

3/30/2026

Letter to support Siletz Schools

I am writing this letter in support of keeping the Siletz Schools staying open. As often has been said the heart of a community is the School and church. I am a 1969 graduate of Siletz High School. I have had five of my own children and now several grandchildren attend the schools in Siletz.

The current issues with Siletz schools began back to the 1980's when a political decision was made to close the High School. This allowed Siletz High School students to attend other schools in the district. Buss transportation was provide to Toledo High School, if students wanted to attend another school they had to have their own transportation at the time. Eventually this changed to where students could get a waiver to attend any High School they desired. It then progressed to the grade school level. When Siletz High School once again opened as a Charter School students were and continue to choose which schools they want to attend. I know there are any number of reason parents choose this.

I believe the School District has failed the Siletz schools once the High School reopened. From personal experience of my eldest children attending grade and middle school teachers who were struggling at Newport and Toledo were sent to Siletz. I recall one math teacher who had trouble teaching his subject at the start of the school year. After myself and other parents asking their children about their math class not doing anything I asked the Principle if it was true nothing was being taught. He stated the teacher was having some difficulty and they were bringing in a tutor to help him get started. This was not an isolated incident where teachers had trouble with their course content. The flip side is there were some very good teachers in the grade school.

Once the High School began the first few years went pretty good. However these last several years the school has floundered. The district has not provided enough oversight and assistance until recently and now it is "Do this or else" type of assistance, which actually does nothing to help.

The school can be viable with some proper assistance. Granted it has been decades since I attended High School. I have seen how low expectations for the schools in this district have devalued the school experience for the students. I know much of the school is funded by CTSI. They are being required to pay for general maintenance issues that should be district costs. This would release funds to provide more teachers and items to help students be properly educated where they can actual read write and complete some basic math.

Siletz is not the only school having problems. I hear the same type of complaints from parents in Toledo and Lincoln City where children are attending a school out of their city. Are you putting those schools on notice of possible closure also?

If you want to tear the heart out of Siletz close the school. If you desire for the school to succeed you can do that with some helping hands, not just talk. If I had my way CTSI would build their own school on Tribal property and get out from underneath the weight of paying for most of the district's maintenance costs.

As mentioned earlier I am a 969 graduate a time when the school expected and enforced discipline and learning. We had students who qualified for military academies' come out of Siletz in the past. I

understand it takes a lot of work to teach young people today. For our County and Country it needs to happen.

Thank you, William Lane

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you today as a deeply concerned mother to express my strong opposition to the potential closure of Siletz Valley School. My three boys, currently in 6th, 9th, and 10th grades, attend this school, and it is no exaggeration to say that Siletz Valley has been a lifeline for our family. It is the only school that has truly accepted and supported my children.

Before finding our home at Siletz, we struggled through the school systems in Lincoln City, Newport, and Toledo. Our experiences there were heartbreaking. In Lincoln City, when my son was only in the 2nd grade, he was subjected to highly inappropriate situations where older girls asked him to go into the bathroom for sexual acts. He was exposed to things no 2nd grader should ever have to learn about, and despite my concerns, the teachers did nothing to stop this behavior.

In Toledo, I spent years—from kindergarten through 5th grade—advocating for my middle son to be held back so he could catch up academically. I was repeatedly told by teachers that holding him back would cause him to commit suicide. Terrified by that prospect, I kept pushing him forward. Then, when he reached 6th grade, the same school gave me three options: hold him back, homeschool him, or move him to another school, admitting they could no longer do anything for him. When I reminded them of their previous warnings about suicide, they simply dismissed it, claiming they had "learned new scientific data."

Desperate to find a place that would help him, I tried moving him to Eddyville, but they refused to take him due to his comprehensive IEP. Finally, we found Siletz Valley School.

The difference has been night and day. Siletz is amazing. The culture, the acceptance, and the genuine care the teachers provide are unparalleled. The small class sizes have allowed my son to go from failing to exceeding expectations.

In Toledo and Newport, my children begged me every single day to let them stay home. They told me awful stories of being bullied, and when I inquired with the schools, the teachers simply didn't seem to care. But here in Siletz, my children actually want to come to school. They wake up excited to be here. In the last three years, I have not once heard the words, "Mom, please don't take me to school." Instead, I only hear, "Yes, I want to go," and "Yes, I want to participate."

Siletz Valley School means more to me as a mother than I can ever adequately express. It is a safe haven where my boys are not just educated, but valued, protected, and encouraged to thrive. Closing this school would be devastating not just to my family, but to the entire community that relies on the unique, supportive environment it provides.

