

#112 Inefficient, Ineffective, and Absolutely Necessary: The Case for Elected School Boards

**Jennifer Berkshire** Welcome to Have You Heard. I'm Jennifer Berkshire.

**Jack Schneider** And I'm Jack Schneider.

**Berkshire** And our topic today is school boards. Discuss.

**Schneider** That's it?

**Berkshire** So, Jack, I feel like a vast portion of the world woke up to the fact that we have these weird things called school boards during the pandemic. And often they were jarred from their reverie by the kinds of viral news stories that were never pleasant. And I thought I would present you with one or two and that you probably have some handy as well. So I'm thinking for example, of a school board member who went through an entire meeting, wearing a paper bag over her head to protest a mask order. Do you have anything that can top that?

**Schneider** Yeah. How about this school board members who thought that their session was not being recorded and was not open to the public and were trash-talking, I believe it was constituents in what turned out to be an open and recorded meeting.

**Berkshire** Then we had the endless stories about the San Francisco school board, which we just spent a lot of time debating renaming schools, which remained closed.

**Schneider** Right, right. Yeah. They were going to take away, I think Abraham Lincoln's name on the basis that he didn't do enough to eradicate slavery.

**Berkshire** So what are these bodies and where did they come from and who in their right mind would ever agree to serve on one?

**Schneider** Well, what are these bodies and where did they come from? Sounds like a great tagline for a zombie movie. I just want to flag that.

**Berkshire** And Jack, I'm going to be calling upon your services as I have not in a while. We're going to need you to ready the time machine to tell us how we ended up with school boards in the first place. Are you, are you going to be ready to do that?

**Schneider** I noticed that you said services rather than expertise. Way to deprofessionalize me there, Jennifer.

**Berkshire** In my mind, you're no longer an education historian Jack. You're an education history influencer.

[Music]

**Berkshire** Well to help us understand what these things are called school boards we needed some experts. And who better to assist than some real live school board members. Rachel White currently serves on a school board in the northwestern Ohio community of Van Wert. Highly knowledgeable listeners will recognize the name of that city instantly. It's where Betsy DeVos and Randi Weingarten teamed up for a joint school visit back in 2017. Yours truly was also in attendance.

In addition to serving on the board, Rachel also studies school boards. In fact there has never been a time in her life when school boards weren't a thing.

**Rachel White** Part of that story is my, my mom's dad was on the school board right before my dad too. So it was just, I feel like it must've just been like in my genes that it was going to happen. It was just the and it was just a matter of when not, if I think I became interested in studying school boards, mostly because a lot of my research interests are around voice and power. And I'm really interested in how we diversify, whose voices are at the table first and foremost. And then secondly, diversifying whose voices are represented at the table. So even if they're not physically, there are, they substantively part of our conversations.

**Berkshire** Her own experience as a school board member started recently. The board that oversees the Van Wert City Schools had an opening and since Rachel happened to be living there, she agreed to fill the position temporarily. And her inspiration actually came from one of our greatest thinkers - that would be Mr. Rogers - and one of his favorite sayings. In times of trouble, always look for the helpers.

**Rachel** That has always resonated with me. I'm like, I want to be that helper. I want to be one of those people that is positive that, you know, just is a public servant. I don't know any other way to say it, but I just am really compelled to do that and to contribute to communities and the betterment of communities. And so, especially once COVID hit, you know, I really wanted to use my experience and my expertise that to help the school board think through really difficult conversations. It's not that I had the answers. I felt like it was that I was able to ask questions.

**Berkshire** Our next guest is also a school board member, or rather a school committee member - that's what they're called here in Massachusetts. Roberto Jimenez Rivera does not come from a long line of school board members by the way. In fact, it wasn't something he'd ever thought about until a couple of years ago when he moved to one of the smallest cities in the state. That would be Chelsea which occupies less than 2 square miles and has a history of welcoming immigrants from all over the world.

