

September 27, 2020

Todd Collins
Shounak Dharap
Melissa Baten Caswell
Ken Dauber
Jennifer DiBrienza
cc: Don Austin

RE: Plan for Reopening School 2020-21; Parent Objections

Dear PAUSD Board,

We (**356 parents and counting**) are writing with serious concerns about the proposed hybrid model reopening plan, and we feel that parents are being pushed with very limited time and information to make a yearlong decision about our children's health and education. **We ask that the board delay the decision on reopening until teacher feedback and parent feedback have been genuinely sought and incorporated into the plan.**

We understand that the board cannot unilaterally create a plan and must negotiate with multiple parties. Nevertheless, that should not be used as a rationale for approving a plan that hurts the quality of education while increasing risk, all without parent and teacher support.

The board's discussion at the meeting on September 22 made it extremely clear that parent and teacher feedback was not being considered at that time, even after hours of concerned comments from many of the 1,000+ attendees on the call. The board claimed that 65% of parents want their children to go back as a reason to push through the plan. However, this 65% was based on a misleading survey asking parents in an abstract fashion whether they would like their student to return, without any information about the plan, disclosure that it would involve asynchronous learning, or opportunity for more nuanced comment. In contrast, the survey that was sent along with this letter, and reached hundreds of parents in PAUSD, showed that over 90% of parents want to delay reopening until the plan is improved, over 40% would stay remote, over 30% don't know whether they'll return under the current plan (when we're just days away from the decision deadline), and over 85% believe it's more important that we keep classrooms together than it is to return to in-person instruction.

We ask the board to conduct a new, more thorough and transparent survey.

If the board chooses not to delay, we still hope you will more actively seek and incorporate our feedback to improve the plan.

We want to reemphasize the concerns raised at the board meeting on the critical topics of quality of education, safety, teacher safety and wellbeing, community, and distance learning challenges:

Quality of education

Our teachers have done a tremendous job providing high-quality live instruction and virtual learning opportunities that have been effective for many students. For many, this has been a

huge improvement over the spring asynchronous experience, and the students are finally settling into a routine and community in their classrooms. We're grateful for that.

The current hybrid plan requires alternating weeks of 2-3 days of asynchronous learning. **This will be a huge step back.** Our students will have *less* direct education from teachers. Based on many of our children's experiences with asynchronous last spring, these days will be less effective for learning and much more intensive for parents and caretakers. For many of us, 2 asynchronous days will require one parent per child to take that time off work, or will mean two days without education for our kids, and the harm to our families will be felt immediately.

The proposed hybrid model means that the teachers will have a full load (teaching in person 5 days a week), but they will have to additionally provide 2-3 days of full lesson planning for asynchronous tasks and videos. This is asking so much from teachers who are already working incredibly hard – and may result in worsened lesson planning due to the increased difficulty. Alternatively, kids will have to rely much more heavily on outsourced software education for 2-3 days per week. Further, because some students will have the asynchronous tasks and lessons before their in-person class and others after, it will be incredibly difficult for the classes to reinforce one another.

If the board chooses not to delay the decision, we ask that the hybrid model be changed to allow for live instruction via video for the cohort at home. This would be a huge educational improvement and also a huge help to parents and caregivers compared with asynchronous time. This would offer 5 days of live teaching to all children, whether remote at home or in person at school.

While the social component of school is a huge advantage of being in-person, the current plan requires masks, social distancing, and in some cases physical barriers. As such, it's not clear whether the in-person days will truly provide the social-emotional learning that many of us crave for our children.

It is also clear that the district does not have broad support from teachers for its plan. **We trust the teachers**, who are doing a fantastic job with remote teaching, to understand what would be needed with a successful reopening, and this is not it.

Safety

As we enter the fall and winter, with an upcoming flu season on top of COVID-19, the safety of this program should be clearly demonstrated. Aside from being legally allowed, what gives the board confidence that reopening will not lead to further COVID outbreaks spread by our children and teachers?

Aides and specialists, PE, music and library teachers, are currently slotted to go back in person. These people see up to 700 students a week and could serve as super spreaders. They have already been doing a fantastic job with remote teaching, and we recommend keeping these specialists remote.

The district still does not have a plan or requirement for regular testing or contact tracing, which we request be put in place before classes resume in person.

