

Dear SUHSD Board,

We hope this message finds you well. We, the staff at Carlmont High School, are writing to express our concerns about the upcoming study session on detracking classes at the board meeting this Wednesday. It has come to our attention that this important matter may not have received adequate teacher input, and as the individuals responsible for our students' education, we feel it is crucial to share our perspective.

Just three days ago, we received an SDTA email mentioning a comprehensive [Research White Paper](#) on the efforts to detrack at the 9th (and 10th) grade level in our District over the past 2-10 years. While this email invited those involved to attend Wednesday's SUHSD board meeting, it did not provide ample prior notice or opportunity for discussion.

During our recent SUHSD Professional Development we were not informed about this initiative or the report. Even our active JEDI (Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion) committee had not encountered any reference to this significant undertaking.

At the same time, parents and the community have been asking about this and circulating a report, ["SUHSD Goals Study Review."](#) This is the first time many of us have heard about this work, and we are deeply concerned about the potential wholesale elimination of AS/AP at the 9th and 10th grades.

It's important to clarify that the views expressed in "Streamlining Course Offerings and Creating More Diverse Learning Environments to Increase Student Access and Success" do not represent a unified message from union members. Many at Carlmont, as well as other schools, do not support the detracking of students in 9th and 10th grade, whether as teachers or as parents within the district.

Our concerns primarily revolve around the negative consequences of detracking. These concerns should not be misconstrued as a dismissal of equity. Our central focus is on preserving academic rigor and providing challenging opportunities for students according to their abilities.

The notion that placing all students in the same class automatically creates equity and resolves systemic issues oversimplifies a complex problem. In reality, it can be detrimental to students of varying ability levels.

Combining students with vastly different levels of mastery in the same class, such as those who struggle with basic concepts and those who excel at advanced applications, can be challenging and unfair to both groups.

Furthermore, these decisions appear to prioritize addressing socioeconomic inequality over sound educational pedagogy, which may not necessarily lead to the intended outcomes and could negatively impact many students.

We appreciate the SDTA president's statement about recognizing the hard work and successes of teachers, counselors, and others in striving for equity. However, we believe that detracking poses significant problems, particularly in terms of targeted instruction time for each student.

The proposed solution, differentiated instruction, ironically mirrors the principles of tracking but does so less effectively. As a result, it diminishes the overall quality of education for students.

Teaching in a class predominantly composed of advanced students requires an exclusive focus on their needs, while a class with struggling students demands significant time and attention to bring them up to grade level. These are fundamentally different challenges that detracking fails to address effectively.

As educators, we understand that helping struggling students achieve mastery is one of the most demanding tasks in education. Maximizing instruction time to meet their needs, while also catering to a wide range of other skill levels, can be counterproductive and lead to less effective outcomes.

We have already witnessed the inefficiencies of detracking in recent years, particularly since the elimination of the algebra readiness class. Struggling students are not receiving the targeted attention they need, and advanced students are not adequately prepared for future advanced courses.

This trend will likely continue if more classes are detracked, leading to lower overall mastery levels and reduced preparedness for subsequent courses.

Lastly, we want to highlight that Carlmont's students consistently achieve some of the highest AP pass rates in the country across all subjects. Our academic programs receive national recognition, and our students gain admission to top colleges nationwide.

While the pursuit of equity is commendable, we should also consider providing equity of choice. If students seek access to rigorous standards and national recognition, we should not deny them that opportunity.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns. We believe that open dialogue and collaboration can lead to solutions that benefit all students in our district.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carlmont High School Staff

Signed:

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