



## GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY Board of Directors

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1005 47th Street, San Diego, CA 92102 p. (619) 263-2171 f. (619) 264-4342 [www.gompersprep.org](http://www.gompersprep.org)

### SAVE OUR GPA FOUNDERS

October 26, 2020

Dear Gompers Preparatory Academy Community,

The San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) is asking Vince Riveroll, Lisa Maples, Judith Franceschi, and Paz Garcia-Ramirez to choose to stay at GPA or return to the District by March 1, 2021. By doing this, SDUSD is breaking a long standing promise to GPA, our community, and to these loyal leaders. This is wrong.

In 2004, SDUSD wanted Gompers to become a charter school because the District let Gompers fail for decades. To help improve Gompers, the District assigned Principal Vince Riveroll to transition the school into a charter, in hopes of making it a safe and successful school.

There were school board members who did not want Gompers to become a charter school, and they removed Vince Riveroll from being principal to try and stop the charter movement. Thankfully, our inspiring parents and community members took on the politicians, the school board members, and other organizations who were trying to shut down the charter, and the Board of Education authorized Gompers to become a charter school in March of 2005.

Once Gompers was approved to go charter, SDUSD asked a few of their best employees, four who are still working at Gompers today (Vince Riveroll, Lisa Maples, Judith Franceschi, and Paz Garcia-Ramirez) to stay at Gompers charter instead of working for a District school. SDUSD knew they needed their best people in order to transform a failing inner city school and lead the effort of educational reform at Gompers, so the District made a promise.

SDUSD promised these founding leaders that if they worked at the new charter, they could be placed on what the District called **on loan** employment status. They promised the leaders that they would never need to quit the district in order to work at Gompers charter, especially since changing Gompers from a district school into a charter school was the District's idea. Knowing it would take consistent, brave, and innovative leadership, SDUSD promised the on loan agreement to these charter founders for the life of the charter.

Sixteen years later, these four GPA founders continue to uphold the mission that the District asked them to fight for. Year after year, they serve students, families, staff and community with impressive results in safety, school culture, parent engagement and student achievement. It is an understatement to say that they have made good on their promise to serve with students first. Now the District has broken their promise, cancelled the on loan agreements for our founders, and everything is in jeopardy.

This action by the district is a change they have not made in 15 years, a change that is not necessary. The on loan agreements for these four leaders does not hurt the district in any way. It is a small price to pay for the district to continue on loan agreements, especially since the district benefits from the fact that this brave, innovative and consistent leadership is what it takes to turn around struggling schools. To shift any part of this winning combination at GPA makes no sense.

So, why do it now? SDUSD is doing this while GPA is facing multiple obstacles, in order to weaken our school and eventually close our charter school. This is happening to many charter schools across the state and the country. Now that GPA is a thriving neighborhood school, a shining star among struggling schools in southeastern San Diego, SDUSD wants it to return to the District.

Forcing these GPA founders to choose between GPA and the District is a direct attack on GPA's ability to continue to serve our school community. It is a direct attack on our ability to keep the GPA mission alive and stay strong against all of the other threats we are battling as a charter school operating in a pandemic. Forcing key leaders to make this choice will likely have a massive negative impact on our ability to continue serving our families for years to come.

# **IT IS TIME TO TAKE ACTION TO SAVE OUR ON LOAN EMPLOYEES AND SAVE GPA!!**

Please contact the Board of Education TODAY to let them know who you are and that you want to preserve the rights of our four On Loan founders!

## **How to contact the San Diego Unified School District Board of Education:**

### **1) Public Comment at a Board of Education Meeting:**

- Submit your comments via email to: **publictestimony@sandi.net** (Feel free to use the template on GPA Website)
- Upcoming Board of Education meetings: **Oct. 27, Nov 3, Nov 10, Dec 10**
- Submit comments as early as possible, and definitely before 9am the day of the meeting, to be sure they are read. (Keep comments under 150 words to ensure your entire testimony is read)

### **2) Write a letter and send to the Board of Education and Superintendent:**

**John Lee Evans**  
Board President  
johnleeevans@sandi.net

**Kevin Beiser**  
kevinbeiser@sandi.net

**Mike McQuary**  
mmcquary@sandi.net

**Richard Barrera**  
Board Vice President  
rbarrera1@sandi.net

**Sharon Whitehurst-Payne**  
swhitehurst-payne@sandi.net

**Cindy Marten**  
Superintendent  
cmarten@sandi.net

### **3) Call the Board of Education office at (619) 725-5550 and leave a message for the Board of Education members**

Sincerely,

*Cecil H. Steppe*

Dr. Cecil H. Steppe  
Chairman of the Board  
Gompers Preparatory Academy