**Roberto Jiménez Rivera** It's really been an immigrant city for, for decades. Different waves of immigration have, have impacted the city going back to, you know, Jewish immigrants you know, Polish immigrants you know, a big part of the population. And then Puerto Ricans came and were, you know, over half of the city. And then kind of as we've entered the contemporary stage of U S migration that has had so many immigrants from Central America, those, those

people are now like the majority of, of newcomers to the city. And they've really become a huge portion of our city. And so, you know, what you end up with is a city that is over two thirds, Latin X. And when you look into the school system, it's even more stark difference. Right? Our, our student body is about 90% LatinX.

**Berkshire** That strong LatinX cultural identity was a big part of what drew Roberto to Chelsea. He and his wife bought a home there and he started thinking about getting active in his new city.

**Roberto** The fact that it was such a small city also had me really interested because I wanted to get involved somewhere where I ended up moving to. And so the fact that it was so small made me feel like, Oh, I can probably get involved here. It's not like moving to Boston where you're just one of hundreds of thousands of people. I had connected with some folks already during the Ayanna Pressley for Congress campaign in 2018. And so when I, when I moved, I kind of reconnected with those folks. They were like, Hey, we have a, we have an election coming up. And they knew that I was interested in education policy. You know, they kind of mentioned, Hey, would you be interested in running? And I'm like, when is the election? And they're like, Oh, that's this year. So I was initially thinking that I would run, you know, two years later maybe four years later or something like that.

But then as I connected with more people who were leaders in the community, they, they said, you know, it's okay, you bought a home, you're going to be here for the long term. And people will understand that. So if you're interested, you can. And so that's how I, that's how I decided to run. And then from there, it was just knocking on doors, walking every inch of the city, which given that it's two square miles, it was a little bit more manageable. And so I ended up topping the ticket at the end of that election, which is really exciting and got sworn in January 2nd, 2020.

**Berkshire** Part of what struck me listening to Rachel and Roberto is that while their personal stories and school board journeys really couldn't be more different, they're also weirdly and affirmingly similar. Both of them wanted to get involved in this most local institution because they really believe in representative governance. And one of their shared frustrations is that a lot of people don't really understand what school boards do or who is on them. Something that has been glaringly obvious during these superheated pandemic times.

**Rachel** Not all school board members are like me, not all school board members study school boards, study school governance, school policy, you know, school politics. A lot of them are bankers and healthcare workers and moms and dads and grandmas and grandpas, and, you know, just business owners that, you know, it's, it's, it's not education experts very often. And so a lot of times, you know, and, and rightfully so in a lot of cases, they're deferring to the superintendent, right? Who's in sometimes then the superintendents deferring to the principals because they know their buildings, right? Like, so we really have to think about the ways that we approach governance as a school board, and not using politics and ideology to make decisions, but really, again, drawing on experts in the data. You can't make it not political, but trying to take that as much as you can, away from the center of the conversation.

**Berkshire** When Roberto was running for school committee back in 2020, he found that one of the biggest challenges he faced was that potential voters knew very little about the position that he was running for. And now that he's a member, he still spends a lot of time trying to explain to Chelsea residents what the school committee does and why they should care about it.

**Roberto** If the city council runs all the programs for the city, right. And they establish policies for the city, the school committee does that, but only for the schools, I kind of break it down into a couple of different kind of basic functions. And the first one is we hire and evaluate and fire, if we need, to the superintendent. The second thing is we are aware of kind of different policy changes that need to happen in the district and, and, and make sure that if there are policies that need to be updated where the ones that are updating those with input from the district, but ultimately we are the ones making those decisions. That includes also setting the budget for the district, right? So we are, we're making sure that the money that we get from the city and mostly from the state is allocated to the things that are most important to the community. And then the last piece, which I think, you know, is really the, one of the most important part of our job is to connect with the community and make sure that we are kind of liaising between the community to better understand what the community actually wants out of their schools and making sure that then that message gets to gets to the district.

**Berkshire** So Jack, I can imagine that people already have a big question. And fortunately, it's the kind of question that you can answer. You mean, it's an important question. No, I mean, it's the kind of question that will inevitably produce a very long answer. And that question is why, why do we actually have school boards in the first place?

