

May 21, 2020

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Superintendent Jorge Aguilar

**Re: Item 7.1 Coronavirus Response Update**

Dear SCUSD Board Members and Superintendent Aguilar:

The Community Priority Coalition (CPC) is very concerned about the Sacramento City Unified School District's (SCUSD) is navigating its response to the COVID-19 crisis. The school closures and the impact on SCUSD's already difficult fiscal situation turns a glaring light on the existing inequities we have been identifying and requesting your focus on. While the pandemic is challenging for everyone, it is having an unequal and more difficult impact on our most vulnerable students and their families, especially students of color, low-income students, English learners, foster and homeless youth, and students with disabilities.

Since 2016, the Community Priority Coalition has submitted to the Sacramento City Unified District Board an alternative budget that reflects the following Coalition priorities:

- 1) Class Size Reduction (24 to 1);
- 2) Professional development in cultural proficiency and restorative justice;
- 3) Additional instructional assistance for English Learners and increased efforts to involve their parents in their education programs, including bilingual counselors, teachers, social workers and other staff; and
- 4) After-school/early intervention programs.

While these issues may have been included in SCUSD's LCAP, we are not satisfied that they have been addressed sufficiently. That was before COVID-19. The district's response to COVID-19 underscores our concern that we will be ignored as the district makes decisions as the school year ends. LCAP timelines are extended, state level assessments (including for ELs) are suspended, and the State's budget is broke. What that means for the district is more than just tough budget cuts, but also how the district is making decisions, whose input is being considered, and whose needs are being targeted. We respect the work of the LCAP Parent Advisory Committee, but they are not a first-responders' team on the pandemic. We also read that the district has done a lot of work (with a lot of tension and disagreements).

When the schools were closed, the Legislature and the Governor agreed to keep paying you – district staff, through the closures. One of the Governor's Executive Orders and the state's guidance charged you with specific activities, including:

- a. "High quality" distance learning opportunities
- b. School meals in a safe setting

- c. “Supervision of students during school hours”
- d. Submitting a written report explaining to the community the changes to program offerings the district has made in response to school closures to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of such closures on students and families, *including low-income students, English Learners and foster youth.*

We appreciate the District’s successful efforts to be the centers of community support as shown by their heroic meal provision as well as their efforts to get Chromebooks out to all families even with our concerns about how it was rolled out. However, we continue to be concerned that the Coalition’s priorities have not been taken seriously. Now with this health crisis, those priorities are even more important.

We request that the June 19 report address, in particular, how:

1. The District provided the specific services required in law to English learners. How will you be ensuring that English Learners are progressing with their English language proficiency and have equal access to the curriculum? What are you doing specifically to address their needs?
2. The District provided services for students with the greatest needs, and how those needs are (1) identified and (2) addressed. Our Black and Brown students were already experiencing the poorest academic performance in the district pre-COVID-19. Online distance learning is not the appropriate learning opportunity for all students for many reasons, including because their families do not have Wi-Fi, computers or the capacity to help their students online. In addition, we know that many students have not even been reached or engaged. Have you conducted an assessment yet of all our students’ ability to participate with and without online learning technologies? What have you found?
3. The District is supporting teachers to deliver the learning opportunity that meets the needs of their individual students. Again, online learning does not meet the needs of all students, nor their families. Teachers who have been successful in reaching their students and delivering learning opportunities – online, packets, on the phone, in person at social distance – should be part of the district’s future program and response to improve its delivery of learning and in helping other educators.
4. The District will determine how to provide appropriate mental health and emotional support to students as they return to school that might look very different in the fall. Many students will have experienced trauma at some level during the school shut down and summer. The district will need a plan for how to support both the students dealing with acute trauma as well as almost universal anxiety and disruption.

We expect and request that the COVID-19 Report submitted with the Budget be presented to the community with opportunity to review and comment *before* the Board meeting to accept the report. There are only 2 more board meetings, so we want to see a draft of the COVID-19 Report at the next board meeting on June 18 before it is accepted with the Budget adoption on June 25 so that we may comment and so that those comments may be considered in the final report.

As the district makes plans for reopening schools, we want there to be a community engagement process so that we can understand what the district is considering and we can provide input.

The Community Priority Coalition sincerely wants to work collaboratively with the Superintendent and SCUSD Board for the betterment of our children.

Sincerely,  
Carl Pinkston  
Community Priority Coalition

Liz Guillen  
Public Advocates

Duane Campbell  
Education Committee,  
League of United Latin American Citizens, Sacramento

Tere Flores  
Sacramento ACT