



**Burbank Unified School District**  
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**Board of Education**

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**Superintendent**

Matt Hill, Ed.D.

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom  
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA, 95814  
By email and U.S. Mail

Dear Governor Newsom:

We greatly appreciate your leadership during these difficult times. We understand the need to balance the budget, but we urge you to use every option at your disposal instead of cutting public education. Now, more than ever, we need to invest in public education so that our children are taken care of, learning, and thriving. This will allow our families to get back to work and jump start the economy again.

Our number one request is for you to use the State's reserves, Rainy Day fund, deferrals, and allow school districts to return to their 2016 levels of contributions to CalSTRS and CalPERS. For example, if districts returned to the 2016 levels, that would save Burbank Unified School District \$3.5 million, Bonita Unified School District \$3.4 million, Monrovia Unified School District \$2.8 million, La Canada Unified School District \$1.8 million, Glendale Unified School District \$5.25 million, Claremont Unified School District \$2.6 million, South Pasadena Unified School District \$1.8 million, and Pasadena Unified School District \$3.3 million. These strategies will allow the State to balance the budget and will allow school districts to focus on reopening in the fall instead of cutting our budgets.

If those strategies are not enough to balance the budget and budget reductions are necessary, we encourage you to provide school districts with as much flexibility as possible. These flexibilities include:

- **Do not penalize districts for lower ADA during the 2020-21 school year.** We anticipate attendance to be at an all-time low next year and will be encouraging students to stay home if they feel ill. In addition, attendance models in distance learning environments or in any hybrid model are incongruous with the current ADA funding algorithm. Will the regulations be modified to allow school districts to offer parents an alternative instructional model allowing choice to be 100% independent study or hybrid model?

- **Provide flexibility in instructional minutes and days.** Reducing from a required 180 days of instruction to 175 would put all districts on an even playing field in terms of instruction and would yield a budgetary savings through furlough days and result in fewer cuts to student services and programs.
- **Allow flexibility of Supplemental, Concentration, and Lottery Funding Spending.** Temporarily allow spending for all student groups and for all student needs.
- **Allow flexibility with class size in grades K-3.** At a time when not all students will be in class at the same time, lifting the CSR penalty for exceeding 24 students would provide financial relief and much needed flexibility for the 20-21 school year as our plans to reopen require multiple scenarios. The State continues to advocate for “local control”. Class size should be administered by local governing boards.

Finally, as we reopen schools, we will need some new structures and supports to support our students and employees:

- **Expand broadband connectivity and devices.** Many households and students lack access to devices and internet connectivity. Closing the digital divide remains an unmet need. We urge the state to press internet service providers to provide low-cost internet access and seek federal funds through E-Rate to ensure connectivity and devices for students. Some form of distance learning is part of our new normal and we must address this inequity.
- **Develop a State-wide program for “high-risk” employees** who are unable to be on campus due to COVID-19 concerns to be compensated from other sources other than the district of employment. As an example, 10% of South Pasadena USD teaching staff meets the current definition of “high-risk”. Coupled with the number of classified staff, South Pasadena USD will need to reduce an additional 5% of its operating budget to replace the identified employees.
- **Provide protection for legal liability** in the event of a student or staff member contracting COVID-19, despite school districts following health guidelines.

Sincerely,

Carl Coles, Superintendent, Bonita Unified School District  
 Matt Hill, Superintendent, Burbank Unified School District  
 Jim Elasser, Superintendent, Claremont Unified School District  
 Vivian Ekchian, Superintendent, Glendale Unified School District  
 Wendy Sinnette, Superintendent, La Canada Unified School District  
 Katherine Thorossian, Superintendent, Monrovia Unified School District  
 Brian McDonald, Superintendent, Pasadena Unified School District  
 Geoff Yantz, Superintendent, South Pasadena Unified School District

cc: Senator Anthony Portantino