**Schneider** Yeah, that, that's a good question. So, well, we're going to have to get in our time machines and go back several hundred years. In some cases,

**Berkshire** Did you say you time machines? Do we now have two of them?

**Schneider** Oh, sorry. There's just one. You're going to have to cram in here with me.

**Berkshire** In the sidecar.

**Schneider** Yeah. And you know, you and I are both in Massachusetts, so we're going back you know, almost 400 years here. Right. So schools were once entirely controlled at the local level. Eventually and in Massachusetts that was quite early on it's 1647, where there were these state directives for local communities to establish schools. But then once the school had actually been created, and that was often to serve just a handful of local children. So in Massachusetts that 1647 law, which is commonly referred to today as the old Deluder Satan act, and people should Google that required the communities with 50 or more families hire a teacher and communities with a hundred or more, had to build a school in tax themselves to support it, right. That was their school. They owned it and these communities, and it was later in other places they taxed themselves to keep their schools, they hired and sometimes fired their teachers.

They made sure there was enough wood to keep the stove running in winter. That was a real concern of theirs. And they judged whether kids were learning anything. Bill Reese actually has a good book about that. So you know, this made sense in the context of a largely rural disparately settled institutional democracy. But eventually you can imagine the kinds of critiques that ensued that, you know, this approach to governance was deemed unmodern and unscientific. And, you know, this is prior to the kinds of critiques that have been really levied so aggressively by neo-liberals and conservatives in the past couple of decades. We see a massive school consolidation movement in the late 19th and early 20th century where we went from over a hundred thousand districts. And so that's more districts in the year 1900 than we have schools today to a much smaller number, right.

They get it down to 50,000 and then 30,000 today we're down to a little over 13,000 districts and schools were also consolidated. So, you know, the one room schoolhouse, which was once a symbol of democracy, I guess it's still is, was increasingly viewed as an impediment to progress. And in addition to the school and district consolidation, there were all these reforms to introduce so-called scientific management, right? To begin standardizing and centralizing some of the functions and components of school you know, largely being done at the County or the state level. And so eventually by the latter half of the 20th century, you get your first real efforts to create some national uniformity, not many, but a few largely in return for federal dollars. And the story we end up with here, right, is this story of local control and then some evolving state level control and eventually some evolving federal level control.

And we have today, this strange hybrid where each level has a claim on authority. Each has a set of powers. Each has access to levers of control. And because this system was not intentionally designed because it instead evolved over time, some of those powers and controls, overlap, or contradict each other. And that's one of the reasons we see this sort of contest station for authority and control

**Berkshire** Back to our distinguished guests. If you remember an episode we did earlier this year about the fierce battles over reopening schools, part of what we heard was how federal and state officials punted decision making down to the local level. For school board members, that often meant an impossible situation. In fact, as Rachel helped members of the Van Wert school board start to navigate the pandemic. One of the things she tried to impress upon her colleagues was that the kinds of decisions they were being asked to make required expert input.

**Rachel** I thought it was really important to let the professionals do the professional work. And so listening to the healthcare experts like that was a big thing, is like we as school board members and superintendents and principals, like we should not be in a silo making this decision by ourselves. We need to rely on the people who are on the front lines of this work and who have expertise in epidemiology and all of these public health, all of those things.

**Berkshire** Still, deciding how to reopen Van Wert's schools was agonizing. And that's why Rachel thinks we should cut school board members some slack.

**Rachel** People have access to different information and resources and, you know, trying to make these decisions is hard. It's really hard. I mean, I was terrified as a school board member having to, I remember when they decided to go back and I was like, gosh, like this is really nerve wracking. Like if I'm being really honest, I was like, if someone dies like this is, this is on us, this is on us. Like, this is a really hard decision. And I think probably a lot of school board members are thinking that, right. Like if someone dies, this is on us. But at the same time, you know, we know that kids are going to be better served when they're in this one environment. So at the same time, it's like if someone dies in 20 years because you know, like of inequities that happened or social injustices that occurred that maybe like we're somehow connected to this, this pandemic and just doing school from home. Like, you know, that is that on us too. Like, for me, I, I would, I would be thinking about those things.

