



## FRIENDS OF LINCOLN

May 29, 2023

Cardinal Times Editorial Board,

In response to your editorial piece “Since school fundraisers indirectly promote racial inequality, a general fund is necessary” we agree that equity is a top priority for funding public schools.

[PPS uses an equity lens funding model](#) in its budgetary decisions, directing more funds to higher-needs schools. However, this method, combined with federal funds (Title 1 and other programs), results in some schools receiving about twice as much per student on average than other schools. For example, one elementary school received an average of \$6,926 per student over 2020-2023, while another received \$14,797 per student over the same period (see [PPS School Funding Heatmap with Foundation Funding](#)).

Schools with higher percentages of historically underserved and higher-needs students in their communities receive significantly more funds per pupil than those from more affluent communities with lower percentages of such students. **Underserved and high-needs students exist at every school.** Lincoln and other schools with foundations are not any different. There are 300 historically underserved students and 12% of the student body is on free or reduced lunch at Lincoln High School. **When equity funding doesn't follow each student to their school, who minds the gaps so they don't fall through the cracks? Friends of Lincoln does this for Lincoln High School and other local school foundations do it for their schools.**

In recent years, other high schools have used PPS equity resources to fund courses like Restorative Justice and AP African American History. Lincoln has used foundation funds to hire a Critical Race Studies teacher, offer courses such as Queer/Gender Studies, and support a Spanish-only magazine *Puno y Letra*. Other schools use PPS equity funds for double blocks of math and writing support. Lincoln has used foundation funds to offer literacy and numeracy-based academics. Lincoln receives zero county or district funding for culturally specific partnerships like SEI or Step Up. Friends of Lincoln, along with parents and the greater community, come together to fill that gap for kids.

[The money we raise also benefits PPS as a whole - by administrative rules, we share 1/3 of what we raise](#) for teaching positions with [The Fund for Portland Public Schools](#). Eliminating local school foundations would cut millions in funding for all PPS schools.

In 2020, local school foundations raised approximately \$4 million in private funds for PPS schools, one-third of which went to The Fund for Portland Public Schools. These extra fundraising efforts resulted in \$1.2 million in private dollars for 53 high-needs schools (see [Save PPS Foundations](#)).

Although the focus on reforming school foundations is on the “buying of additional staff,” Friends of Lincoln also builds community connections and caring through a broad range of volunteer efforts. We provide support for all students to participate in activities that are important to a well-rounded high school experience. Please consider the following list of programs outside of FTE that we have supported in the last several years:

- Cardinal Families Health Action Network
- Drama, Music, Band
- Classroom Support and Teacher Requests
- Cardinal Times Special Project
- PTA Clothing Center
- Academic Club Support
- Student Social and Affinity Group Support
- Athletic Club and Team Support
- Community Outreach: Food, Clothing and Housing
- Graduation Party Scholarships
- Teacher Appreciation
- Field Trip Scholarships
- Sports Field Rentals for Teams without Facilities

Finally, it's important to consider that not all fundraising happens at the foundation level. Throughout PPS and all of Oregon, PTAs and Boosters raise money to support their own schools. Foundations have an equity and oversight mechanism because they share money with The Fund for Portland Public Schools. PTAs and Booster Clubs do not have an equity mechanism and keep all the money raised at their local schools.

Friends of Lincoln would love a world where schools receive all the funding students deserve and equity is optimized, but that is not the world as it exists today. Eliminating foundations like Friends of Lincoln, we believe, would make things worse, not better. Arguing that eliminating foundations would spur change at the government level is likely overly optimistic or, at best, would have clear negative effects on Lincoln and all PPS students in the near future. It's essentially just another budget cut.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and learn from one another to move forward with informed action and compassion to benefit all PPS students.

Sincerely,

Friends of Lincoln Board of Directors  
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