



May 23, 2018

Dear Ms. Hendricks and Board Trustees,

At our General Association Meeting on May 23, 2018, Palo Alto PTA Council, consistent with our commitment to advocating for the rights of ALL children in our school district, endorsed full funding of the budget requests attached to the Equity, Dyslexia and Special Education Plan. This request is in alignment with PAUSD's strategic goals of providing both high quality teaching and learning and equity and access.

The success of our school district should be measured not only high numerical rankings, but also by how well we serve our most vulnerable, least resourced students. We commend the district, with the support of the board, for the strategic initiatives to ensure that we are serving ALL students in our district in a way that meets their needs and provides them with equal access and opportunity to reach their full potential.

The PTA Council hereby urge the board to approve funding so there is a full-time Reading Specialist at every elementary school, recognizing that learning to read is the core task of the primary years. Students who struggle with reading deserve more support, not less, and failure to provide explicit instruction has devastating consequences for a student's academic, and life, trajectory. Reading Specialists should be considered core teaching staff at the elementary school level and funded accordingly.

It is imperative that students who either have not received needed reading interventions in the primary years and/or who continue to experience reading challenges in the secondary years receive reading interventions that are intentional, consistent, and evidence-based in middle and high school. Without these interventions, we are effectively consigning these students to the educational dustbin.

We strongly urge the board to fully fund, per the Equity and Dyslexia Plan, both Multi Tiered System of Support Coordinators and Intervention Specialists at the secondary level. These Intervention Specialists are the sole source of expert reading intervention for our secondary students, and provide students with not only reading support but also facilitate access to content across all subject areas and much needed emotional-support.

There is no silver bullet to closing the opportunity gap but the Equity, Dyslexia and Special Education Plans show a clear, strategic path forward that we believe will result in clear, measurable improvements in the achievement levels of our most vulnerable student populations.

We, Palo Alto PTA Council, urge the School Board to fully fund the Equity, Dyslexia and Special Education Plan, guaranteeing a fully funded full-time Reading Specialist at every elementary school, an MTSS Coordinator and MTSS Intervention Specialists at the secondary level in the 2018/19 Budget.

Sincerely,



Audrey Gold
PTA Council President, 2016-18
<http://ptac.paloaloto.org>