



School Board Meeting Action

On Tuesday at the board meeting, several people spoke in response to finding out that we'll be losing full time counselors at 4 of the 5 elementary schools, we are losing one comprehensive counselor at Gabrielino, and cuts are being made to the Speech and Language program. In my speech, I referenced the comments I collected about the counseling topic. I gave the school board and cabinet copies of the submitted comments written by you about how the loss of counseling services would impact your day. I was asked to send out my speech so you would be informed about what is going on. Please read it below.

I want to start by saying I know we all want what is best for students. We wouldn't be here if we didn't.

As the SGTA president, I have to make some tough decisions. When I was told teachers would be laid off because of enrollment, I didn't fight it. I accepted it because I understand declining enrollment and not being over-staffed. It was encouraging to know that it would be likely that most, if not all, would get their notice rescinded and I am happy that that has come true.

But last Thursday, Mr. Perry informed me that we would be letting go of 2 of our elementary counselors. I have also learned that our district is planning to reduce Speech and Language Pathologists by 1 and Speech and Language Pathologist Assistants by 3. I can't accept this. I can't sit by and let go of VITAL services for our most vulnerable students when most of the concerns I hear from SGTA members is the need for MORE services. Our workload will suffer. Our students will lose out.

While the temporary status of the elementary counselors was something we have discussed in the past, I did not think we would actually ever lose any of them. We discussed changing their funding source, but not letting them go.

Mr. Perry explained that McKinley would get to keep a full time counselor, Roosevelt and Washington would each get 3 days and Coolidge and Wilson would each get 2 days of counseling.

I asked SGTA members to explain what impact this would have on their day. Here is one response that sums it up from the point of view of a general education teacher.

“As a General Education Teacher, my day would be severely impacted. Instructional time and implementation of MTSS would suffer because counselor focused aspects of the day would fall onto the teacher. My class has dealt with various situations where our school counselor has been able to step in and resolve in a positive, caring, professional, and impactful way. AND in a way I do not have training in. ALL of our students have benefited from having a full-time school counselor. It would be a disservice to student's well-being and education if sites move to not having a full time school counselor.”

I have given you a copy of all of the responses. When you read it, you will see even the secondary schools are concerned about what this would mean.

In asking the question about elementary counselors, I was also made aware that the high school will also be losing a counselor. When I asked Mr. Perry to confirm this was true, he stated that it is because they have been over-staffed for quite some time. If this is true, why did they hire someone to take Ms. Machado's place while she is in her current counselor on special assignment role?

Also, on September 13, 2022, Dr. Perez gave a presentation about the GHS counselors-stating they would be removing the college and career counselor and have 5 comprehensive counselors instead. The reasoning presented was to lower the student to counselor ratio. At the time of the presentation, the ratio with 4 comprehensive counselors was 369:1. Next year, with projected enrollment, the ratio would be 359:1. Why was it unacceptable then, but ok now? Dr. Perez's presentation stated "lowering ratios allows all school counselors to effectively deliver a comprehensive school counseling program to better meet scholars academic, career and social emotional needs." She continued by emphasizing the desire for individualized support.

In addition, "Equitable access to health and wellness for all" is one of our LCAP goals for the 2024-25 school year. In the draft about social and emotional health support it says, "this action reflects increased and improved services because it increases access to both universal and targeted SEL and mental health supports and services to ensure unduplicated students have access to the tools needed for emotional regulation."

If we are making our elementary counselors share sites and having fewer high school counselors, are we really increasing and improving our services?

By reducing support amongst speech therapists and our school counselors, our most vulnerable students will be lacking in the help that they need to thrive.

Our students deserve the best.

Bring our counselors back.

Keep all of our Speech and Language Pathologists and Speech and Language Assistants.

Thank you.

[Lisa Durandette, SGTA President](#)