommendations to the Board of Education for distribution of donations for staff positions.

Sincerely,

Jonny Savoie  
President, James John Elementary School PTA  
Parent, James John Elementary School 2nd grader

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonny Savoie', with a stylized, flowing script.