



Subject: Communities for Los Angeles Student Success (CLASS) Coalition Statement Demands an Equitable Return to In Person Learning

To the L.A. Unified Board of Education and Superintendent Austin Beutner:

We are the Communities for Los Angeles Student Success (CLASS) Coalition, made up of parent, student, educator, community-based and civil rights organizations who share a dedication to ensuring that all students in Los Angeles Unified School District receive an equitable, high-quality public education. Our coalition of advocates of color, comprising 12 core organizations, represents over 150,000 BIPOC families and students in the Los Angeles region.

The pandemic exacerbated the inequities faced by our most vulnerable communities and deepened gaps in learning opportunities. We applaud the efforts taken to address the myriad challenges, many rooted in those inequities, that a safe return to school for LAUSD's 600,000 students and their families must face. However, we have worked hard to understand exactly what the families we represent need for a safe return to school, and we write to share our coalition's concerns about that return.

We cannot afford to replicate further inequity with this reopening. We urge you to prioritize meaningful community engagement with those families most impacted during the pandemic in order to identify concrete solutions that center equity. Especially for families facing intersectional challenges, we must directly address the trauma and learning recovery for students to make the return to school as transformative and free of harm as possible.

Throughout the pandemic, two vastly different stories and realities have emerged within the district. In one, families with resources and privileges manage their children's educational journeys and mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic largely from being able to live in areas with lower rates of infection and death. In another reality, disproportionately BIPOC families are pushed to their limits by economic, housing, job, and food instability while they struggle to support their students through distance learning.

The statewide vulnerability & recovery [index](#) created by Advancement Project California highlights the disparities between communities within Los Angeles county. In the communities the CLASS Coalition represents, students juggle classwork hampered by limited physical spaces to work in their homes, often-spotty broadband, the need to care for younger siblings, and even while taking on the role of provider in their homes after family members get laid off. They live with the traumas of losing loved ones and the ever-present fear that family members forced to continue working as essential and front line workers will fall ill.

Given these unequal realities, we urge you to:

- **Center social-emotional learning supports in equity**, especially for BIPOC, low-income, English language learning, foster, and homeless youth. Work with us to equip teachers and staff with the resources they need to manage the trauma that students and families have experienced.
- **Create informational awareness on the effectiveness of vaccines** by partnering with the CLASS Coalition and other educational partners and support increased equitable access to vaccination.
- **Continue to push for equity in the budgeting process**, as lifted up by the Equity Alliance, by centering new funding on the Student Equity Need Index. Equitable budgeting of the reopening of schools and focusing new state and federal funds on the highest-needs school will offset long standing inequities.
- **Help high-need schools recruit staff members** with resources and flexibility so that critical positions don't go unfilled, delaying support for students and families.
- **Solicit ample community input for short- and long-term learning recovery plans**, particularly from educators, parents and students.
- **Center student voices**, unacceptably left out of the last year's distance learning conversations, to shape the return to school.
- **Plan and deliver targeted, proactive outreach to the unengaged "missing students"** with whom schools and districts have yet to successfully connect throughout the last year. We want to help you create strategies to reach these students.

We are currently learning what parents and students will need to confidently return to school through focus groups and surveys. We are eager to partner on district-wide shifts to center the voices of BIPOC students and families. Ultimately, our students are the leaders our community needs to build transformative powerful education systems and a more equitable and racially just future. We look forward to meeting with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The members of the CLASS Coalition:

