



info@savecaliforniastudentsnow.com

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2021 FEB -5 PM 12: 25

CITY CLERK  
CITY OF PASADENA

February 5, 2021

Pasadena City Council  
City of Pasadena  
100 N. Garfield Avenue  
P.O. Box 7115  
Pasadena, CA 91109

RE: COVID-19 School Reopening

Dear Honorable Mayor, City Council and Dr. Goh,

California's children have now spent nearly one year away from their classrooms—precious time sacrificed in the name of public health. This lack of social interaction for our kids has caused an increase in mental health breakdowns and suicide attempts, weight gain from lack of physical activity and excessive screen time, a general lack of motivation, and overall stunted developmental gains. They have lost a year of learning, socialization, and well-being, along with the safety of daily interaction with educators trained to recognize signs of child abuse.

The CDC says that a return to school is safe and schools across the country are reopening successfully, so why are our kids still at home with no end in sight? When will our state legislature and local officials accept that our children are bearing the brunt of these flawed public health policies?

We ask you to consider the harm caused by these current public health measures and examine why we have allowed the wishes of powerful unions like the California Teachers Association to outweigh the needs of our children, who depend on us to make decisions in *their* best interest.

CTA and other teacher unions have an outsized influence across the state; their opinions even impact private schools. CTA's ridiculous list of demands, many of which have nothing to do with COVID-19, are only taken seriously because of the union's significant political power. This needs to stop. When union demands delay in-person learning, students lose.

It is time for you to be an advocate for our children. Unlike the CTA, our children do not have the financial means to sway the conversation with powerful Sacramento lobbyists. They only have you. *Your efforts can ensure that our children return to school before the one year mark.*

We are counting on our state legislature and local officials to pay attention to the struggles our kids are facing and get them back to school. The unions are fighting on the wrong side of history; we hope you will not find yourself doing the same.

Thank you,

Erika Foy  
On behalf of Save California Students Now

02/08/2021  
Item 1

**Iraheta, Alba**

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**To:** Jomsky, Mark; Official Records - City Clerk  
**Subject:** RE: Pasadena City Council Meeting

**From:** Gary Stern  
**Date:** February 5, 2021 at 2:52:09 PM PST  
**To:** "Jomsky, Mark" <mjomsky@cityofpasadena.net>  
**Cc:** Gary Stern <  
**Subject:** Pasadena City Council Meeting

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Dear Mr. Jomsky,

The Pasadena Area School Heads (PASH) (heads of Pasadena area independent schools) would like to share the attached letter that was sent to Dr. Goh and Steve Mermell to thank them for their dedicated leadership and unwavering partnership. We are profoundly grateful to Dr. Goh, the Pasadena Public Health Department, and Steve Mermell for playing an instrumental role in helping our schools safely navigate the uncharted waters the pandemic presents.

Notably, we would like to advocate strongly on behalf of modifying or eliminating the stable cohort requirement for middle schools and high schools to allow middle and high school students to return to campus for in-person instruction when the COVID-19 case rates reach the designated threshold (7 cases or less per 100,000). The attached letter below more clearly articulates our position on this important matter. I would appreciate it if this letter could be part of the public record for the upcoming Pasadena City Council Meeting. Thank you for your review and consideration of our position.

With appreciation and gratitude,

The Pasadena Area School Heads

Warmest regards,

Gary Stern  
Head of School  
High Point Academy

Dear Pasadena City Council,

The Pasadena Area School Heads (PASH) (heads of Pasadena area independent schools) would like to share a letter that was sent to Dr. Goh and Steve Mermell to thank them for their dedicated leadership and unwavering partnership. We are profoundly grateful to Dr. Goh, the Pasadena Public Health Department, and Steve Mermell for playing an instrumental role in helping our schools safely navigate the uncharted waters the pandemic presents. Notably, we would like to advocate strongly on behalf of modifying or eliminating the stable cohort requirement for middle schools and high schools to allow middle and high school students to return to campus for in-person instruction when the COVID-19 case rates reach the designated threshold (7 cases or less per 100,000). The letter below more clearly articulates our position on this important matter. Thank you for your review and consideration of our position.