Please, do not close Siletz Valley School. Listen to the families whose lives have been changed for the better because of it.

Sincerely,

Melinda Pearson
Melinda Pearson

Melinda Pearson
801-458-7928

Dear Lincoln County School District Board Members,

I am writing you to address the attempt by the LCSD Board to close the Siletz Valley School. The Board's action to remove the only school from the small community of Siletz is **deeply disappointing** and represents a disconnect of the LCSD Board with the local Siletz Community.

As a Biologist employed by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians I am involved in the local Siletz Community and interact weekly with the teachers and students of Siletz Valley School. Monthly, I drop in as a guest speaker with the high school science class. These classes included raising juvenile steelhead, field trips to tribal fish hatcheries, fish dissection and natural resource career exploration.

Working as a Biologist I interact with many community members that attended Siletz Valley School and pursued careers in Natural Resource Science because of their experience in school! Closing this school would remove the ability for local kids to explore and learn about fields in science. It also limits their potential to pursue new and exciting careers!

Prior to my job as a Biologist, I worked as an instructor at Oregon State University teaching college students. My background as an instructor at the university level gives me unique insight and ability to comment on subjects of Pedagogy. Your actions are removing trust and creating an unstable environment for Siletz Valley students to learn. This is already negatively affecting students' ability to learn.

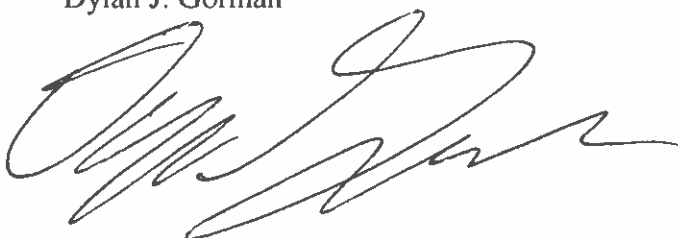
I find it **very hard** to accept that the LCSD Board is acting in the best interest of students by closing the Siletz Valley School. If the LCSD Board chooses to assert its leadership, it would work with the community towards a solution that keeps the school open. The LCSD motto from its official website is "Every Child, Every Day, Future Ready." How does closing the Siletz Valley School fit into this motto?

The concerns raised by the LCSD Board are real and need to be addressed. LCSD can work with staff at Siletz Valley School and other community members to solve these concerns. Talk with the staff at the school, they want to work with you towards a real solution! The teachers there are skilled and motivated, talk to them, visit the school and work together.

Voting to close the school represents a failure to exercise your duty and leadership as a board. Please show courage and commitment to the students in the Siletz Community and keep this school open.

Sincerely,

Dylan J. Gorman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dylan J. Gorman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "J".

To Whom It May Concern,

I'd like to start out by expressing my appreciation for this meeting being held to hear the community and everyone impacted by recent events and a pending decision.

My name is Dr. Samantha Chisholm Hatfield. I am an enrolled Siletz Tribal member, and am currently a Senior Research Professor at Oregon State University.

I know firsthand the difficulties that Native students face when attending a school systems. It's common knowledge that our Native history has been long, difficult and fraught with difficulties for students and families. What many don't understand is that many of those difficulties remain, even still today. This is one of the reasons Native Americans have the highest drop-out rates and lowest graduation rates 74% in 2019, up from 67% in 2012. according to National Indian Education Association. It is imperative that we foster these number locally and continue to provide opportunities for our students.

According to the group Running Strong for American Indian Youth, as of August 2025, 640,000 Native students live in the U.S., and more than 72% attend public schools. This means the vast majority of Native youth are navigating mainstream education systems that often lack Indigenous representation in teaching staff, culturally relevant curriculum, or community-led decision-making. We have a unique opportunity here with Siletz Valley School that has led directly to improving the ratio of representation, and has directly led to increased graduation rates of Native students.

As someone who works in Higher Education, I strive to empower our students any way possible. I've been fortunate enough to work with students that overcame all odds to be able to attend Oregon State, and witnessing the success of a student is incredibly rewarding – especially knowing it is not just the student, but the family, their neighbors, and the extended community who benefits.

For the past few years I've been able to help create and be involved with the Explore and More program that AJ Mallozzi has created. I have been able to assist with supporting and witnessing success with Siletz students that they never would have access to in a public school system. Siletz Valley School provides opportunities, support, and fosters a better sense of community. I implore you to consider not just the logistics of the school itself, but the broader impact it has in our community.