The school has not detailed whether every room has been adequately updated with COVID-safe air filtration systems. We ask that outdoor options be used wherever possible (and resources

be provided to do so), that windows/doors remain open even when it gets colder, and that HEPA filters be put in place or remote-learning contingency plans be offered for whenever windows and doors must be closed.

While regular cleaning plans have been put in place, parents are concerned about shared bathrooms and how these are kept clean during the day.

In addition, the kids who attend school in person in cohorts two days a week will go home or to childcare settings the other three days per week. These settings could be with siblings at home who attend other classes in person; they could be with small learning pods with other kids from other classes or schools; and they could be with childcare providers who also see kids from other cohorts. The safety benefit of an A vs. B cohort may be quickly negated with the outside class interactions.

Teacher safety and mental well-being

Teachers overwhelmingly do not feel safe returning right now (over 80% do not want to come back in person yet), including some teachers who are high-risk (e.g., have diabetes) and face higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19. We will lose some teachers who simply won't be willing to return in person. We are very afraid we could also lose teachers, parents, or administrators to COVID once it begins spreading through the schools. We also worry about teachers receiving sufficient paid leave to cover their time away in case of illness. Most importantly, we want teachers to be comfortable with the plan that is created.

Community disruption

Palo Alto schools have done a great job creating class settings remotely, and families are just now settling into a routine in the new remote setup.

But depending on how many families choose distance learning or hybrid, classes could be split up, teachers could be re-assigned, and distance learning classes could end up with teachers and/or students from other schools. Language immersion courses could be jeopardized altogether, or grouped across multiple grade levels, and real-time instruction will be reduced to 2-3 days per week in the hybrid program.

As parents, how can we make a decision if we have no idea how our decision will affect the entire classroom for our child?

We ask that these decisions not be made permanent for the full year, given that we don't know what the classroom setups will be, and we *do* know that COVID conditions will change. Please keep options open for families until a safe full-time education can be started or allow at least one additional decision point before the end of the school year. And please allow for live remote instruction so that students can have 5 days of live teaching per week, and classes can be kept together.

Distance learning challenges

We recognize that distance learning is very hard for many kids, and for many families. We care deeply for these families. But we are a strong community with many resources, and we could do a lot to help families without putting the health and education of the entire community at risk.

We recommend the district prioritize supporting these families first, while it works to improve the reopening plan.

Ideas include:

- Expanding the PAUSD+ program to include a broader range of students and families for whom in-person learning is needed.
- Connecting families who want more social interaction for their kids to existing learning pods or other families that would welcome another kid during the school day.
- Raising money to support the cost of childcare during distance learning for families that need it.
- Creating free, supervised distance learning classrooms **at schools** for students who need to be out of the house. Keep class sizes small and isolated and focus on the kids who need the help and interaction. Parents will fundraise for this. Expand the model currently operated by Palo Alto Community Childcare (Kids Clubs), RightAtSchool, and other childcare centers that are already doing this for a limited number of families.
- Creating in-person teacher instruction for students that need the direct support and instruction. Keep class sizes small and isolated and focus on the kids who need the help and interaction.

We implore the board to take more time to gather feedback from teachers and parents. Please be considerate of the vast knowledge and experience of our teachers and be aware of the needs of all of our families before making such a dramatic and sudden change.

There is a lot we could do to make the reopening of schools safer, more effective educationally, and more sustainable for families. There are ways to continue to safely provide five days per week of synchronous teaching for all children. We will help enable the school district to execute a well-considered, community-supported plan, but this is not it.

Sincerely,

Ben Patton (parent of student in Spanish Immersion first grade at Escondido)

Yasmine Coupal, SI 1st and 3rd grade

Claudia Sardi (parent of two Spanish immersion 1st graders @ Escondido)

Lorena Murias

Ramya Bhagavatula, K parent

Tom and Angie Whitnah, Duveneck, Ms. Tai and Ms. Gerfen

Maura Tarnoff. Kids: Benjamin, 3rd grade (English, rm 17, Escondido) and Adriana, kinder (SI, rm 6, Escondido)

Rowena Chiu (Ohlone, 3rd Grade)

