

Patti Regehr

Good evening. My name is Patti Regehr. My two children graduated from Gunn and from college. I've been working as a full-time career substitute teacher in the Palo Alto Unified School district for 12 years. I've substituted at every school except at Jordan.

As a substitute teacher, I see children go from kindergarten through high school, and I feel like these are my kids too. I see when kids get really down, and they don't know where to go, and so they leave campus to hang out with friends. Just having teachers understand the kids is not easy. I don't know what it takes to just be connected with the kids. It's very insecure being a teacher of a high school student. You don't want to make a fool of yourself as a high school teacher, which means putting up a wall.

When a child cuts class, it's an issue. As a community we should find out, why is this student cutting class? This is a big part of where students start falling through the cracks – when they start cutting class. That's where kids really start getting into trouble. I see the problems start in the transition between middle school and high school.

My own son – his first day as a freshman at Gunn, he lost his map and schedule. At the end of the day, we learned that he sat in the quad all day. When we asked him why, and he said he didn't want to start his first day of school with everyone thinking he was stupid. I wish someone had just asked him why was he sitting there all day. Its not like he's a scary kid.

So trying to get kids involved early is pivotal. 9th grade is pivotal, and 10th grade is pivotal. I'm not taking about activities, because we have enough of those. I feel the district needs more ways of helping the kids who aren't connecting with their regular teachers. There are certain kids that connect with their teachers and other kids who don't. Kids feel very vulnerable, no matter if they have mental health diagnoses or not. They all feel like they have to be perfect, and if they're not perfect, it's a problem.

And none of us are perfect. All of us can do better.

Thank-you