

LAUSD Parent Advisory Committee

Chairperson's Report

March 18, 2021

Hello, colleagues:

As we know, the hot topic right now is **reopening**. I hope all of you attended the Zoom “town hall” sessions held this past Monday by your school principals. If you did, it’s possible and even likely that you heard something you didn’t like — I certainly did. If you have a child in elementary school, you are forced to choose between morning or afternoon class. What if you have two children, and one kiddo wants to go in the morning but the other says afternoon? Not good.

If you have kids at what’s known as a “secondary” campus —middle or high school — the District’s plan is even more frustrating: Students in small “cohort” groups will sit in their same advisory classroom all day, with the only teacher they see, live and in person, being their advisory teacher. However, this teacher will *not* be providing any instruction to the students seated in front of him or her, but rather to other students who are logged in virtually to Zoom from home.

I’m really sorry, but with all due respect to LAUSD leaders, Board Members, the Superintendent, and our labor partners, to me this arrangement seems counterintuitive and completely absurd.

From the very first survey that went out to parents back in December, each time I have responded that my child will be participating in the so-called “hybrid” model, which was always described as part-time classroom plus part-time virtual. But now, the new definition of “in person” instruction apparently means that even students who are in the classroom with a real, live teacher won’t be able to actually interact with this teacher! What on Earth is the point in “reopening” a middle school or a high school if it looks like this? Please tell me what I’m missing!

On Tuesday, the morning after my daughter’s high school held its own town hall session on reopening, I asked her whether she wants to go back in person. Without hesitation, she told me no, she wants to stay at home, online. Surprised by this answer — I assumed she would be eager to go back — I asked why, and she gave two reasons: She likes to sleep in until 8:30 a.m., and she doesn’t see the point in being on Zoom in a classroom instead of being on Zoom at home.

I was very sad to hear this from her, but I could not think of an argument to put up against her unassailably elegant logic. Why make the effort to go back to school when the only supposed “benefit” would be to see a few of your friends in the room — masked up, at least six feet away, behind Plexiglass partitions, staring at a laptop screen just as you are? I don’t blame her one bit.

There must be some good reason for a kid to be back on campus after a full year away, I’m thinking. I have to come up with something to convince her that returning would be preferable. So, after leaving her room and going downstairs for breakfast, I reviewed everything I might say:

Oh wait, all student cohorts go to lunch at the same time! You can catch up with friends then.

But no, cohorts are not allowed to mingle with each other.

Oh wait, you and your friends can talk on the playground!

But no, playground “apparatus” equipment is off-limits.

Oh wait, you girls can talk in the restroom!

But no, only a few students are allowed in the restroom at a time, and they will be escorted.

Oh wait, you all can hang out after dismissal!

But no, after-school supervision only goes until 4:00, not 6:00, as it was in “the good old days.”

So really, then, what’s the point?

What’s the point, indeed — so far, the latest survey results have only 50 percent of all District students returning in person. In communities of color, where COVID-19 has hit particularly hard, this number is even lower. Black and Latinx parents are hesitant to send their kids back. I get it.

The parent surveys that were done could have been a golden opportunity for us to provide thoughtful opinions and to engage in real collaboration with LAUSD. However, this was not to be. Those so-called surveys asked us only to choose one of two options, *both of which had already been agreed to by the District and UTLA*. Maybe I don’t understand what a “survey” is.

Were parents *ever* “in the room where it happens,” to quote the famous lyric from *Hamilton*? No. Every time parent leaders asked why this was not done, the only answer was ... no answer.

Is this supposed to represent working together? Have parents been treated as “equal partners” with the District? Please excuse me, PCS staff, but were we ever asked to “co-create” the best solution for reopening our children’s schools? *Do parents feel like anyone cares about us at all?*

I leave it to you to answer these questions for yourself. I know what I would say, and I can predict what one of our long-time colleagues, the late Juan Godinez, would say — in all capital letters:

“WHAT THE HELL? IT MAKES NO SENSE!”

At your service,

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