Pasha Dahncke, Addison Elementary

Amit Karmarkar, 6th Greene

Kristan Green

Robert Weiner, parent of Duveneck 3rd-grader
Kelly Chang
David Chan, son is 1st-grader @ Addison
Melissa and Matthew Roybal (parents of a student in Spanish immersion kindergarten at Escondido)
Mandi Lin & Ohlone 1st grade
Mari Ueda-Tao, 3rd Grade, Fairmeadow Elementary
Kanthi Nagaraj -- kindergarten
Carolyn Wang (Palo Verde Grade 2 and 5)
Diana Fong, parent of 4th grader
Kathleen Murphy, Mom to 7th grader at Greene
Stephanie Tully, Nixon Parent
Heather Gaillard
Pranita Garg, 2nd grade
Nancy Krop, Gunn parent
Jianying Lang/1st grade
Karen Lu (parent to K and 1st grader)
Rachelle Doorley, Ohlone Elementary
Viji Subramanian, 3 rd grader and a 5 th grader
Rajesh Nishtala, Palo Verde 2nd Grade
Shana Segal Palo Verde
Prerana Jayakumar - Ohlone 3rd grade
Alexandria Boehm (Kinder and 3rd grade)
Colby Ranger (Kinder at Hays)
Anshuman Bapna, Grade 1
Letizia Rodriguez
Moongon Jung, room 1 & 17
Alexandra Kennedy, Ms. Holmes's class
Frank Li
Meron Shewarega (Parent to kids in Kindergarten and 2nd grade at Palo Verde)
Sanjeet Thadani - Escondido room 11
Jiao Yuan, room 3
Sheila French
Alicia Pelly parent of Evelyn Pelly Room 9

Marcela Dorigo - Alegría Dorigo (5 th grade) and Amadeo Dorigo -3rd grade
Jeny Smith, parent of a SI kinder Escondido
Khurshid Gandhi
Joanna Argasinska/Hanna Ghahramani grade 1
Claudia Schweikert
James Ehrlich Escondido 4th Grade SI room 25
Corey Lamb/ Tamar Defrancesco Room 8
Tom Brinck, Escondido Room 20
Divyata Griggs(2nd & 3rd)
Kristen Podulka, 5th grade parent at Fairmeadow
Xiaolin Zheng (SI, Room 3)
Sowmya Latchoumanan & Fifth grade
Athena Huin, Keri Ghiorso's Class Room 11
Rosario Rico Velazquez, parent of Lilliana Velazquez, room 3
Leah Russin, SI first grade
A. García
MaLisa Moore, instructional aide and parent of a Kindergartener
Ellen Payne, Ohlone grade 4 & JLS grade 7
Alice Bizri
Nicola Rueckheim
Kaleen & Jason Martin- Kinder & 4th
Kristina Toland, SI Fifth grade Room 26
Bridget McCormick (Mrs Dungan)
Jeff Dahncke
Pearlin Yang, Barron Park
Ellen Huang (Ohlone, 1 and 3 grade)
Maria A. Rodriguez (4th grade Briones)
Xia Liu
Lydia Lee Rm#16, 22
Tina Chow (3rd grade)
Giuliana Hadade (Lara, Malu and Giulia)
Michael Ng Grade 2 and Grade 6
Patrick Dang, 4th Grade, Room 21
Esther Yoo, mom of Liselle Yoo (5th Grade)

Young / Room21

Julia Satterthwaite (mom of Duveneck 3rd and 4th graders)

Megan Fletcher / kids at Briones and Greendell

Gabor Foldes & Jessica Zuniga. Escondido SI 1st grade

Bonny Lee Rm 16

Kristin Vanak. Jack Vanak @ Walter Hays, grade 4/Mrs Lindsay

Brenda Dampier, with 4th grader in SI

Rachel Wright Escondido first grade spanish immersion

Jina Liu, 3rd grade parent

Ivan Mejia (4 grade)

Christianne Corbett, room 21

Rubi Valencia

Cortney Richardson, Escondido Rooms 18 & 21

Audra Tan. Fairmeadow 1st grade parent.

