

Tuesday June 30, 2020

Dear Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell, OUSD Senior Leaders, Members of the Covid-19 Action Team, and all Members of the OUSD Community:

In late May, OUSD formed a COVID-19 Action Team to develop recommendations for how public schooling would work in the 20-21 school year. At the urging of Sondra Aguilera, OUSD Chief Academic Officer, LCAP PSAC members requested participation in each of the working groups that comprise the Action Team. After invitation to join the COVID-19 Action Team was forwarded to PSAC, we quickly mobilized to recruit individual members and to develop spaces for us to engage in dialogue across our working groups. We met weekly to discuss our involvement and planned a Special Meeting so that families and the larger community could give their feedback to the committee and to district leaders. Despite the role we were able to play, we faced serious constraints, including not having sufficient time to reach school communities broadly in the way that this undertaking demands.

These were the PSAC members who participated in each of the working groups:

Instruction - *Reginald Mosley and Mona Lisa Treviño*

Technology - *Jen Darmstadt-Holm*

Operations - *Caitlin Khurshid*

Facilities - *Alma Piedras*

Wellness - *Michelle Campbell-Mateo*

Finances - *Diana Casanova*

Community - *Alan Pursell and RocQuel Johnson*

With final recommendations from the Task Force due soon, we understand that this is a very complex undertaking. OUSD has a limited budget and a very short window of time in which to make assessments and decisions. That being said, our most recent PSAC working groups debrief ended with the general sentiment that the Covid-19 Action Team and OUSD are not ready for the school year to start on August 10th. Below is a summary of the themes and concerns that contribute to that assessment.

**We feel that this process is not data-driven and that there continues to be insufficient communication between all stakeholders to develop a strong plan.**

The survey and data gathering done to date have been insufficient in scope and detail, both for families and staff. It is also unclear whether a broad segment of the OUSD student body was polled or even sufficiently aware that information gathering was taking place. Similarly, feedback from teachers was not incorporated into the most recent recommendations as presented. The same holds true for feedback gathered from public community and committee meetings.

Additionally, the working groups have not shared information with all principals and other administrators. Statements made by various principals at our engagements have included incorrect or incomplete information about the planning process and the possible scenarios under consideration. We wonder how many principals are available during this process after the close of the school year.

Finally, while some working groups are very much attempting to do outreach, provide information, and are receptive to feedback, others are clearly very guarded, even with members of their own working group.

**We feel that we are rushing into things too quickly. The blended learning plan currently being put forth is presented as a given rather than a possibility. Feedback from all stakeholders has not been gathered fully. The feedback that has been gathered has not yet been integrated and analyzed.**

The planning process is disjointed and there is no feedback between constituency groups. The most recent presentation indicated that there would be some form of in-classroom instruction starting the week of August 10th, yet there doesn't seem to be a plan for determining whether things are working once school starts, much less the ability to adjust if things go poorly. There isn't even a sense of how many teachers, families, or staff will be willing to return to campuses. We concur with a staff statement made during the most recent Action Team presentation, "It is easier to start slow and then pick up the pace than to make many mistakes."

An August 10th classroom/remote instruction date would start the year with unprepared teachers and unprepared families. We believe that instruction should begin after Labor Day, with the start date and all plans/processes communicated to families as soon as possible before August 10. Ideally, instruction days would be added to the end of the year to account for the later start.

**If blended learning is how the school year will begin for a subset of students, these are our main concerns and recommendations:**

More time is needed for clarification of key elements at the school site level. Sites need to organize themselves as thoroughly as possible to protect the health and well-being of students, staff, and families. Other key elements include determining the cohort of distance learning teachers and the means for school staff to reach out to the families that were not accounted for after distance learning started last spring. School sites need time to inform all staff and families about site-specific plans, as well as to implement and operationalize plans with them. Also, school and departments must provide initial technical support to families and assess the learning and social-emotional needs of individual students in a manner that is culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate. Sites need time to determine learning loss and other impacts due to shelter in place, and to then figure out how to effectively teach and support individual students during the school year. This staging time could also

include some limited direct instruction with students to prepare them for distance learning and/or in-person learning, and to initiate social-emotional support and relationship-building.

One-to-one Re-Entry Meetings with all families in Phase 1 must be held to orient and plan, particularly with Special Education families. All Phase 1 families, teachers, and staff should have a clear understanding of what blended learning will entail and of what it means to “opt out”.

Most of the focus has gone to planning for the on-site elements of the school year and not enough to planning the distance learning aspects. This is in part understandable due to the health risks involved. Still, key elements of a distance learning plan have not been addressed. For example, while the goal of giving every student a chromebook and internet access has been expressed publicly, there are no plans to make sure that families have the basic computer literacy to facilitate the student learning process at home. Also, households with multiple students will have very different computer, internet, and computer literacy needs than a household with just one student. Finally, significant planning and articulation of how the district will address other types of equity concerns, such as language and economic conditions that impact the availability and capacity of families to support distance learning is needed. Direct partnership between families and teachers should be the focus of planning for distance learning.

Teachers also need additional training and preparation to use the tools of distance learning so that they can focus on the curriculum. Initially, better computers and internet access for teachers is a prerequisite. Chromebooks are not powerful enough to do more than Zoom video chats. For example, a teacher could not do a slide show presentation while running Zoom on a chromebook. This is but one example of teacher access issues that must be addressed. Not enough thought has been given to how people will collaborate at the school site level to make specific things like this work.

More generally, we must establish the strong partnerships needed to support whichever model is chosen. If we are to face the many challenges of this moment for the benefit of students, those partnerships must include families, teachers, staff, administrators, and other members of the community. Establishing those essential partnerships requires that we allocate sufficient planning, collaboration, and implementation time. We must minimally devote the month of August to doing so.

We remain committed, alongside other committees and community stakeholders, to partnering with you in support of all OUSD students and families.

Sincerely.

The PSAC Participants in the Covid19 Action Team