Email sent to Superintendent/BUSD school board 4/23/21 1:00pm

To Brent Stephens, Michelle Sinclair, and the Berkeley School Board:

We are writing to address the issues of equity that have emerged in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways those issues have affected each member of our community. Every caregiver and family with a student in BUSD made a decision to continue with the educational option that works best for their needs. We recognize that COVID has shifted our lives significantly, and we continue to learn the short and long term effects of our decisions. While our personal decisions affect us immediately, we need to acknowledge and learn from how these same decisions affect all members of our community, whether they are learning at a distance or on-campus.

1. We ask the district to release disaggregated data for both on-campus and distance students to learn more about the communities that exist within the two methodologies of learning within BUSD.
2. We ask for immediate and meaningful professional mental health support for students to take place as part of the curriculum. Our community is reeling from the broad reaching effects of this pandemic and in order to support our students and our community, utilizing the expertise of qualified professionals will help students process traumas.
3. We demand that the district restore Intervention Services for all students; one casualty of the return to in-person learning 5 days a week is that all RTI services have been suspended without any updates to scheduling. Our most needful students are losing a vital resource-- intervention in an area of academics as well as the loss of a trusted educator that they have worked with this past year.
4. We acknowledge that teachers and classified staff should have the choice whether or not to return to teaching on-campus without need for documentation.
5. We demand a continued level of service for Distance Learners (clear scheduling, retaining enrichment teachers, teachers trained and experienced in distance learning, TWI teachers fluent in their school's languages, continued choice for all families whether DL or in-person)

We are also sharing information we have collected about Distance and On Campus learners that shows that while many students of color are returning to campus to learn, students of color are disproportionately represented in distance learning, which makes the quality, support from the district, the investment in the program itself inherently an Equity issue. In order to support all of our students and also to do Equity work, we must acknowledge that through negligence and lack of informed preparation that we have perpetuated systems that do not benefit our community and are, in fact, actively causing harm.

Emerson Elementary Distance Learning information

	Emerson Students	% of Emerson Pop	Emerson Distance Learning Students	% of Demographic in Emerson's Distance Learning Program
Latino/Latina	57	19.00%	14	24.56%
Black or AA	38	12.67%	13	34.21%
Asian	35	11.67%	8	22.85%
White	141	47.00%	8	5.67%
2 or More Ethnicities	24	8.00%	7	29.16%
Other Ethnicities	5	1.67%	2	40.00%
Total	300	100.00%	52	

Site based enrollment data from the CDE dashboard:
https://maps.schools.covid19.ca.gov/public.html

In Solidarity,
Cielo Rios, Emerson Parent, Ad-hoc PTA DL advocate
Tyler Black, Emerson PTA co-President and BUSD Parent
Erica Carter, Emerson Kinder Distance Learning Teacher, Equity Lead Teacher, PTA co-Secretary
Vivian White, Emerson parent and PTA Equity Liaison
Kelly Shimoda, Emerson parent and PTA Equity Liaison
Rana Cho, Emerson Parent, PTA Fundraising Co-Chair
Gretchen Ross, parent of DL students at Emerson & Sylvia Mendez
Rose Lynn Abesamis-Bell, Emerson and Willard parent, BUSD FUSE
Jenny Weddle, Emerson 5th Grade Teacher, Emerson Parent
Heather Ondersma, Emerson parent
Jeremy Sypniewski, Emerson parent
Emily Nathan, Willard & BHS Parent
Kyla Portugal, Emerson and Willard Parent, Emerson 2nd Grade Teacher, PTA co-Secretary
Tessa & Justin Paine, Emerson Parents
Michele and Derek Byrnes, BUSD parents
Neil Harris, Emerson parent
Molly Salyk, 1st Grade Teacher and Emerson Parent
Krysten Curtis, Emerson Parent, PTA Community Outreach Co-Chair
Ayako Nagano, Emerson Parent, PTA Co-Treasurer
Yona Abrams, Emerson Parent

Vikash Rugoobur, Emerson and Willard Parent, BUSD Black Dads Affinity Group
Kevin Jude, Emerson Parent
Paige Passano, Sylvia Mendez Parent
Michelle Luu, Emerson Kindergarten Teacher
Megan Covey, Emerson Parent
Oriana Melgoza, Emerson 1st grade Teacher & Co-Equity Lead Teacher

Additional signatures (received after letter was submitted to recipients 4/23):
Anna Stuppi, Emerson teacher and BUSD parent
Jonah Charney-Sirott, Malcolm X parent
Carrie Rosenbaum, PTA Executive Committee member (signing in personal, individual capacity) and parent of Oxford DL student

[PLEASE ADD YOUR NAME, TITLE] AS A COMMENT HERE]

Translation of letter in Spanish included in 4/23/21 email

Para Brent Stephens, Michelle Sinclair y la Junta Escolar:

Le escribimos para abordar los problemas de equidad que han surgido a la luz de la pandemia de COVID-19 y las formas en que esos problemas han afectado a cada miembro de nuestra comunidad. Cada cuidador y familia con un estudiante en BUSD tomó la decisión de continuar con la opción educativa que mejor se adapta a sus necesidades. Reconocemos que COVID ha cambiado nuestras vidas de manera significativa y continuamos aprendiendo los efectos a corto y largo plazo de nuestras decisiones. Si bien nuestras decisiones personales nos afectan de inmediato, debemos reconocer y aprender de cómo estas mismas decisiones afectan a todos los miembros de nuestra comunidad, ya sea que estén aprendiendo a distancia o en el campus.