Kaitlyn Liao, Mrs. Carnes at Walter Hays

Margaret Chai Maloney. Tolerba's class

Melinda Mattes, Barron Park

Lindsay Green (Charles) - Duveneck Room 2 (Thibault)

Cait Evans (Scott, Holmes, Brubaker)

Carol Wu Duveneck

Anna Simon-Rooke, Ohlone Kindergarten Parent

Anne Marie Hallada

Bella Beltinoff, room 8 (1st grade)

John Evans, 3 boys: Walt (4th Brubaker), Sam (3rd Holmes), Monty (K Scott)

Delney walker - El Carmelo, grade 2, Dina Kim

Raluca Perkins

Tiffany Steinwert- Henry Steinwert-Arrowood

Georgiana Comsa (6th and 9th grade)

Sayoko Sakakibara, 1st grade

Amy Tsou, 7th grade Fletcher Middle School

Joyce Fee - Duveneck K/1 Combo

Zoubin Ghahramani, 1st and 5th grade

Katie Elliott, fairmeadow room 13

Jennifer Pan (Nixon 1st Grade)

Jules Sherman
Philipp Stauffer
Prashant Dhamdhare
Juliana Biggerstaff (TK, 1st and 4th)
Devi Ramanan
Prashant
Tanya Schornack (6th Grade)
Laura Ambrose, mom of Sam (room 12)
Ann Wu
Jessica Tolerba, kids are in grades 2 & 5 at Hays. (& 8 at Greene)
Jens Hainmueller (Ben and Lucas Nixon 1st and 2nd)
Karen Guo, Room 5
Yeohun Kim, room1 & 17
Christy Park, duveneck mom of first and second grader
Tammy Truher, 10th and 12th, Gunn
Surabhi Gupta/ Room 11
Janet Lee, Hoover first grade parent
Juanli (Parent of student in 1st grade at Hoover).
James Chang, kid at 2nd grade
Jennifer Corey, 1st and 4th grade
Fiona Chuang, parent of Hoover 2nd grader
Aaron Andrikopoulos (parent of 2nd grade student)
Kelda Jamison, Nixon third grade parent (Hayes)
Shannon Beres, Ohlone Room 14 and 30
Alan Lee, Juana Briones 5th Grade
Roxana Gafton - Hoover Elementary, first grade, Room 6
Sue Yee, ohlone room 28
Jenna Rinsky, Mother of Escondido First Grader
Ayfer Ozgur (Nixon K-3)
Linzi and Randy Lee/Nixon Elementary Ellenberger
Ella Wilsher, parent to a kinder and a second grader at Addison
Anne Sweeney Maestra Rodriguez
Daniel Moore (Walter Hays 1st Grader in Mixed 1st/2nd grade class)
Kari L. Drews , Palo Verde

Stephanie Avila - Nixon Kinder
Tetteh Otuteye
RJ Salus. Parent of a 3rd grader and Kindergartener
Cindy DiTiberio
Ozgun Bursalioglu / Kinder with Ms. Lanette (Room 1))
Parent : Hilda Izaguirre. Child: Danika Merlos/ Teacher:Mrs. Barbara Lindsey
Nick Pelly (Room 9, Escondido)
Colleen Hallagan Preuninger, 3rd Grade
Agnes Le
Dori Moss, Ohlone 5th grade
Jill Paldi Escondido SI kinder & 4th grade
Yana Potashnik
Ian Barile
Tanya Meyers - Kinder (Tai) and 4th grade (Meinke)
Christine Light (Room 14 / Noonan @ Juana Briones)
Andrew Felch - Penaloza
Mary Kraiss, kindergarten room 3
Nicholas Scott Preuninger
Ekaterina Tcareva (Kirill Tcarev, 5 grade, Mrs Levy class)
Jennifer Samayoa (3erd grader at Barron Park Elementary School)
Alicia Gutierrez
Weiwei Zhu, Kids In Grade 2 and K
Adam & Ashley Lee /3rd grade Marrujo/Duveneck
Loreto Ponce de Leon - my son is Diego Hakeman (5th grade)
Emily Wessler, 4th grader at Nixon, 6th grade at Fletcher
Erin Doll
Rona Yang / duveneck kinder and 4th
Lauren Daniluk, Duveneck Elementary Kinder & 5th Grade students
J. Chung, parent of Nixon 1st grader
Yikun Wu Room 4
Kathryn Kobza Ohlone K/1 Rm5
Kristin Vanak, Benjamin Vanak, grade 3, Mrs Davies
Janice Chiu/ Rm 18 at Briones
Dionne Zijlstra - mom of 1st grader at Barron Park Elementary School

