



GOMPERS PREPARATORY ACADEMY

a UCSD Partnership

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June 4, 2020

Dear GPA Families and Community Members,

On behalf of the GPA Board of Directors, I would like to send our heartfelt wishes to you and your loved ones. We hope you continue to be safe and healthy during this severe public health crisis. The local and global impacts of COVID-19, to health and safety, teaching and learning, and public school funding, are undeniably substantial and entirely unprecedented since the K-12 model of education was enacted in our country in 1965. While the effects of this pandemic are evolving daily, I would like to provide you with an update of our current status and ongoing planning for the future.

GPA Education Program

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools world-wide to change rapidly. Almost overnight, we moved from a brick and mortar school program that served the needs of nearly 1,500 students and staff members, to supporting students as they work from home, while adhering to California's stay-at-home orders. Reopening our campus will come with many challenges and we are still uncertain about the timeframe and overall parameters to do so. No matter the next steps, there is no such thing as business as usual for the coming months and, perhaps, years to come.

As we look to the coming school year, we have been exploring plans to meet our students' needs with an evolving educational model. Depending on the guidance we receive from education and public health officials, as well as collaborating with the teachers union, we hope to start the school year with a distance learning and/or blended learning model that will limit COVID-19 transmission risk for students, families, and staff. We plan to build on the successes of the Continuity of Learning plan we put in place during this year's emergency school closure, implement promising best practices in distance learning, and innovate, as we always do at GPA, to inspire, educate, and support our students in ways that support their individual needs.

Rather than lament that we can't teach our students exactly how we have in the past, we need to seize this opportunity to reimagine education and teach students in new and exciting ways. Over the coming weeks, our staff, in conjunction with the teachers union, will continue to develop these plans and provide guidance to families as we get closer to the start of the school year. Rest assured that safety is our top priority and we will do our best to provide all of the information, equipment, and supports needed to ensure that students' academic and social-emotional needs are met to the best of our abilities this Fall, while limiting health risks to students, families, and staff.

Budget Update

Last month, the State of California proposed cuts to education funding of at least 10 percent. This announcement comes as GPA was already bracing for unavoidable cuts before the pandemic in order to offset rising employer contribution costs for PERS/STRS, expected teacher salary increases, and other naturally rising costs, like

insurance, utilities, etc. We are also considering the likelihood that this pandemic may cause some families to move out of our area or out of the country, which could reduce our average daily attendance revenues. Additionally, regardless of whether we offer a distance learning or blended learning model next year, we will need to make large investments in student and teacher technology and Internet access for those in need. We have already started and will continue to purchase health and safety equipment, to ensure that anyone who steps foot on our campus is as safe as possible.

Many changes will be necessary in order to continue fulfilling our mission for students, and that will mean innovating now to protect our ability to serve students in the future. While several large school districts in California have announced that they will not reopen in the fall without more money from the state, as an independent charter school, we don't have the luxury of operating at a deficit. Nor are we willing to put our students' education on hold in the Fall, waiting for additional money that may not come.

Staff Layoffs

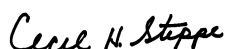
With the likelihood of deep cuts in funding from the state, GPA is looking to reduce our operating budget by 30% in order to stay fiscally solvent for the coming years. Although we are thankful to have built a healthy reserve since the 2008 recession, budget projections show that our reserve will be depleted by the end of the 2020-2021 school year if we do not make significant cuts now. As the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) stated in their April 2020 Alert, "Now is not the time to deplete reserves, but to ensure reserves are available for further changes as the year progresses and the economy impacts Local Education Agencies in 2021-22 and beyond."

In order to stay fiscally solvent over the next 3 years, and to prepare for the unknown timing of when we will return students and staff safely to our campus, we will need to make changes to our educational and social-emotional support programs, the manner in which these programs will be delivered, and how students and families will access them.

Unfortunately, these changes come with some difficult and painful decisions for us, as they affect the livelihood of our staff. With deep sadness, we are facing the need to lay off a significant portion of our staff, both teachers and support staff, at the end of this year. GPA staff members are unique in their passion for our students and their dedication to our mission of putting "Students First." We hope they will carry this tireless and positive spirit with them in their future endeavors.

Thank you for your continued support of our school and for entrusting us with caring for and educating your children. While there are many unknowns right now, and many choices still to be made before the school year begins in August, you can be sure that we will continue to put students first in every decision.

Sincerely,



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