Creating pathways to assist and help the next generations that are becoming our leaders is our responsibility as adults and community leaders in roles such as those we fill. Please keep in mind these are the young people who will create and foster the

community we cherish, and will lead the way for the generation after them. It is up to us to find better options, to teach through example and leave a legacy that can be supported and empowered. You all have before you the opportunity to rectify and “make right” the wrongs that have been done, as well as the opportunity to fulfill the statements of wanting youth to succeed.

We must not fail these students by closing Siletz Vally School.

Thank you for your time,

Dr. Samantha Chisholm Hatfield



Good evening, and thank you for this opportunity to speak. (actually I was unable to speak as I was outside the building because of overflow issues)

We are truly blessed to work at Siletz Valley School—not only for our community, our tribe, and our students. You'll hear me use the words *our*, *us*, and *we* often tonight, because that is what we must continue to focus on—togetherness.

Our culture classrooms have been incredibly fortunate to receive strong support from our students, our community, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and our amazing teachers. Because of this support, our students have been given opportunities to represent our culture across the state of Oregon in meaningful and powerful ways.

Our students have performed honor songs and Nay Dosh songs to welcome and honor the Nine Tribes Flags at the Capitol for the Oregon Department of Education.

They shared honor songs and dances at the Oregon School Board Association annual meeting—an experience that moved many in the audience to tears and earned our students a standing ovation.

They collaborated with the Culinary Department at The Allison alongside Jack Strong, a Siletz Tribal member and James Beard-nominated chef.

They have delivered cultural presentations at 90% of schools in Lincoln County, as well as seven additional schools across Oregon. They have performed honor songs for senior nights at three Lincoln County schools.

They were part of a historic first for the OSAA, providing an honor song and land acknowledgment at the Parade of Champions—leading to invitations for the Track and Field State Finals at Hayward Field and the Cross Country State Finals.

Our students have also been invited by Dr. Raeshelle Meyer from COSA to open the Annual Seaside Conference with a land acknowledgment, honor song and dancers before the Keynote speaker.

Dr. Charlene Williams, Superintendent of the Oregon Department of Education, personally requested our students to present at their conference next October.

Dee Butler from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians has asked our classroom to participate in the Oregon Tribal Behavioral Health Summit.

When we look at all of these accomplishments—and all of these requests—it's incredible to think about where we started just four years ago, where we are now, and where we are headed.

But what does this really mean for our students, our school, and our community?

Some of the most important outcomes can't be measured on a black-and-white report card in Salem. What it means is *oral history*—a connection to our ways of life. It means pride, identity, and belonging.

When you heard the drum outside this evening, those songs came from the heart. They came from Tribal youth, Tribal housing youth, and non-Tribal students singing together—creating understanding and building allies. In listening to the blessings of the songs you can't tell the difference between a non-tribal and tribal voice that is our pride and belonging for all.

The areas of focus identified by our program—tribal language, beading, weaving, necklace making, canoe journey, and drumming—are not separate pieces. They work together to bridge gaps and strengthen our students in ways that go far beyond the classroom.

Tonight, you will hear directly from our students, a school board member and school staff—not only about what this program/ school means to them, but also what it means to our community.

Our students in our culture program have shown growth. We've seen improvements in academic performance, attendance, graduation rates, ninth-grade on-track success, and discipline. Many students who struggled in previous years have found motivation through these classes—motivation to show up, to succeed, and to take pride in their education.

They are not only learning cultural practices—they are learning respect, responsibility, and connection, specific areas of best practices for a charter school.

As many of the speakers will state to you, don't be a distant stranger come to our school and see personally the great things happening. It will deliver a different message than a score for an organization that has not visited our school either.

And that is something no state report card can fully capture.

Thank you.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter to share my love of the community at Siletz School. I attended the school in the 1980's and 1990's and felt held and supported by the people who helped to raise me up at the school. The teachers and staff from the past remind me so much of the team that we have now at our school. When there is a family in the community that is struggling, the school is there for a soft place for students to land and learn. Many of our students have experienced all kinds of loss, trauma and other things left unseen. I was one of these students. If it were not for the people of the Siletz School that had shown up for me in the past, I would not have made it to this place of safety and service in my life.

One program that helped me to build confidence at school was the SMILE (Science and Math Investigative Learning Experiences) program that is in partnership with OSU. I started as an elementary student in the 1990's, the first year that they brought it to Siletz. We learned about all things SMILE related and toured OSU every year on field trips. I grew up without knowing anyone who attended college (aside from my teachers and doctors) and my experience with SMILE and Siletz School helped me to imagine myself in places I would not have ever dreamed without their support.

