

January 20, 2021

To: BUSD Board Members, Dr. Brent Stephens

From: BUSD DELAC

Cc: Bajé Thiara, Michelle Sinclair, PAC Committee, & All BUSD ELAC Committees

Good Evening Board Members & Dr. Stephens,

I am Patricia Rodriguez, one of two co-chairs for DELAC this year. I am a parent of a Berkeley High graduate and have a middle schooler. As a working parent, it is hard to go to all the school meetings, and it can be intimidating for those of us that do not have English as our first language. When I was brave enough, I attended my first DELAC when my oldest was in 2nd grade. I remember that meeting, like it was yesterday. We looked at gloomy data presentations about our children that honestly nearly crushed my hope as a parent. Our beautiful, brilliant, bilingual children were struggling so much academically, and I'm sorry to report that our current data tells the same story. But, from that moment, I decided to work with other families in partnering with the principals at my schools to work creatively to try and resolve this problem. As an ELAC President, I have learned a lot, and now I wish to support more families in building their knowledge in order to advocate and support their children in our district.

My name is Sagrario Zepeda, the second co-chair for DELAC. I have a soon-to-be high schooler and a child in elementary. I am a working parent, who cares deeply for my children's education and the importance for them to love themselves as confident, bilingual individuals. In our family, like so many others in Berkeley, we value the importance of speaking our language, while we get better in English. We know that being bilingual expands our thinking, but culturally, is critical for us, so that our children can maintain ties with our elders, and learn from their wisdom.

I would consider myself active in my children's education, but my willingness to step into a leadership role did not happen overnight. I asked many questions and had many frustrations, before I became my school's ELAC President. Believe me when I say, we have **a lot** of work to do in our District when it comes to improving systems that impact and boost the outcomes of our bilingual children. I thank our DELAC reps for trusting Patricia and I to carry this work forward.

We realize that the District plans for reopening are a priority, but our conversations around systems of support for our "English Learners (ELs)" have gone on long before this pandemic. At our last DELAC data presentation, we learned that currently **1 in 4 students** that are EL are also in Special Education. My heart dropped when I learned

this because this tells us what we already know--we are **not** giving our EL children all that they deserve.

We are encouraged to know that there is a commitment to finally rewrite our EL Master Plan. Our families have been advocating for a revision for over four years. We expect to see a **robust** and **comprehensive** process, led by **culturally competent** leadership, that includes **key** stakeholders. This leadership needs to hold **expertise** (and nothing less) in the:

- institutional knowledge of our district and community
- unique needs of our children as language learners
- skillset to engage with **our families**, who also deserve a seat at the table in this process

Our children deserve a well-thought out revision of this critical document, not just some extra pages here and there, just to say that we updated it.

The EL Master Plan holds the details for the systems that not only help our children access their learning, but also represents the manner in which the District and staff connect with us--the families-- in order to communicate how well our children are doing, or not. We cannot stress enough the need to say that the leaders in this work need to be experts, but they must know our childrens' educational rights as language learners, as well as laws that protect those rights.

We are relieved to hear that the District is committed to rewriting the EL Master Plan, but we want to make sure that we give it our all. Make no mistake, the work starts now, but let's cooperate in order to make sure that we do this right--our children deserve our care and dedication.

We'd like to report the topics that we've discussed at DELAC as priorities for our committee, only in short, but detailed below in our letter:

•**Funding**--Study closely the Reclassification rates at each level, and at each school. The numbers at the secondary level show the need to strengthen our model at the elementary. For years, DELAC has requested that we dedicate more funding for ELD programs across the elementary level so that every child gets the same opportunity to succeed by receiving the same amount of support, from one school to the next. Maintain funding for our bilingual sites--these are unique programs, with unique needs and resources, that are working. We saw this in the data, too. Find out why it is working! We need more of this! We are looking for ways to help our children thrive, not just get by.

•**Communication**--The District must identify schools that have families (15% or more) that speak that language. This information needs to be public knowledge, posted on district and school websites. For example, if a school has more than 15% Arabic speaking families at that school, it needs to be public knowledge, and all communication needs to be provided in English **and** Arabic.

•**Inclusion**--“Caregiver” must be included when referring to “Parent” for all district communications. Not every child is raised by a parent. Again, this communication must be translated. We recommend the use of less text and more graphics in all communication from the district to families. We need to provide access for our caregivers that are not literate in any language.

DELAC expects the revised EL Master Plan to reflect bilingualism and multilingualism as valuable assets, as seen in the EL Roadmap.

DELAC requests a timeline of a thoughtful and robust plan for launching the EL Master Plan revision, as well as our action items mentioned in detail in our letter.

Sincerely,

Patricia Rodriguez, DELAC co-chair  
Sagrario Zepeda, DELAC co-chair