



December 7, 2020

Greetings Superintendent Marten,

As the holidays are upon us, I want to take a moment to say thank you for leading the District during this uncertain time. In times like these, strong and consistent leadership is needed for our students, staff, and community for whom we both serve. The on-loan matter has been difficult for our employees and our community. Each day is uncertain due to the pending decision the on-loan employees must make by March. A decision that could potentially have a damaging impact on Gompers' sustainability and success. It is this uncertainty for our community and employees that I hope you can rectify by respectfully reversing the termination of our on-loan agreement. What a gift this welcomed news would bring to our GPA community, District E families, and the on-loan employees.

I remember in 2003, the District asked me to leave Keiller Middle School where I was principal, and support the administration at Gompers Secondary with their lunch supervision duty because of the violence and chaos on campus. Gompers needed more help, the District asked me to step in, and so I served the District.

In 2004, the District asked me to leave Keiller Middle School, after serving for two successful years, and serve as principal of Gompers Middle School, as it was failing and continued to be an unsafe campus for children and staff, and where learning was not happening at the level needed. And so I served the District.

In 2004, the District asked me to lead the efforts to convert the Gompers campus into a charter school. This was a politically charged campaign that took herculean efforts of all involved. While leading Gompers Middle School during the day, a small group of dedicated District employees and I worked on the charter movement late into the evenings and weekends per the District's guidance. And so we served the District.

This controversial charter conversion effort, that we District employees found ourselves in the middle of, resulted in a political power move from the newly elected Board of Education members directing the superintendent to remove me as principal of Gompers Middle School in February of 2005 as a means to halt the charter movement. I had 24 hours to pack up my personal belongings from my office and leave the Gompers campus with a school police escort. I still remember that day with vivid and painful clarity as I had to say a hard goodbye to Gompers. And so I served the District by leaving Gompers and serving at the District's office.

In the summer of 2005, after serving as a "Mentor Principal" for the District since my sudden removal of Gompers in February, and after a March board meeting in which Gompers was approved to become an independent charter school, the District asked me if I would be willing to return to Gompers and lead the school as a charter. I was shocked considering how I was just removed a few months earlier.

The District's plan to convert the Gompers campus into a charter school succeeded. Now the District needed strong leadership and the most dedicated employees to give Gompers any chance of being successful despite it being a failing school for many years prior. And so, we served again. Paz Garcia Ramirez, Lisa Maples, Judith Franceschi, and I agreed to return to this whole new world of the charter, and do our best on behalf of the children of District E. We would have to do everything, we would have to learn quickly and we would have no help from the District, which was disheartening.

There would have been an easier route to take by not going to Gompers, but we knew the school needed us, and so did the District. And so we served the District by accepting their request to enter into an "on-loan" agreement to lead Gompers charter. The District and the newly established Board of Directors at Gompers both agreed this on-loan arrangement was in the best interest of the school and all parties. The District knew what was needed to create a high-quality neighborhood school in District E and ensured the on-loan employees that if we served this new mission at Gompers, we would be assured of our indefinite return rights to the District for whom we have and continued to serve faithfully. This was the deal. And so we served.

Converting the school by title from District to Charter was the easy part. No one knew however the magnitude of the work and sacrifice it would require from all of us to change a failing school into a school that we can all be proud of in San Diego Unified. But still, we served. We served 12- 16 hour days, we served on holidays and weekends, we served every summer, spring, and winter break because that is what was needed to fulfill the mission the District set up for us to accomplish. We still serve that mission. Gompers is a school that never sleeps. We are always working on fulfilling our mission 24/7.

Sixteen years later, the mission is being fulfilled. The District employees are still working as hard as they were 16 years ago and continue to give their all to the children of District E without question. We still serve the mission of the District and our Gompers community. Faithfully.

In June of 2020, during a global pandemic, the on-loan employees who have given so much to the greater good, and have always put the community before self, received notification that the District would no longer be supporting their efforts at Gompers by extending the on-loan agreement to them. So, now we find ourselves having to choose who to serve. The District or Gompers, but no longer both.

When the District needed us in 2005, we were there. We have continued to be there. Now that we need the District, the District isn't there for us. We need the District to serve its on-loan employees. The on-loan employees have never asked the District for support in 16 years of creating and running the charter. Now we humbly ask for this one thing, allow us to remain on-loan. Allow us to continue to serve with pride and distinction without having to choose between the District or Gompers.

The District has always had the power. This is why Gompers is a charter today. Your on-loan employees have done everything the District has asked for 16 years without complaint. We should not have to resign from our district that we have served faithfully for more than 25 years, in order to continue to serve a school that we love with all our hearts.

Superintendent, the power lies with you. Please reinstate our on-loan agreement for your four employees. We are doing good work on behalf of all of our students in District E.

Give us peace and stability this holiday season. Don't let another day go by with this uncertainty in everyone's lives. We don't deserve this. We deserve your support to continue to fight for public education in our most underserved communities. Your decision to reinstate our on-loan will be the most support we have ever received from San Diego Unified. Support us. This is a gift you can give an entire community today.

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With Students First,

Vincent M. Riveroll
Director