**Berkshire** Back in Chelsea Massachusetts, Roberto and his colleagues were dealing with a challenge of a different order of magnitude. The city's compact size and a workforce that did not have the luxury of staying home made Chelsea a COVID hotspot with a rate of infection on par with New York City. That meant that not just the school committee but the whole city was trying to navigate a public health emergency like no one had experienced before.

**Roberto** As soon as we shut down, right. We had to basically figure out how are we going to educate all of these students while also understanding that the pandemic was, it was increasingly noticeable how hard it was hitting Chelsea. So then you had people who, you know, were people started losing their jobs. People didn't have food. And so one of the first things we did was make sure that we were still providing meals for our families. And so in addition to trying to think about how we were going to do schooling, we had to figure out distribution sites for meals. We were doing things kind of on the fly because nobody, you know, I was the only new member to the school committee, but no other school committee member had experienced a pandemic before. So we were all new and our superintendent had only been there for two months. So we were all new, just all trying to figure out how we were going to provide all these services for our students. So it was, it was just very chaotic for the residents, right, for the constituents, but also chaotic for us because we had to figure out how to, how to do all of this. Even though we, you know, most of the people didn't know what a Zoom was at the time.

**Berkshire** And while surrounding school districts have been caught up in the same heated debates about when to reopen, the situation in Chelsea was so dire that for most of the last year, in-person learning wasn't even under consideration.

**Roberto** Even when we did a survey in January just to kind of get a sense of where people were. We didn't believe that from a public health perspective, we were, we were there to reopen our schools. And so we even ask people whether they thought we should bring people back. The questions were really geared towards understanding how people were doing with regards to remote learning. And then at that point, we were still fully remote. The results of that survey

indicated that roughly between 20 to 30% of the people were having some significant challenges with the way that we were doing remote learning, which was really interesting. So then I posted this long Twitter thread. It was very politicized, right? The people who were full reopen were saying, Oh my goodness, a quarter of your students are having problems. That's terrible. Meanwhile, the other people were saying, a quarter of your students are having problems. It depends demic. So that kind of makes sense that some people are having problems, but that's surprisingly better than we expected. And so it was just very interesting seeing that dynamic kind of playing out, people always say like, Oh, use data to determine what you want to do, but then, you know, you can have two different versions of what that data means. Then you have to make a political decision.

**Berkshire** Well, Jack, so we really heard during the pandemic, the return of a pretty old set of demands, which was basically that school boards represented the most incoherent way to run schools and we just need to get rid of them once and for all. And you actually have a lot of different people making that argument for different reasons. And I wondered if you could just sort of paint a picture for us of what it is, what it is they hope to accomplish and where they want us to go?

**Schneider** Yeah, I can do that and I can even do one better and, you know, make a case for why school boards actually serve a plausible purpose and you know, where they might conceivably go. You know, I, I think that the critics of school boards are not wrong about some of their points, right? That there are benefits of aggregation and those benefits are largely related to equity, right? So school funding for instance, is fairer at a higher level of aggregation, but there are consequences of aggregation. So sameness and uniformity are not the hallmarks of excellence. And I find it to be somewhat ironic that some of the staunchest critics of school boards will often criticize schools for sort of, you know, treating all kids the same or taking a cookie cutter approach. So, you know, I, I think, whereas we might want some degree of centralization in order to advance things like civil rights and equal opportunity.

We also probably do want some degree of local control in order to tailor schools for local circumstances. And now, you know, it's like I'm channeling Thomas Friedman's accolades here. What could that possibly be? The world is flat. Local control is nothing but a failure to capitalize on economies of scale, right? Can't you just hear them screaming, like why on earth would we want to reinvent the wheel across 13,000 school districts? And I think, you know, that's a valid critique, but at the same time, you know, let's just think about a single example of say a school serving largely African-American kids, right? Setting aside her concerns about racial segregation in the schools. I think there are some really compelling reasons to think that a community like that might think differently about what's empowering for their children, for instance, than let's say a largely white suburban community.

