



# Memorandum

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Councilmember Sylvia Arenas  
Councilmember Maya Esparza  
Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco  
Councilmember Pam Foley

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** April 3, 2020

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Approved

Date

*Sylvia Arenas*  
*Magdalena Carrasco*  
*Maya Esparza*  
*Pam Foley*

*4/3/20*

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**SUBJECT: REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER, DAVID SYKES**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommend that City Administration include in their update to council on April 7th and return to Council on April 14th with a response to include questions and next steps for working with San Jose's school districts in a clear and systematic manner and:

- 1) Request the City Administration address the following questions:
  - a. Which school districts have received direct assistance from the City and was that assistance direct financial support and/or contracts related to food distribution? What criteria was utilized for assistance?
  - b. Which school districts are under consideration for financial support directly from the city?
  - c. What commitments to equity is the administration committed to in these efforts?
- 2) Bring back to Council answers to the questions submitted in the attached letter from school district leaders, including:

- a. How can we support their emergency need to quickly close the digital divide that now threatens to suspend the education of many children in low income families? What steps can we take to mobilize our digital inclusion grant process to meet this challenge, including ensuring access to mobile Wi-Fi devices? How do we prioritize moving quickly forward with our community wireless network partnership with East Side Union High School District and SmartWAVE?
- b. What steps are we taking to leverage our resources to assist school districts in their emergency mission of providing child care to eligible families – examples of which include providing access to city libraries and community centers?
- c. What steps are we taking to increase awareness and access to services for undocumented families?

## **BACKGROUND**

San Jose has responded quickly and decisively to the Coronavirus pandemic. As a city, we've benefited from the experience and leadership of our city administration and the lessons learned during the 2017 flooding, the 2019 wildfire season and of course the Great Recession. And we've benefited from strong partnerships with the County and State governments.

Additionally, San Jose families have benefited when there has been a strong partnership with our local schools. Immediately, they jumped into gear to provide to-go meals for the children they serve. However, as the scope of their assignment grows, and as the crisis moves from days to weeks, the challenge they face grows too.

In the Governor's executive orders, schools have been tasked with providing Distance Learning, School Meals, and continue to support special education initiatives. Today they are pivoting their work to overcome new challenges with limited resources. On March 17th, the California Department of Education provided additional guidance to schools to "collaborate with local partners and other entities to ensure students are supervised during school hours". This crisis hits schools particularly hard given they were already experiencing a decline in their budget due to low student enrollment.

This crisis has brought to light the existing inequity that many of our school children have faced throughout our communities. That is why initiatives such as the Digital Inclusion Fund were started, and now more than ever we see the urgency in continuing and supporting this work.

This week, leaders from local school districts wrote to the Council, seeking help and partnership as they work to meet this challenge. While our city resources are limited, that should not hamper our ability to provide clear and systematic cooperation within our means.

And we *do* have access to resources that can make a vital difference for vulnerable children in our communities. We have already seen the city provide direct assistance with food distribution in at least one school district. We have a digital inclusion fund, that has never been more needed. And we have sites and teams that currently cannot serve their usual functions.

Our local school board members are reaching out to us in an hour of great need, which is why this memo asks for answers on critical questions regarding our partnerships to protect children and families.

*The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.*

Dear San Jose City Councilmember,

We are grateful for your actions to prioritize the safety of students, educators, and our communities in the City of San Jose. During this state of emergency, we as school board leaders and educators recognize that collaboration is imperative to meet the growing needs of our families and constituents. Collectively, our districts are working to slow the spread of COVID-19, while ensuring students have access to meals and learning during school closures. We cannot do this work alone. Therefore, we are advocating and making the following asks in the spirit of collaboration around what is best for kids and in support of our respective communities:

- 1) **Bridge the digital divide** by addressing internet and device access for distance learning. With the unprecedented announcement of school closures for the remainder of this school year, school districts are navigating equity challenges as we strive to provide access to resources for remote instruction. Based on family surveys, funding capacities, and technology availability, our districts are averaging a need of approximately 500 devices and internet hotspots per district.
  - a) Help us engage and advocate with our tech companies, nonprofit collaborators, and stakeholders with resources, who can help provide our children with the devices and access to broadband they need to be able to continue learning virtually.
- 2) **Coordinate access to [emergency child care](#)** for eligible families including children of healthcare workers, disaster service workers, low income, and unhoused families. We ask for your continued collaboration and commitment as our individual districts evaluate and build our own capacity.
  - a) One specific consideration is looking at the unified model that the [City of San Francisco](#) has been able to effectively establish utilizing a partnership with Parks and Recreation and City Libraries. Utilizing universal community spaces and resources such as libraries or community centers, we can expand our support in a manner that is safe for providers and children.
- 3) **Increased outreach to support undocumented families, unhoused families, and families experiencing financial hardship.**
  - a) Locally, the City of San Jose has adopted provisions to provide financial support for housing as well as eviction protections for families facing financial hardship. We are grateful for this display of leadership and ask for continued information accessibility.
  - b) School district meal distribution, programs like meals on wheels and nonprofit organizations like Second Harvest are providing access to food for individuals in

need. We must continue to coordinate our efforts to provide food to those who need it.

- c) Increased coordination on resource distribution and intentional outreach to vulnerable communities is imperative. We need additional and multifaceted communication to families who need these resources and may not be aware they exist.

Thank you for your urgency and collaboration during these unprecedented times. We know our collective impact will ensure that the most vulnerable members of our community receive the support they need.

***Educator-Elected School Board Members in the City of San Jose***

*Maimona Afzal Berta, Franklin-McKinley School District Trustee & Special Education Teacher*

*José Magaña, San Jose Unified School District Trustee & Former Teacher*

*Kristiina Arrasmith, Campbell Union High School District Trustee & Bilingual Teacher*

*Jorge Pacheco Jr., Oak Grove School District Trustee & Ethnic Studies Teacher*

*Lorena Chavez, Eastside Union High School District Trustee & Former Teacher/Principal*