With appreciation and gratitude,

The Pasadena Area School Heads

Dear Dr. Goh and Steve Mermell,

As heads of Pasadena area independent schools (PASH), we would like to begin by profoundly thanking you and your colleagues at the Pasadena Public Health Department (PPHD) and City of Pasadena for your tireless efforts aimed at protecting our local and school communities in particular - during this unprecedented time. It is of great comfort to our faculty, staff, parents, and students to know that there are so many dedicated public health professionals and local government officials working tirelessly to keep us safe.

### **Small Cohorts, Limited Services Provision**

As you know, the Reopening Protocols for K-12 Schools document includes a provision that allows schools to serve students on campus who have IEP's or ELL designation, or who have needs that cannot be adequately met by the distance/remote learning environment. We are pleased these guidelines were amended on October 23rd to allow for up to 25% of the students in a school to be present on campus at any given time to receive these services. Allowing children who are struggling with the online learning environment to return to campus for specialized services was a prudent and reasonable step forward.

Unfortunately, after over seven months of being isolated and removed from their school communities, virtually all students have social and emotional needs that are not being

adequately addressed by the online school environment. Some of our students are exhibiting significant deleterious effects, such as behavioral issues, academic challenges, anxiety, depression, and deterioration of physical health. We know that these effects are real because we see them in everything from lagging academic performance to increased calls to our school counselors to the high number of concerned messages from parents. In the interest of serving our students who desperately need the social and emotional support and connection that derives from on-campus, in-person interactions, **we are appreciative and grateful that the PPHD revised the Reopening Protocol to clarify that individual schools maintain significant discretion to bring up to 25% of the total number of students enrolled at a particular school back to campus at any given time to participate in programs of the school's design and choosing so long as those programs operate in a manner consistent with the health and safety guidelines outlined in the Reopening Protocol document.**

### **The Reopening of Schools Once LA County Transitions to Tier 2 (Red Tier)**

We remain hopeful that LA County will transition to Tier 2 (Red Tier) in the not too distant future. In preparation for a broader reopening of our campuses, our schools have engaged in extensive administrative, logistical, and curriculum planning, including dedicating significant financial resources to hiring and training additional personnel and adopting health and safety measures and guidelines aligned with PPHD's School Reopening Protocol. Once LA County enters Tier 2 (Red Tier), we are confident in our ability to safely and successfully reopen our campuses for in-person instruction once we receive the appropriate authorization from PPHD. Importantly, due to a generally smaller student population, substantial health and safety preparations, diligent and highly trained personnel, and facility enhancements, our independent schools are well positioned to plan and implement safe and secure campus reopenings.

To help facilitate our ongoing planning and preparations, we would appreciate optimal clarity regarding the specific parameters of PPHD's and the City of Pasadena's plan for authorizing school reopenings once LA County transitions to Tier 2 (Red Tier). Toward this end, it would be reassuring for PPHD and the City of Pasadena to articulate clearly that its guidelines for school reopening would be no more restrictive than the corresponding State of California guidelines.

### **Stable Cohorts**

We would like to affirm our position that mandating stable cohorts for middle schools and high schools is impracticable and would effectively preclude our middle and high schools from reopening our campuses for in-person instruction once LA County enters Tier 2 (Red Tier). Effective instruction of our students requires their interaction with multiple teachers

throughout the day who are content specialists in their subjects. Students also require access to varying levels of academic classes so maintaining a stable cohort of students who are all attending the same levels and types of classes is impracticable. Accordingly, we respectfully request that middle schools and high schools refrain from being subject to a stable cohort requirement. We recognize the imperative nature of maintaining small groups and minimizing interaction with others, and we believe we can meet this goal and ensure the health and well-being of all of our students.