So I think if we can agree that sameness everywhere might not necessarily be a strength, you know, it's not always a weakness, but it certainly might not always be a good thing. And that's something by the way that you tend to hear really interestingly from the radical left, as well as from traditional conservatives, like our friend, Andy Smarick right, that, that sameness

everywhere is, is possibly a bad thing. Then we might also attend to some questions of power. Like if we have a single national system whose voices are going to be heard, right, whose visions of the future are going to hold sway, whose interests are going to be served. And I think we have reasons to be concerned that if we were to nationalize education policy, we'd further empower and elevate white middle-class families and often in a way that doesn't actually serve their interests.

Right? Cause it actually substantively wouldn't change the nature of schooling for their own kids. It would only undermine the interests of other communities and further disempower them. You know, of course, on the other hand, we need to ask about capacity. What can our 98,000 public schools be expected to do on their own? Or what can our 13,000 school districts be asked to do? You know, maybe it does make sense to do something only 50 times across the States or just one time at the federal level. But for me, these questions of aggregation are best thought of in terms of what is aggregation actually going to get you here and what are the costs of it going to be?

**Berkshire** Thank you Jack for that informative explanation. Now back to our experts. As you've doubt picked up, they are both extremely passionate about local democracy, so much so that they're willing to donate their time for what sounds like, to these ears at any rate, one of the most thankless tasks imaginable. So I put to them a criticism of school boards that seems, well, kind of true. Local elections attract a notoriously low number of voters. So how representative are school boards? Rachel says that the research might surprise you.

**Rachel** Of the literature and the research that has been done. It does suggest that school boards, even though they have a long, long, long ways to go, they do tend to be the most representative publicly elected body. And there's lots of ways that research would suggest certain areas are able to create more diverse boards that are representative of their population because of the structures they have in place. So we can think about election timing. We can think about whether it's word-based or at large and all of those things. There is research that would suggest that. And in some places that does seem to matter.

**Berkshire** Much of Rachel's research has focused on education policy makers at the state level. Which is actually far less representative than local school boards.

**Rachel** I have found that state legislatures, especially education committees in state legislatures, as well as state board of education members are heavily white male businessman which is what your legislatures typically are. And there's a lot of reasons for that. A lot of them are because of structural institutional and policy based barriers that are just running of our society and continue to remain there that don't allow or don't support our provide resources for people that had historically been marginalized in those contexts.

**Berkshire** This issue of representation is one that Roberto thinks about a lot. And almost as soon as he took office he noticed that the parents he'd run for office to represent were hard to find.

**Roberto** When I talk to other school committee members, they hear a lot from their community. People are always engaging them. Here in Chelsea, I don't hear a lot from my constituents, which is very different and it's something that I wanted to change once I started. But then three months later the pandemic happened. And so it's, it's really made it very challenging to, to engage with, with the community, especially with the people who have kids in the schools.

**Berkshire** That's because the same dynamic that made Chelsea so vulnerable to COVID also shapes the city's school board politics. There are a ton of people here who can't vote because they're not legal residents. So while the school committee is really diverse by most standards, it still doesn't represent many of the parents with kids in the schools.

**Roberto** But when you actually look at, have they been elected by a representative sample of the city, then I think you can make it the case that it's not necessarily the will of the people, because for one, a huge percentage of our city does not have the right to vote. And so they don't, they don't get to say, and then when you actually look at the turnout for the election, turnout for the citywide election has hovered between 15 and 20% for municipal races. When you look at the school committee races, there's a bunch of blanks left. So you end up with essentially like 10% turnout for school committee races. And so you could say that a large percentage of our first city has not actually voted on these people myself included. So I think that we need to make, you know, take steps to make sure that these elections, that participation goes up, that we have more people engaging with this. And I would go as far as saying that we need to give the vote to people who are non citizens and especially in this community where there's such a huge percentage of the, of the population.

