

March 24, 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. Tonight I'd like to report out on what we've been discussing this year at DELAC.

We learned that the district has been interviewing potential consultants to work on the EL Master Plan. It was shared that it has been difficult finding a bilingual and biliterate candidate, and currently there is a strong candidate the district is considering. This person is not bilingual, but will work closely with an assistant who is. With the supportive advocacy of Latino Unidos de Berkeley, we will have the opportunity to hold conversation with the consultant and assistant as part of a collaborative effort to make sure that this person is a good match for the needs of our community. We believe that a collaborative process in this selection is so important--our families have waited so long to revise our EL Master Plan. Choosing the person who will hold this work so closely is a process that needs to happen in collaboration with us, too, the families. Believe me when I say that we are ready to partner with you in order to make sure that we are thoughtful in every step of the way in rewriting the EL Master Plan. This is the meaning of Family and Parent Engagement, where we are equal partners in these processes and decision making, not silent recipients. Again, our families and community want to partner with you in this work. It should be a partnership. We look forward to this upcoming meeting.

I am Sagrario Zepeda, also a co-chair for DELAC. And another topic that we have been discussing is funding. Very plainly, we need the district to commit to dedicated funds to uplift our children. Not temporary funds or funds that are dependent on a number of students from a shrinking source, but **dedicated** General Funds to give access to education to language learners-- this is what is needed.

In order to ensure both program and accountability to students we have to dedicate General Funds. The amount of support that our children receive is not enough and we see this clearly in our Reclassification rates, year after year. And every year we observe and comment that the funds that are dedicated to support our students are not enough, and every year sites report budget cuts--even at sites that have success in Reclassification!

Every student in our district who is learning English deserves to have the following:

- specific and consistent support in developing English so that he/she can have access to their education
- regular communication to their family, from the school, on how the child is growing in English and how to support them
- a developed plan with a path towards Reclassification in 6 years or less
- a developed plan for the required 4 years after Reclassification that ensures academic success. This plan should be shared and updated with families twice a year for that time
- dedicated district personnel (more than 1) to oversee all of the above

We have had 3 joint meetings with PAC this year that have given us a lot of things to rethink when we are considering the needs of students. It also has helped us see that our prior requests have been valid in requesting that funding be both increased and guaranteed in order to improve our ELD Program.

In April, we will meet with PAC again, and we will make a recommendation that Reclassified students be identified as a focal group in LCAP. While we are required to keep an eye on Reclassified students, with our current funding practice, Reclassified students do not get “counted” in EL funds because they are no longer English Learners. If the State makes this requirement, the district must make a plan to carry this out, which of course requires funding and staff to do so.

As we have said in January, 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. By “specific and consistent support in developing English” we can no longer rely on just a number to decide on funds for support services or program.

20 students at one school may need more or less than the 20 at another site, but we continue to give schools the same budget, year after year, without considering the students themselves. We argue that it is unjust that some children continue to get support 5 days a week while others only get support twice a week--of course the outcome will be different. For language learners, language practice **must** be consistent, now more than ever as we transition back to in-person learning. For some kids, school is the only English language model they have.

Finally, DELAC asks that the District maintain funding for our TWI sites. Despite their proven success, every year for the past 8 years, families turn out to Board meetings giving testimonio about why the program needs what it needs. Every position is needed to serve students and build community with families. If we are a district that offers this unique program, with unique needs and required resources, that is working for kids, we ask that the District commit to being a TWI supportive District by stabilizing the funding from a reliable funding source, like General Funds. Our district should use their practices as a model for other sites. Again, our goal is to make sure our students are growing and thriving.

In summary, we want to restate that we look forward to connecting with the consultant and we request that reliable funds be dedicated to both ELD and TWI programs.

We look forward to reporting more from DELAC next month.

Sincerely,

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