

October 30, 2020

Dear IUSD School Board members and Superintendent Walker,

On behalf of the members of Irvine Teachers Association, the Executive Board would like to emphasize to the School Board and District Leadership that conditions of instruction during this pandemic are still in need of vast improvement.

The most shocking problem to us is the failure of the district to honor the contract regarding class size limits and compensation for the teachers in the Irvine Virtual Academy. We applaud and appreciate recent efforts to reduce class sizes by adding more sections, and we hope all of these classes can be reduced to meet contract limits. Nevertheless, teachers are still owed compensation for the days they had more students than the contract maximum. We do not understand why the district believes that these particular teachers do not deserve their compensation as specified in our contract. They are responsible for more grading, more parent emails, more students needing assistance, and all the additional work that comes with more students. The fact that their time is spent online is irrelevant to the fact that they are accountable for teaching more students than the contract maximum, and therefore deserve contract-specified compensation.

Another problem is that elementary teachers in the “traditional” model are having to teach their classes split in half into two different classrooms—at the same time. While there are some instructional aides for part of the time, instructional aides are not teachers, they should not be asked to be teachers, and they have not been trained as teachers. Nor is there time built into the schedule for teachers to confer with and to train the aides; therefore, in addition to their many other duties, teachers must write substitute teacher plans every single day for their aides to follow. This is not fair to the aides, the students, or the teachers. Do parents even know that in the traditional model, their children are being taught by aides, not their teachers, half the time they are in school?

The teachers in the hybrid model are struggling to balance instructional time between in-person and at-home learning. Planning and instructing for both models concurrently requires twice the work, with very little time in which to complete that work. For secondary teachers with multiple courses to teach and elementary teachers with combination grade levels, multiply that work load because it can require more than 2 times the preparation and planning that regular school would require. The hybrid

teachers need more time built into their schedule to do all the extra work required of them.

The education specialists and speech and language pathologists are also being expected to perform multiple tasks for students enrolled in up to three different models: hybrid, traditional, and virtual. The scheduling of services is a maze that requires exceptional amounts of time to manage. For those ed specialists who have self-contained classes with students in multiple grade levels and in various models, it's a scheduling impossibility.

In addition to these instructional difficulties, our nurses, counselors, and itinerant teachers are facing the additional workload and unique challenges with their increased demands to ensure all our students—and staff—are safe and healthy. Our nurses are spending hours of their own time on the phone talking with families to explain what they need to do and answer their questions; the district needs to provide support for nurses so that work can be done within contracted time limits.

When so much is on the line, and so many are sacrificing so much for the greater good, the last thing the district should do is make life even more difficult for educators. Show us we are valued.

1) Reduce the work load. Delay or omit all tasks and meetings that are not immediately necessary for instruction at this time, during this unique situation—no pilots, no trendy education strategies, etc. Let educators focus on staying safe, keeping our students engaged and challenged, and helping them learn.

2) Honor our contract for ALL teachers. IVA teachers are not a separate group; they are IUSD teachers. Do not shortchange them. We are appalled that the district is trying retroactively to deny proper compensation to IVA teachers whose student numbers exceed the contract maximum.

To benefit all students and staff, we expect that the district will do everything possible to ensure that the efforts of all teachers, counselors, nurses, and SLPs are respected by immediately reducing of all extraneous time requirements and honoring our collective bargaining agreement for all members.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board of the Irvine Teachers Association