Now in 2026, I am a teacher at the school and the Elementary SMILE teacher as well. It has been a dream of mine to do this and my hopes have been fulfilled. I see so many students at our school that remind me of myself, shy and hopeful...supported by the community here. I have to say, my experience at other schools did not match this. I want to continue to serve the community and these kids here at Siletz.

I have so much more to share, as well as many other families...

I just hope we get the chance to continue on at Siletz School.

With Love.

Dear Dr. Tolen and Members of the Lincoln County School Board,

Please - Please - keep Siletz Valley School open.

Not for the staff. Not for the district. **For the students.**

Please consider our youngest learners. A kindergartener who feels safe and supported in a small, familiar environment will soon become a first grader. Instead of continuing in that nurturing setting, with a teacher and fewer than 15 students, they may be asked to leave their community, ride a long bus, and enter a classroom of 25 or more students. That is a significant and difficult transition, and it is not equitable for our students.

I urge you to keep this school open, recognizing our ethical responsibility to avoid causing further harm or disruption. For many of our students, especially those on the reservation, being removed from their school and community carries a deeper meaning. While this situation is not the same, it can echo past experiences in which students were separated from their homes and placed in unfamiliar systems. *That history matters, and it should guide our decisions.*

I understand the importance of following rules and maintaining compliance, and I take that responsibility seriously. However, we also know that removing students from this school will have a lasting impact. Siletz Valley School has been closed before, and I have personally heard from families about the hardships that resulted, not just academically, but ***emotionally and socially.***

This decision should be centered on what is best for students, not solely on systems or financial pressures. At a time when the district is facing financial challenges, it is even more important to ensure that solutions do not ***disproportionately affect our most vulnerable students.***

Please do not ask our youngest learners to bear the weight of these challenges. Instead, I ask that you work with us, support this school, address concerns collaboratively, and allow us to continue serving the students who need us most.

I am deeply concerned that closing Siletz Valley School will lead to increased absenteeism and students disengaging from school altogether. We cannot afford to lose these students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Siletz Staff-

My name is Klokic Plummer and I am a graduating senior of ~~2026~~ Siletz Valley Schools. I have not always gone to Siletz. I went to Toledo 1st - half of my freshman year and I can confidently say I would not be here today IF I would have stayed at Toledo. Growing up I was always one of the only black kids at Toledo and I always felt so isolated. Things got super bad in middle school where I was severely bullied and extremely mistreated by staff. My bullying got so bad. I was persisted in our school gym and nothing was ever done about it, in fact I told a teacher and what I said was distorted and spread making my situation so much worse. I was called racial slurs and pictures of me were constantly being taken. My freshman year I decided to switch schools and it changed my life drastically. When I went to Toledo in middle school GPA was a 2.03 and I never went to school. I genuinely had no motivation in life and nothing there was helping. I use to cry and beg to stay home and when I was forced to go I spent so much time in the bathroom crying. The very first day at Siletz I felt that sense of impending doom and all of my anxiety leave my body. Almost everyone at Siletz is tribal but having other people of color and not being the only dark person instantly lifted a weight. Switching was such a culture shock for me. Even though I am not native I have learned so much about the culture and how important it is. Having the opportunity to be surrounded by so much culture taught me so much about being brown. That first day of school I met the most motivational powerful women that have made me the person I am today. Katrina Kosydar, Kelsey Cimock, and Theresa Smith. I am now a straight A student with a 3.97 GPA that never misses school and they gave me that motivation. Having teachers that genuinely cared for me, gave me a new perspective on life. They made me feel so loved and seen that I have woken up everyday wanting to do better and wanting

come to school. Kosydar is my English teacher who is the best teacher I have ever had. She is the reason I am going to SWOCC next Fall to begin my journey in becoming a teacher myself. Kosey is my former science teacher who founded Explore and More with AJ at OSU and she is the most patient nurturing person I know. I have never been good at science or math but she always made sure to go above and beyond to keep me where I needed to be and to make sure I actually understood. Theresa is our cultural arts teacher and one of my closest friends. Theresa has taught me so much about her beautiful culture and has done it with open arms. She has taught me so much about myself and I am so beyond grateful to have such an encouraging role model. All 3 of these teachers have advocated and had my back through so much and knowing that other people could potentially not get to experience how amazing they are is heart breaking. I would not be in the position I am today without Siletz. I hope others that need it can be served by the community like I was.