



October 18, 2016

Dear Members of the Board and Superintendent McGee,

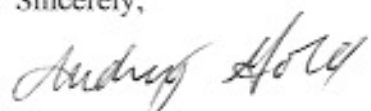
We are concerned that the proposed budget for 2017-2018 does not ensure sufficient staffing of classrooms in Palo Alto's high schools. In August, the largest of the "bubble classes" enters the high schools. At a recent town hall meeting, and in the enrollment report from the 9/13/2016 board packet, the district committed to maintaining the 2016-17 class sizes in 2017-18, despite increasing enrollment. As the largest child advocacy organization in the United States, we urge you to include the PTA in budget discussions because the implication of the decisions are potentially large for our student's education and well being.

Large classes impede relationships between teachers and students, limit time for meaningful feedback to students both during and after class, and frustrate even the most eager and self-confident student's ability to participate fully in class and get his or her questions answered. Large classes are particularly detrimental for at-risk students who might need more support or individual attention. Large classes are a barrier to innovations like experiential, project-based and student-led learning. Palo Alto's students need high quality teachers in sufficient quantities to prepare them for their next steps in life. A sufficient quantity of capable teachers is also essential for students' social and emotional health and academic achievement. Even the most talented teacher cannot create more minutes in the day to assist students during and after class, or more hours in the week to grade essays and homework.

The 2017-2018 budget does not allocate sufficient funds to hire an adequate number of teachers for our high schools for next year. Without your attention to this matter, this problem will only get worse as the high school population grows over the next five years.

Our students and teachers deserve class sizes that give students the opportunity to thrive. For the sake of our high-schoolers, we strongly urge you to find the resources to hire more teachers to honor your commitment to maintain the current class sizes while also maintaining the enriching academic experience our community values. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you as you move through the budgeting process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Audrey Gold".

Audrey Gold

PTA Council President 2016-17

<http://ptac.paloaltopta.org/>