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Subject: Thank you from Black Mountain Elementary
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Dear Trustees and Senior Leadership Team,

We wanted to take a moment to share a deep and heartfelt thank you for the wonderful opportunity you gave our school community last night. We were so honoured to share about the What Could School Be Symposium and the opportunity it gave us to spotlight the learning of 81 amazing children (and the educators who serve them).

At Symposium, the stories we shared were each 45 minutes long (you can find the links to the slide decks [here](#) and [here](#)), and then educators returned to our school to spend the afternoon alongside the children. And each time, as was the case with every story shared at Symposium, the real brilliance came from the children and young adults at the center of each story.

Your deep attention and care to each child, and the way you held up their words last night and honoured each of their voices was so important to us. It felt like the way we hold each other up in our communities, so thank you for that gift. They are each feeling even more power and agency as learners and children in this world, thanks to you.

We met in circle today with each class to invite the children to share their experience last night, and here is what they offered (Austin and Amelia were not there when we asked the questions, but we know they also felt important and powerful):

Deagan- I was very nervous because I've never been to one of those...I saw two screens - one at the front and one at the back and it took me a while to notice that they both showed the same things.

Rhea - it was scary. It was definitely scary having to speak in front of the entire school district. You don't know them and it's also kind of a big deal. They make the decisions. It was nerve-wracking. But I am really proud of myself for going. For sharing what I had to say.

Deagan - it was really hard. It was hard to answer the questions. I didn't want to have a pause where I was thinking, "what do I do? What do I say?" So I just went for it and I got the answer right.

Natalie- It felt really weird at the start because you walked in and as you sat down you saw all the people sit there and there were so many of them. But, like, after it was over I want to do that again because it was so much fun being able to stand up there and share with a bunch of people. I was so proud.

Deagan- Probably having that little gold pin. That felt really special. And eating the ice cream after and playing soccer with a can. (We had an ice cream celebration in the parking lot after the sharing).

Rhea - connecting to what Deegan said, the ice cream bars, and getting to talk in front of the entire district. And getting that pin. When I got that, I realized I did something big, something important.

Natalie- I liked just getting to be there and getting to answer the questions with what you feel.

Hunter - my favourite part was my second time talking. I liked it better because I wasn't just talking about myself, I was talking about community. That felt important to me.

Rowan - I feel like when you see all these people, and it looks very professional, it felt good. It felt like you were speaking for people who couldn't speak up for themselves.

Hunter - we were speaking for our friends and family.

Rowan - I want to say thank you to everyone. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, because I know a lot of kids don't get this. It feels very important to have this. It's a good way for me to start middle school, because I know my voice matters. And I have so much more to say.

And so, we end with Rowan's words. Thank you to everyone. Thank you for holding us up. Thank you for holding learning up.

Limlmt,

Rhea, Natalie, Austin, Hunter, Rowan, Deagan, Amelia, Janet, Jeremy, Jenna, Shivy, Ainzley, Amanda, and Keely

(on behalf of all the children and educators of Black Mountain Elementary)