

President's Update 4/27 to 5/1

Hi everyone.

Teacher Appreciation Week

I'd like to first take a moment to tell you how much you are all appreciated, perhaps more so now than ever. You give of yourself, your time, and your hearts day after day, year after year. And in this unprecedented time of distance learning, you have once again risen to the challenge. You created classrooms in your homes, learned technology you may not have even known existed, and made meaningful connections with your students. While we do have a supportive parent community here in Moorpark, the dedication and hard work of teachers has become much more apparent than ever here and across the country. Thank you for all that you do.

Bargaining

We finished updating the contract yesterday. We negotiate again on May 18th. At that session, we hope to have some word from the State about money, but the primary emphasis at this meeting will be the counselor's working conditions. Dyan McIntosh, Jake, Lisa and I will meet with Dr. Lasure this Wednesday to discuss the District's latest proposal concerning counselor's working conditions.

Letter to Board Members

The week after Moorpark's Facilities Bond measure failed, MUSD issued Reduction in Force (RIF) notices to 3 teachers and 2 counselors (a total of 4.8FTE). Although, MEA was aware the District had projected a revenue deficit of about \$370,000 due to a lower than average cost of living adjustment issued by the State (all CA districts protect COLA at 3%; Governor's January budget offered 2.29%), we were caught by surprise how little time we had to deliver the news to these members. In the spirit of California Student Mental Health Week, this is wrote to the District and its school board trustees:

As you may know, this week (May 4th-8th) is California Student Mental Health Week. It is an attempt to draw attention to the rise in mental health issues facing our communities and the empathy, compassion, support and programs that our school counselors provide to our students and their families. I want to take this opportunity to champion the outstanding work--the social, emotional, academic, and career guidance--that our 12 school counselors do every day. We need these mental health care experts on our campuses more than ever!

Consider these statistics:

- *From 2007-17 anxiety diagnoses for ages 13-18 rose 17%*
- *From 2007-17 depression diagnoses for ages 13-18 rose 5% (from 2 million to 3.2 million nationwide)*
- *From 2007-17 suicides rose 56% for kids ages 10-24 and rose 50% for ages 5-11*

- *25% of all Dr. visits result in anti-anxiety prescriptions*
- *Student refusal, kids who shut down and do not attend school, is rising*
- *Student stress and adult stress are mutually reinforcing*

The majority of mental health experts assert that during the pandemic students will require more social and emotional support than they did prior to the pandemic and school closures. 30 million more Americans have applied for unemployment in the last couple of months. The economy is projected to constrict by 30% in the second half of the fiscal year. Families are moving or moving in with extended family. If the 1918 Flu is a useful guide, many children will struggle just to come to school when we open our doors. In addition, students will need a different kind of academic support as we transition to online and or a blended curriculum delivery system that only counselors can provide.

During the school closure, counselors provide individual counseling to students, support our teachers with bilingual communication, connect to students without technology, call parents because their students are not doing their work, attending IEP meetings, and collaborate with staff through leadership team meetings, and management meetings. At the elementary level, counselors have recorded 22 Second Step: Social and Emotional Learning lessons as well as supplying digital workbooks that teach kids vital worry, grief, mindfulness, and coping skills. In addition, the elementary school counselors to plan also a College and Career Week during the week of May 11-15.

The demands on school counselors change as they meet the daily challenges of providing care for their student populations. Here are just some of the services that school counselors offer:

- *Advisement and appraisal for academic planning*
- *Orientation, coordination, and academic advising for new students*
- *Interpreting cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests as well as schoolwide and school counseling program data*
- *Providing counseling to students who are chronically absent or tardy or have disciplinary problems*
- *Provide short-term individual and small group counseling services*
- *Consult with teachers to schedule and present counseling curriculum lessons based on developmental needs and data-based research*
- *Inform teachers about the role of non-cognitive factors in student achievement and behavior*
- *Interpret student records and GPA in relationship to student achievement*
- *Consult with their principal to identify student issues, needs, and problems and articulate between schools and grade level*
- *Advocate for students at IEPs, SSTs, Home Hospital, in-patient care and school attendance review boards*

- *Attend or host parent nights, future freshman registrations, college fairs, awards nights, graduation, ELAC/DELAC, PRIDE meetings, and supervise or attend a variety of afterschool and nighttime events*

And the list could go on . . .

Please join me in recognizing, thanking, and celebrating our school counselors. I hope that you will agree that we need them more than ever!

CARES Money

Last, please be assured that MEA is lobbying on behalf of RIF'ed members. We did hear some possible good news from the Federal Government. This is the first financial good news in a while. MUSD's portion of the CARES stimulus money is about \$368,000. This element of the CARES Act authorizes Federal COVID Relief Funds to local governments to help "navigate the impact of" the outbreak. The amount is equal to the revenue deficit that MUSD's CBO projected in January. Remember, Mrs. Jamal has to plan budgets for three years (two years into the future), so that \$370,000 on MUSD's books becomes \$1.3 million. Still, MEA insists that if this money can be used for salary, then let's continue the practice of meeting the demands of today, and bring back all of these valued employees. Given the overwhelming circumstances that our students face, using the CARES money to retain educators who meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students is the right thing to do.

Brian