**Berkshire** One of the things that so inspired me about talking to our school board members for this episode is that even after this horrific year they remain so committed to local governance. So I had to ask them what they make of yet another debate that's raging right now about mayoral control of schools in big cities like Chicago and Boston. Rachel says she's troubled by a debate that makes it sound like some communities are less equipped for elected representation than others.

**Rachel** When people say school boards are not effective, or they are a less effective form of governance, I think people really need to think about what school boards they're thinking of and the communities that they're serving. Most often, they are communities that have more black and Brown students, and they are communities that are in urban areas. We look at where States have taken over boards, that that's primarily where they are. I think school boards are and can be effective. I think we have to sort of reorient ourselves to what it means to be an effective school board. And if we are really going to like believe in the power of local school boards, who gets to decide what it means to be an effective board, is it for locality that gets to decide what's effective? Is it the state? But I think those are all like important questions to consider and to make sure that our approaches and policies, and then saying that a school board is ineffective is actually not just racism.

**Berkshire** Chelsea meanwhile, is just a stone's throw from Boston which is currently in the midst of a debate about whether it's time to bring back an elected school committee. For Roberto the answer is clear cut.

**Roberto** The schools are community schools. They are for the people, by the people, paid for by government taxes, which are the people of the city. So I believe that those people should have control over their schools. And I think that the best way to do that is to have elected control over the school district. One of the biggest arguments that I hear for not doing so is that you need to ensure that there is representation from different stakeholder groups like students and teachers and parents. And my counter to that is we can elect those people. We can elect parents, we can elect educators, we can elect students even, right. We, we have a, we have a student representative in every school committee in Massachusetts by law. We can ensure that that there's opportunity for those people to be at the table. But when you have an appointed body, then it's just one, you know, one person, presumably in the case of Boston, it's the mayor deciding who those people are going to be. If you ultimately don't like what the school committee is doing, you can elect people. And that I think is the biggest, the biggest taste, right? It's that when you have an appointed board, if you don't like what they're doing, you're stuck with them.

**Berkshire** A big thank you to our special guests. Rachel White is a member of the Van Wert City school board in north west Ohio and an assistant professor of educational leadership at Old Dominion University. And Roberto Jimenez Rivera is a newly elected member of the school committee in Chelsea Massachusetts. He is also the political organizer for the Boston Teachers Union. And Jack and I will be right back to answer a burning question. Is he really thinking about running for school board?

[Music]

**Berkshire** So Jack, one of the ironies here is that when I was getting ready to interview Rachel, and I asked you if you had any questions and you sent a whole list, and frankly, they came across as kind of school board skeptic, and Rachel and I had a laugh at your expense that, you know, we had not expected this from you, that you seemed like, frankly, just another voice who thinks that the time for school boards has come and gone, and yet I'm picking up on something very different here. In fact, I'm guessing that you're going to take this opportunity to announce to the world that you're actually going to run for school board.

**Schneider** Well, somebody had to play the role of skeptic there. Somebody needed to channel Checker Finn. So, you know, I did my best there with those cases.

**Berkshire** That'd be a great one man show: Channeling Checker. Somewhat, somewhat ill attended, I would guess.

**Schneider** Well, Rick Hess would be there. So I want to make, I think one big pitch for school boards and it's about school boards as seed beds of democracy. You know, school boards have

taken a rhetorical beating over the past few decades and maybe for our Patreon members, we'll put some of those pieces which, you know, some of which have not aged well over the past 10 to 15 years in our reading list you know, Neil liberals and conservatives have presented school boards as outmoded and backwards, uninformed progress resistant, navel gazing, you know, to be fair. Some of that is true. But I think we should also recall how disempowered and handcuffed they've been over the past half century, right? Once upon a time school boards maintained almost complete authority in public education, save whatever was devolved to the school or classroom level.

