

Note to parents: If you're a CCUSD person who's interested in signing on and staying in the loop, first of all, THANK YOU. You can do so [here](#). If you've asked me to add your name and I've forgotten, please forgive me! My email is miriam.posner@gmail.com; please nudge me again, or you can just fill out the form.

Leslie Lockhart
CCUSD Superintendent

Tracy Pumilia
Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services

Lisa Michel
Director of Secondary Teaching and Learning

Rebecca Lynch
Director of Elementary Teaching and Learning

Summer McBride
CCUSD Board President

Tashon McKeithan
CCUSD Board Vice President

Anne Allaire
CCUSD Board Clerk

Steven Levin
CCUSD Board Parliamentarian

Kelly Kent
CCUSD Board Member

July 18, 2020

To Superintendent Lockhart, Assistant Superintendent Pumilia, Director Lynch, Director Michel, and Members of the Board:

We are fortunate enough to have children in the Culver City Unified School District, where they have flourished. Like most parents and staff, we were caught completely off guard by the COVID-19 epidemic and quarantine, and we have appreciated immensely the hard work and energy of CCUSD faculty and staff to make the best of a bad situation. These are unprecedented times, and we can't imagine the demands they have made on your commitment, time, energy, and creativity.

We're writing today because, as we approach the 2020-21 school year, you may be aware that many parents of CCUSD students, assisted by Facebook and other networking sites, have begun forming "pods": groups of two to four families whose children will meet together to

complete lessons and socialize, sometimes under the tutelage of a hired professional, and sometimes under the supervision of a parent or parents. Frankly, given the complete absence of childcare options during the pandemic, these pods seem to many parents to represent one of the only ways working parents can continue to function. Many parents in the district work demanding full-time jobs, and the task of supervising and educating our children, while also completing our paid work, is too much really to contemplate. Thus some of us were pleased and relieved to sign up for pods, on one of the spreadsheets circulating for the purpose. Others among us have avoided signing up, for reasons described here.

Even as these pods multiply, we know you are aware of the implications this informal system will have for increasing racial and economic divides among CCUSD schoolchildren. Hiring an outside tutor is an expensive proposition, and only those families who are comparatively well-off will be able to afford this expense even part-time. Likewise, many parents will not be able to work schedules flexible enough to allow them to take their turn in a co-operative, rotating schedule of supervision. Those of us who have children with disabilities are left completely out of the discussion, since these informal arrangements seem unlikely to meet our children's needs.

The most common-sense solution, which has been circulating on social media, would seem to be for relatively affluent parents to pledge to include students with fewer resources in their pods, without charge. While this possibility is attractive in its simplicity, we think you will agree that it cannot work at scale. First, individual parents are unlikely to be able to replicate the school district's infrastructure for identifying and providing resources to every student in the district. Second, the prospect of less well-off students relying on wealthier parents' *noblesse oblige* is untenable; public schools exist, after all, because every student, regardless of circumstance, has the right to high-quality education. Students with fewer resources cannot be relegated to second-class citizenship in our system of public education. Finally, a system of private pods risks leaving students with special needs out of the equation altogether.

Even as CCUSD parents are aware of the havoc this "podding" will wreak on equity within our schools, some of us are faced with a terrible, no-win decision: Do we seize on what seems to be our best chance to provide education to our children while continuing to provide for our families financially? Or do we leave our children unsupervised, to attempt to complete their online education in whatever piecemeal fashion they and we can manage?

We are writing to you, therefore, to request that you investigate a creative solution for addressing the reality parents are faced with. Would it be possible, for example, for the district itself to organize and geographically distribute these pods, equipping them with aides who can coordinate with teachers to keep students supervised and on task?

We want to acknowledge that, after the district investigates the matter, it may well emerge that the best solution to meeting families' needs is an arrangement other than pods. The key issue, to our minds, is that while school is fully online, the district must provide some solution for

working parents who need childcare and instructional support, and that solution should not exacerbate inequalities or rely on private individuals to make private arrangements.

Any proposed plan is likely to meet with difficulty, including liability concerns and policy roadblocks. But as you well know, the alternative to the district's coordination promises to be something akin to racial and economic apartheid in the school district: a radical reshaping of educational opportunity along the lines of race and privilege. What parents are creating is, in effect, a parallel, privatized infrastructure for education, with potentially far-reaching effects for the district and our students. Do we not, then, owe it to our students to at least investigate the possibility of providing some kind of public infrastructure district-wide? Complex though it certainly will be, its difficulty is dwarfed by the looming prospect of segregation in our district.

We are requesting, therefore, that the district coordinate learning arrangements itself while schools remain fully online, rather than risk exacerbating inequalities by relying on private individuals to do so. Thank you very much for reading this letter and considering this request.

Sincerely,

Miriam Posner
CCUSD Parent

Andrew Wallace
CCUSD Parent

Kelly Hatfield
CCUSD Parent

Audrey Babcock
CCUSD Parent

Megan Goodwin
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CCUSD Volunteer, Former Parent and Grandparent, and Former Teacher

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