

This is KPTZ FM 91.9 in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nhatt Nichols, bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, April 23, 2025.

In their April 16 meeting, the Quilcene School Board's agenda showed a disconnect between the problems that students and teachers felt needed the board's attention and the issues the board actually discussed. Although discussing requiring students to play on the sports team aligned with their birth gender was on the agenda, board member Vivianne Kuehl reminded the board that they had previously decided to wait until the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) had voted on an advisory amendment that would have restricted girls' sports to "biological females." The WIAA announced on April 21 that the proposed amendment failed to reach the 60% threshold needed to pass.

During the public comment period, Courtney Beck, a teacher and the president of the Quilcene Education Association, spoke about the school board's decision to show a video on gender from PragerU, a nonprofit organization known for producing short, controversial videos that promote conservative viewpoints. PragerU, which is not an accredited university, has previously had its videos removed by YouTube for spreading misinformation. Beck said, "Our students are watching, and what they see right now is a school board that is more focused on targeting LGBTQ students than addressing the real issues that impact teaching and our learning in our classrooms. Tonight, you plan to show a video that claims gender is binary. That message directly contradicts medical, psychological, and educational consensus; and more importantly, it violates your own District nondiscrimination policy. That policy exists to protect all students, and you are not exempt from it. When board actions contradict district policy, it erodes trust, not just in you as leaders, but in the entire public school system."

Eli Allen, the student representative to the school board and a Rival baseball player, commented that he didn't understand why they were talking about trans students playing sports, when there currently are no trans students playing sports. He asked the board to instead focus on things that the students do need their support with.

The board also discussed removing public comments from their meeting, a decision that would directly contradict school district Policy. The Quilcene School Board will be discussing the WIAA's failed amendment at their meeting on May 7.

The value teachers offer to our children and the community cannot be understated, nor can the value of art. The Performing Arts Club is designed for students in 4th through 12th grade to develop their voice and skills. Camille Hilderbrandt, the art teacher for the Quilcene School District, has been overseeing the student wearable art show for almost nine years. Hildebrandt, along with artist Margie McDonald and a supportive and creative team, are working together to help eight individual students create a wearable art piece and a performance to showcase their work. The process is an interdisciplinary hybrid between visual, fabric, and performing arts.

Zak is fifteen and in their second year with the show, after winning 3rd place in their first year. This year, they are inspired by family addiction and the global history of pharmaceutical misuse. Using wire as a malleable and structurally sound material, they have created a physical metaphor for mental health struggles and the imaginative mind. The solution to chronic illness, they believe, is self-acceptance and integration of self-love. To all the people navigating trauma, Zak says, "You're not broken, you're just bent."

After a student unrelated to the Performing Art Club sabotaged Zak's piece by cutting it up and leaving notes in it, Zak decided to keep some of the changes to add additional meaning to their work. Zak believes that it is each of our responsibilities to heal our lineage.

Two shows will take place on April 26 at the Port Townsend High School. To learn more, visit <https://ptartscape.com/>.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from jeffcobeacon.com. You can submit ideas to the *Beacon* through info@jeffcobeacon.com. This is Nhatt Nichols. Thanks for listening.