Pamela Garcia
Christopher Avila, Ed.D; Mateo Avila, K
Angie Whitnah, kinder and 2nd grade
Neera S Narang, Barron Park 1st grade
Maria Reynolds
Taraneh Ahmadi Barron park (rm 13 & 16)
Hilary McDaniel- 1st & 3rd Grade Parent
Kevin Yu, 4th Grade, room 20
Konika Kumari - Grade 1 room 8
Nitin Kumar, Nixon, 5th grade.
Vivian Woo - parent of two boys that are juniors at Gunn
Maria Lishtaba
Ashley Tseng/ Hoover room 4
Jayashri Srikantiah (3d grade; 6th grade)
kavita Dhamdhere. PAUSD- parent
Inge Hansen, my kid's in 5th Grade/Schwartz
Janet Wang
Terry Wang
Mayumi Finger
Ming Zhao, first grade kid
Ingrid Garzon for a Palo Verde 3rd grader
Zakary Tormala, parent of 5th grader (Catherine Dobroff's class)
Laura Lajeunesse
Florence Ow (daughter in 2nd grade at Nixon, C1)
Nora Ziegenhahn parent of Student in 2nd grade Ohlone English program
Megan Winslow JLS 6th grader, Fairmeadow 3rd grade and kinder
Nico Westermann (parent of 2nd grade at ohlone English program
Rosario Velazquez (rico)
Mary Walsh, Escondido 5th grade
Maria Brown
payvand kadivar - k, 2nd, 4th
Barry Tao, 3rd grade
John Green (4th, 8th, 10th)
Daniela Villagomez. 1st and 5th grade

JiHae Yoo, 3rd grade in room 30 in Hoover
Yan Xia and Angela Liang, parents of Charles Xia
Niraj Shah and Nishita Kothary (8th G, 5th G)
Tamara Hrivnak
Vincent Scheib
Marianne Yacobian/kinder and 3rd Ohlone
Charles Kronengold, Nixon 1st grade C3
Omer Faruk Yilma, Kinder at Briones
Rebecca Begley - Choy (5th Fairmeadow)
Shinyoung(Ellie) Kim, Fairmeadow 5th
Kim Rodrigo - Kinder Rm 1
Steven Rosenberg
Tracy Ballard-Tal and Iddo Tal, Fairmeadow, 5th grade, Ms. Cortes' class
Priya Balakrishnan
Anjali Joshi - 3rd grade Mrs. Bonzani
Kyu Hong
Chris Easton: Mr. Winslow/4th grade, Fairmeadow
Casie Walker
Amin Vahdat (Parent of Delaney Vahdat in 5th Grade at Nixon Elementary)
Drew Simon-Rooke, Ohlone Kindergarten Parent
Seetal Kothari
Lorena Elisea-Gurrola (Kimberly Moore class)
Youjung Kim, Hoover 1st grade
Joyce Farnsworth
Doyeon Kim
Xiaochun Xu
Myungshin Kim (Jaye Kim in Fairmeadow K)
Lise Latour (Walter Hays)
Darryl Chang (Palo Verde 1st grade)
Jongbin Jung (Ohlone, K-1)
Beverly Rodriguez
Roxanne Patel, Grade 3
Leon Villegas
Vikas Gupta (Ohlone -- 4th Grade and 1st Grade)

Pooja Mittal (4th grader)
Tamara Gracon, Palo Verde 2nd and 5th grade
Tim Edmonds 8th 12th
Sibyl Diver, kindergarten (Mrs. Dungan's class)
Nate Blair
Aude Gabory (2nd and 5th grade)
Ann Holum & Alex Kass; David Kass 8th grade
Sathya Karanth, mom of an 8th grader
Susanne Wisen, 4th grade Briones
Clarabelle Krylov
Neha Pandey
Michi Willcoxon, Rm11
Eric Chan (parent of kinder and 5th grader at Ohlone)
Awimar Solla/ Mr. Scott/ room 1
Dorianne Moss
Elinor Taussig
Muir Hooper
Carol Vernallis, 1st grade, Nixon, Teacher - Ann Kwolek
Shantae Decker, Lisa Schmidt's first grade class
Rosie Mesterhazy
Roberta von Pankow parent of 2nd and 5th grader at Fairmeadow
Kishan Jayaraman
Kim Chiu, parent of 3rd grader and kindergartener
Katie Gentry, 1st Grade Parent
Juhyun Lee, Fairmeadow Elementary 3rd
Rafael Oliveira Room 7
Andrea Ng
Jenyi Huang, 2nd & 4th grade
James Lik
Haryun Peun (Room 17)
Payam and Karina Etminani (Ohlone parents)
Stacey Clifton
Capucine and Maxime Van Rechem, Eowyn's parents. Mr Brubaker.
Arundhati Kotwal, 3rd grade