Additionally, going forward, if State of California guidelines permit, we would appreciate PPHD's consideration of increasing the stable cohort size (greater than 14 students with a maximum of two teachers) for elementary schools when LA County is in Tier 2. Our class groupings are relatively small as it is, usually fewer than 20 students, and we can ensure social distancing and infection control measures are in place. Requiring cohorts of 14 or fewer students will put a huge financial burden on many of our schools who will have to change their staffing and space requirements to meet the smaller grouping requirements.

### **Conclusion**

We strongly believe that safely reopening schools for in-person instruction constitutes a paramount priority. We appreciate and understand that you share the priority of safely reopening schools. In the above referenced circumstances, we would welcome requirements that our schools document their compliance with PPHD guidelines and that the PPHD has the opportunity to visit our campuses and recommend program or safety adjustments. As always, we thank you for providing an open forum in which we can honestly and respectfully share our perspectives and insights. We are deeply appreciative of your courageous leadership and unwavering commitment to our school communities and the community at large.

With much appreciation and gratitude,

Tonya Beilstein  
Head of School  
Barnhart School

John Bracker  
Head of School  
Polytechnic School

Julia Fanara  
Head of School

Alverno Heights

Sister Carolyn McCormack  
President  
Flintridge Sacred Heart

Elizabeth J. McGregor  
Head of School  
Westridge School

Kate Morin  
Head of School  
Mayfield Senior School

Amy Patzlaff  
Head of School  
Clairbourn School

Gary Stern  
Head of School  
High Point Academy

Baudelia Taylor  
Head of School  
Crestview Preparatory School

February 5, 2021

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CITY CLERK  
CITY OF PASADENA

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

Pasadena Area School Heads (PASH) is an organization of heads of independent schools located in and near Pasadena. As members of PASH we want to advocate for action on the state level that would provide a process through which middle and high schools (grades 7-12) would be allowed to reopen for in-person instruction even while Los Angeles County remains in the widespread (purple) tier as designated by the state's "Blueprint for a Safer Economy."

While we understand the crucial need to limit transmission of the COVID-19 virus, we also understand that the mental health of our teenage students is being increasingly challenged by their inability to attend school in person. More and more studies are showing that growing numbers of teenagers are experiencing symptoms of mental illness—especially depression and anxiety. Most tragically there is evidence of an increase in the number of teen suicides during the pandemic.

As educators we are passionately concerned about all aspects of the health of our entire school communities, and we fervently believe that we can safely reopen our campuses for in-person instruction while still in the purple tier. We base this belief on recent research and the example of colleagues who have been able to continue to operate their schools safely even in counties that have now moved from the red into the purple tier. We also have great confidence that our schools have the resources and expertise to ensure that all health department protocols and guidelines will be followed to protect the health of our students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The opportunity to vaccinate our employees in the near future also contributes to our confidence.

Therefore, we urge you to take action and advocate for the development of a process which would provide a path towards allowing in-person instruction for 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Los Angeles County as soon as possible. This could be similar to the waiver program that had been put into place for TK-6 grades without the mandate for maintaining stable cohorts which is generally not possible at the middle and high school levels.

Time is of the essence. For our students—school has been totally remote since March 13, 2020. They are suffering and we need to help them. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jo-Anne Woolner, The Gooden School  
Baudelia Taylor, Crestview Preparatory School  
Julia Fanara Alverno, Heights Academy  
John Finch, Chandler School  
Jim Pickett, Flintridge Preparatory School

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Amy Patzlaff, Clairbourn School  
Michael Maniska, International School of Los Angeles  
Joe Sciuto, Mayfield Junior School  
Perry Martin, La Salle College Preparatory  
John Bracker, Polytechnic School  
Tonya A. Beilstein, Barnhart School  
Kate Morin, Mayfield Senior School