



MEMORANDUM

To: Vincent M. Riveroll, Director/Superintendent
From: Jenny Parsons, Chief Business Officer
Date: November 2, 2020
Re: Gompers Preparatory Academy On-Loan Employees

On October 27, 2020, San Diego Unified School District staff issued a memorandum explaining the District's reasons for ending the on-loan arrangement for four GPA employees after sixteen years. Because the memorandum does not provide even one valid reason for this abrupt about-face, it seems more apparent than ever that the District's motive is to undermine GPA as an independent charter school and return it to District control.

District's Rationale

In the memorandum, District staff state that the reasons for the cancellation of this long-standing arrangement are: (1) the on-loan agreements were only offered in the past to *dependent* charter schools when they operated as an arm of the District and are not necessary now that these schools, including GPA, have transitioned to being *independent* charter schools; (2) the financial needs of the District; and (3) concern that the on-loan agreements may somehow create a two-tiered system for the employees at GPA. The District's reasons are either contrary to, or unsupported by, the facts and make it clear that the District has no valid rationale for its abrupt change of position after so many years.

GPA's Rebuttal and Rationale

First, as the District is well aware, GPA has always been an independent charter school from its very first day of operation as a charter. It was never a dependent charter school or an arm of the District and it did not transition its status as the District states. In 2005, fully aware that GPA was an independent charter school, the District promised the four employees that they would have return rights to the District if they worked for GPA so that the charter would have the best employees and the best chance of success. The on-loan arrangement has provided added security for the leadership of GPA (including its founding Principal), in the event the charter was not renewed. For sixteen years, the District has performed under this promise and these four individuals have worked for GPA, converting an historically poor performing school into a safe, popular and high-achieving community of learners of which the community can be proud. It is only now, when legal protections and appeal rights for charter schools have been weakened after

decades of stability, that the District has decided it no longer wants to honor this promise. This change signals a significant and highly visible weakening of District support for GPA - one of the enduring great successes of the charter school model in San Diego Unified School District.

The District next implies that there is a financial need for the District to end the on-loan arrangement by referring to the projected deficit for the 2020-2021 school year. It does not, however, provide any specifics as to how ending the on-loan arrangement would help the District's finances. This is because, as the District is well aware, the on-loan arrangement has no financial impact on the District and ending the on-loan arrangement will have no beneficial impact on the District's finances. In fact, if any of the four GPA employees make the decision to return to the District, the financial obligations currently paid for by GPA become the responsibility of the District. Therefore, preserving the on-loan agreements with GPA saves the District from these potential expenses.

Conclusion

Finally, the District states that it is ending the on-loan arrangement for the four employees out of concern that the on-loan arrangement may create inequities among co-workers at GPA. As the District notes elsewhere in its letter, GPA is an independent charter school and, as such, the District is its authorizer only. By attempting to make decisions relating to GPA's employees, the District is significantly overreaching its rights and responsibilities as the authorizer. Further, this is not a concern that has been raised at any point in the last sixteen years, either by the District or by GPA's employees. To the contrary, the vast majority of GPA's employees have publicly supported the on-loan agreements and have protested the District's actions to try to end the arrangement. Likewise, many members of the GPA's community have protested the District's actions and have asked the District to withdraw their decision. There is no confusion among any GPA's stakeholders except as to why the District would decide now is the time to alter what has worked for sixteen years. In this time of tumult and chaos, GPA students and staff need stability and continuity. Without any compelling reason to deprive them of it, the District should reconsider its decision.