And you know, that began to change over the course of the 20th century, right? We saw the rise of the state, which was tied chiefly to increases in state aid, which was a major step in the direction of funding adequacy, but which certainly transferred both some authority and a lot of control to the state. And then in the mid 20th century, we saw the rise of the federal government you know, also tied to increases in funding as well as to interventions around student rights. You know, so we're talking about things like the elementary and secondary education act later, reauthorized as NCLB and ESSA, which is what it's called today, as well as the Civil Rights Act, right. Laws like that. And as a result, state and federal agencies have exerted more and more control over time. And they've seized from school boards, many of the powers that they once had.

So like just consider accountability, right? That was something that was once determined at the local level. And I'm not suggesting here that it was done well ever but we see how elected local boards have been completely cut out of that process today. And the result is a system that I think is arguably worse because not only does it not work, but it also disempowers people at the local level, right? It would be hard to make a case that existing measurement and accountability systems are empowering to local people. And so when local boards get criticized, I find those arguments to be somewhat disingenuous, right? The argument is they don't do anything. And in many cases that's true, but that argument fails to acknowledge the fact that elected school boards have had their powers seriously constricted, right? Their hands are tied. And so I think a more interesting question is what would an alternative be if we actually wanted to empower local boards and to build their capacity and to really take advantage of the fact that these are really well positioned institutions for advancing democracy like real authentic democracy, and if they had real and authentic powers powers, like determining school quality via some locally controlled accountability process, obviously overseen by the state.

I think that would be really, it would be really powerful. You know, imagine if we work to build the capacity of these local boards and a range of other local actors to get involved with, what's essentially a political process, a governance process. I could see that being an incredible training ground for real democracy. And that's so badly needed, right? So where do we get to flex our democratic muscles these days at the ballot box once a year, right in the juror's box once or twice in a lifetime. I think there's a lot of untapped potential in local forms of involvement via the schools. And especially since the schools are in every community, every kind of community, and they're often more accessible than other features of public life.

**Berkshire** Well, Jack I'm sure that I speak on behalf of our entire listening audience to say that one that was really inspiring. And two, I learned so much about school boards in this episode. I can't imagine that there could be anything else to learn and yet, and yet there's more in store for our Patreon subscribers who join us after every episode in a special place we like to call in the weeds and this segment, we're going to be talking about the raging debate about big city school boards and Jack I'm imagining that you have a lot to say about that too.

**Schneider** You're imagining correctly, Jennifer. Mayoral control was a fad that burst onto the scene in the nineties and, you know, continues to have a real influence on city schools today. And there's been a kind of resurgence in terms of involvement of local boards in big city school districts. And I think that those tensions between centralized control and the mayor's office and elected boards is a really interesting one.

**Berkshire** So if that interests you, all you have to do is go to [Patreon.com/haveyouheardpodcast](https://patreon.com/haveyouheardpodcast) and sign up to be one of our regular subscribers. It means that you get extra things like a reading list to go with each episode and you get to join us In the Weeds where today you're going to learn all about the raging debate over big city school boards. And I'm sure Jack will now let us know that that's not the only way you can support the show.

**Schneider** Yeah. If you want to keep your Bitcoins in your e-wallets then

**Berkshire** What about your non fungible tokens?

**Schneider** Anyway, you can keep those stored on the, on the uh...

**Berkshire** See? He doesn't know. It's all an act.

**Schneider** It's on the blockchain. I know about the blockchain. There are lots of ways to support the show. Perhaps the best is to share it with people who you think you suspect might not be listening to it right now, share your favorite episode or the latest episode you can go on and give us a rating wherever you download your podcasts, make sure that you're a subscriber. We also appreciate when you engage with the show's Twitter handle at, have you heard pod, we've gotten too many good ideas for episodes from you. So cool it in that regard, and instead, just let us know what you thought about the most recent episode. And we always have fun going through the, Have You Heard mailbags? So let us know how the podcast can better serve you

**Berkshire** Until next time, I'm Jennifer Berkshire also known as the campaign manager for Jack Schneider for school board.

**Schneider** And I'm Jack Schneider, author of a number of non fungible tokens.

**Berkshire** This is Have You Heard.