Estelle Sohne, 4th Grade (twins)
Sakura Hino (mom), Victor Chow (dad) Kinder, 4th and 6th
Margie Borra-Garske
dani guralnick, child is 2nd grade
Chris Thurman, daughter in 2nd grade
Mu Chun Yu & Fairmeadow Rm 16
Lakshmi M, Grade 1 and Grade 4
Leticia Cárdenas (parent of student in fifth grade with teacher Rachel)
Xiaotian Zhang; grade 1
Kanda Ishihara (Fairmeadow 1st and 4th grades)
Natasha Nicol
Cari Templeton, Ohlone Room 28
Shirley Tang (2nd grade)
Aleks Totic (Nina 3rd grade)
Amber Chang Smith (2nd)
Han Xu, Fairmeadow 2nd grade
Aude Gabiane - 1st grade
Kari Nygaard, parent of Fairmeadow kindergartner
Patrick Smith (6th)
Christie Gonzalez Room 1 & Room 20
Vlada bortnik (ella and maya Bortnik room 10 and 28 at Ohlone)
Craig Marshall-Nicholls, parent of Fairmeadow 2nd grader
Ashwini Shanbhogue Child in 2nd grade
Becca Warthen, kindergartner and 3rd grader
Sam Huang, 2nd grade and Kinder
Sandra Robles - Duveneck and Greene grade 2 + 5 + 7
Ilya Gelfenbeyn (1st grade at Juana Briones)
Rebecca Friend, 5th grade, Mrs. Carnes
Samina Shetty, 9th
Parvez Ahmad, 8th grade
Teceta Tormala
Alona Drori, 4th grade
Jane Kuzelka
Baback Elmieh, Room 19 Fairmeadow

Yannick Carapito (4th grade - twins)
Helena Silva
Ginnie Noh 5th
Kathleen Murphy, Mom to 7th grader at Greene
Christina Devine, MD (3rd grade parent)
Estelle Sohne, 6th grade
Bree Jenson, Ms. DalFuoco, 1st grade
Rachel Bender, parent of El Carmelo 3rd graders
Kelly Chang, Walter Hays Kinder
Karen Guo, Room 5
Ashwini Shanbhogue Child in 2nd grade
Sanjeet Thadani Escondido room 11
Carol Wu - Duveneck K and 2nd
Victor Chow; Kinder, 4th grade, 6th grade
Ashok Theruvath (grade 1, Escondido)
Dan Wang (1st grade)
Rob Viola & Ms. Denise kinder class
Estelle Sohne, 6th grade
Johanna Wong, rm 6
Karen Easton - 4th grade, Sophomore, Senior
Ashwini Shanbhogue Child in 2nd grade
Bridget McCormick
Sujung Kim , Room 10
Ima Narváez. 3rd Grade with Alejandro González
Roberta von Pankow parent of 2nd and 5th grader at Fairmeadow
Emiko Yasumoto (2nd grade)
Mu Chun Yu & Fairmeadow Rm 16
Yvette Mangalindan, 3rd and 5th
Swati Solanki
Andrea Helft 3rd Grade
Kim Lohse
Chiara Sabatti, 5th grade Nixon, Nosek
Yannick Carapito
Anthony Mamone, parent of a 5th Grader

Andrew Milne / 2nd and 6th grades

Manav AmritPriti (Kinder)

Sooyong Kim (parent of student in 5th grade at Juana Briones Elementary)

Tal Banon

Rich and Nora Matta

Mark and Rebecca Silverman. Alexander (7th); Zachary (3rd); Eleanor (KG)