



June 9, 2020

Dear Members of the Board and Dr. Don Austin,

We write to you today in strong support of the proposed Resolution No. 2019-20.23  
*"Denouncing Discrimination, and Supporting Equity, Safety, and Well-being of Black People"*.

The unjust killings in the last 3 months of George Floyd in MN, Breonna Taylor in KY, and Ahmaud Arbery in GA shed new light on a long history of systematic racial injustice. This compels us to acknowledge some uncomfortable truths about the experience of Black families in our schools:

- The lack of education and reconciliation about America's history of slavery and long-term denial of the civil rights of Black people continues to affect the perception and treatment of Black people, including in our schools.
- At ~2% of our student population, Black students are often invisible. They are typically the only Black person in their class or grade, and subject to microaggressions (e.g., derogatory references to hair, "n-word" written on a whiteboard for the duration of a class, reckless advice to lane down in math, "legitimized" use of the "n-word" on the basis of an "n-word" pass from a Black person, racist graffiti in school bathrooms, assertions that a student has a college admission advantage because of Affirmative Action, etc.).

The PTA Council affirms the same. The experiences of Black students in PAUSD impact their mental health and wellness, and their ability to engage in and access education, enrichment and opportunities for equitable achievement. It results in a negative learning environment.

We applaud the Board's commitment to actively holding themselves accountable to dismantling the problematic policies and practices, and to ensure that Black students are able to enjoy full access and opportunities in PAUSD. The PTA Council is committed to partnering with PAUSD in this critical work and it is in this spirit, that we urge you to take meaningful action in the following ways:

- **Create space for uncomfortable conversations** on a regular basis at school sites and the district level so that the PAUSD community can listen and learn directly from Black

families. PTA Council expects that the district would provide regular public reports of learnings and action items stemming from these conversations.

- **Transform discipline policy with trauma informed responses and restorative justice practices.** PTA Council expects to see site level accountability and transparency regarding the demographics of student discipline. A district-wide transformation will require a commitment to training, starting with site administrators and reaching all educators. Our National PTA advocates for a district-wide transformation that requires a commitment to training, starting with site administrators and reaching all educators. And so do we.
- **Educate to empower and honor our students' histories.** A recent Southern Poverty Law Center [report](#) shows that teaching the history of slavery is hard. We encourage PAUSD to teach ethnic studies in a culturally sensitive way to properly inform a diverse student body, to impact school climate, and academics. Further, we encourage an intentional effort to elevate the many stories of the strengths, assets and contributions of Black people to our history in California and the United States. PTA Council would support the development of an Ethnic Studies curriculum starting in middle school continuing through high school.

In closing, we fully support the Resolution. We stand together with our Black school community members and our District leadership. Thank you for elevating this conversation to the Board level.

Respectfully yours,

Christina Schmidt, President

*On Behalf of the Palo Alto PTA Council Executive Board-Elect (2020-21)*

Adrienne Germain, VP Community Outreach (2020-21)

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Sara Woodham, Co-VP Education (2019-20)

Elizabeth May, Co-VP Education (2019-20)

Michelle Higgins, VP Community Outreach (2018-19)

Cc:

Jade Chao, Immediate Past President

Julia Jacobsen, Executive Vice President

Enclosures: National PTA Statement on Racial Inequality and Injustice