1. Le pedimos al distrito que divulgue datos desglosados tanto para el aprendizaje en persona como a distancia para aprender más sobre las comunidades que existen dentro de las dos metodologías de aprendizaje dentro de BUSD.

2. Solicitamos apoyo de salud mental profesional inmediato y significativo para los estudiantes como parte del plan de estudios. Nuestra comunidad se está recuperando de los efectos de gran alcance de esta pandemia y, para apoyar a nuestros estudiantes y nuestra comunidad, utilizar la experiencia de profesionales calificados ayudará a los estudiantes a procesar traumas.

3. Exigimos que el distrito restaure los Servicios de Intervención para todos los estudiantes; Una de las víctimas del regreso al aprendizaje en persona 5 días a la semana es que todos los servicios de RTI se han suspendido sin ninguna actualización de la programación. Nuestros estudiantes más necesitados están perdiendo un recurso vital: la intervención en un área académica, así como la pérdida de un educador de confianza con el que han trabajado el año pasado.

4. Reconocemos que los maestros y el personal clasificado deben tener la opción de regresar o no a la enseñanza en persona sin necesidad de documentación.

5. Exigimos un nivel continuo de servicio para los estudiantes a distancia (horarios claros, retener a los maestros de enriquecimiento, maestros capacitados y experimentados en el aprendizaje a distancia, maestros de TWI que dominen los idiomas de su escuela, opciones continuas para todas las familias, ya sea DL o en persona)

También compartimos información que hemos recopilado sobre los estudiantes a distancia y en el campus que muestra que, si bien muchos estudiantes de color están regresando al campus para aprender, los estudiantes de color están representados de manera desproporcionada en el aprendizaje a distancia, lo que hace que la calidad, el apoyo del distrito, el La inversión en el programa en sí es inherentemente una cuestión de equidad. Para apoyar a todos nuestros

estudiantes y también para hacer un trabajo de equidad, debemos reconocer que a través de la negligencia y la falta de preparación informada, hemos perpetuado sistemas que no benefician a nuestra comunidad y que, de hecho, están causando daño activamente.

Información de DL de Emerson Elementary

	Emerson Students	% of Emerson Pop	Emerson Distance Learning Students	% of Demographic in Emerson's Distance Learning Program
Latino/Latina	57	19.00%	14	24.56%
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2 o más etnias	24	8.00%	7	29.16%
Otras etnias	5	1.67%	2	40.00%
Total	300	100.00%	52	

Datos de inscripción basados en el sitio del CDE "dashboard":
https://maps.schools.covid19.ca.gov/public.html

Response from Brent Stephens to Distance Learning Advocacy Group (via email, 4/26/21, 7:04am)

Good morning, Ms. Rios -

Thank you for reaching out, and for your advocacy. As best I can, I'll try to address the demands that you and other parents from Emerson have brought forward.

With respect to the disaggregated data, BUSD did make public the disaggregated data in a letter to the community on March 19. I'm including the full letter and the data below. As we completed the challenging administrative steps to create full-time options for all families on the basis of their choice, we tried to be transparent about this data and reflect patterns in families' choice making. Two things were true after we completed this change: that most families, in all demographic groups, chose to return to campus; and that the families who chose Distance Learning were disproportionately families of color.

All our schools have mental health services provided through a third-party counseling agency, and funding for this is ensured through our Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). We are currently conducting a review of these services as we plan for next year, and are committed to bolstering schools' mental health services if needed. As well, both Distance Learning and In-Person teachers have received professional development on mental health and positive classroom dynamics. Families are encouraged to reach out to their school if additional support is required, and schools are all prepared to work through the Coordination of Services Team to arrange additional support for individual services.

With respect to Intervention Teachers, the shift to five full-days of In-Person school, while also expanding the Distance Learning day, placed an enormous strain on our staff resources. This was the equivalent of opening more than thirty new classrooms. The shift required that in many schools Teachers on Special Assignment became classroom teachers. This affected many Literacy Coaches, RTI teachers, and central office TSAs. I am aware that central office staff are now looking to see if some limited form of cross-school intervention support can be provided, but right now and for the rest of the school year, the shift in our programming required that we commit *all our staff* to providing classroom instruction. Still, interventions for students can take place. In the Distance Learning model, teachers still maintain their small group supports, and we look to this time of the teaching day to provide students with more differentiated support if they need it. We are also actively reaching out to the families whose children are most in need to offer seats in a dramatically expanded set of Summer Learning opportunities.

BUSD has established an employee accommodations process that permits employees with documented medical conditions to seek accommodations, including an accommodation to work from home. This process was established in keeping with the Americans with Disabilities Act and will remain in place for all our employees. We have gone to great lengths to create a safe learning environment, including - very significantly - a partnership with the City of Berkeley to

ensure that all our employees had access to vaccination appointments prior to the reopening of in-person instruction.

I hope that this is helpful information to you. I wish you and your family the very best for the remaining weeks of the school year, and look forward to our full return to in-person learning in August.

Warmly,
Brent Stephens
Superintendent

Response to Brent Stephens and all Distance Learning Advocacy Group (via email, 4/26/21, 10:56am)

Hi Brent,

This group is already in receipt of the enrollment information from March 19th— the ask is current DL student data that details ethnicity since they currently are housed under the Sylvia Mendez and Oxford school sites and both sites have both on-campus and distance learning with no clear parameters for identification. Here is an example of the CDE's enrollment census data published 4 days ago that provides the level of specificity requested in the original letter: https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthLevels.aspx?cds=0161143&agglevel=district&year=2020-21 Thank you for updates on the other issues— we will share with our school Community this week.

Thanks,

Cielo Rios