

June 27, 2017

Randall Booker, Superintendent  
Cheryl Wozniak, Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Adam Littlefield, Principal, PHS  
Ryan Fletcher, Principal, PMS  
Anne Dolid, Principal, Havens Elementary  
Michael Corritone, Principal, Beach Elementary  
Carol Cramer, Principal, Wildwood Elementary  
Incoming Principal, Millennium High School  
Board of Education  
Piedmont Unified School District  
760 Magnolia Ave, Piedmont, CA 94611

Dear Superintendent Booker, Dr. Wozniak, Principals, and PUSD  
Board of Education,

Piedmont ALPS was formed in 2007 by families with advanced learners (including, but not limited to, GATE-identified students) at PUSD. Our main goal is to help the District support advanced students at every level with sufficient challenge and differentiation to meet their learning needs. We achieve our mission through education, advocacy, community building, and fundraising.

**During this past year, our group:**

- Provided \$7,750 for 2016-17 differentiation specialist/coach Amy Symons Burke;
- Provided \$4,250 for 2016-17 6th grade CC6 math enrichment support, Alyse Schneider;
- Presented a joint talk with PRAISE in November 2016 on “Outliers in Learning,” discussing the experiences and challenges of gifted students and those on the spectrum;
- Provided input, advice, and support to district staff on the role of the differentiation specialist, CC-6 math specialist, GATE site coordinators, NGSS changes, etc.;
- Co-hosted September 2016 GATE Parent Information Night for parents with Dr. Wozniak;

- Hosted talk by Amy Symons Burke about her differentiation coaching work in May 2017; and
- Shared information about opportunities and events for advanced learners with our community.

We acknowledge and appreciate the measures the District has put in place to support advanced learners, including the differentiation specialist and the GATE site coordinators. We submit the following recommendations for implementation in 2017-2018 and beyond:

### **1. Revisit Secondary Math Pathways.**

We have received extensive feedback that advanced 6th graders continue to be bored and frustrated by the learning pace and mixed-ability learning groups in CC6. Also, the desire of Piedmont students to pursue advanced secondary math is reflected in the enrollment of more than 50 students, most about to enter PHS, in a 5-week summer IM 2A course. While summer school may be an option, it would be far preferable for the pathways to accommodate student interest and need in advanced math classes to access both the middle and high school compression options without summer school.

PUSD should gather data, including student experience, test scores, enrollment, teacher and family feedback, and reconsider math pathway options, including revisiting 6th grade compression, providing a role for parents, students, and ALPS in the revision process;

### **2. Examine Elementary Math Enrichment Changes.**

After moving advanced math enrichment to a push-in model at the tri-schools, we want to ensure that advanced learners are receiving adequate challenge and differentiation. PUSD must gather parent/student input and other data on change, to determine that it meets student needs;

### **3. Offer NGSS/AP Science Courses.**

Our district has a high percentage of students with advanced learning needs. As we implement a new science curriculum, we support making advanced coursework available to Piedmont students in new areas, including engineering and computer science, as well as

providing greater opportunity in chemistry and physics, including AP courses, as specified in our letter of 3/28/17;

**4. Take better advantage of the trained GATE site coordinators.**

We applaud the commitment and hard work of classroom teachers, but realize that differentiated instruction can vary dramatically between classrooms and projects. To address these inconsistencies, each school site coordinator can (1) help classroom teachers identify students who need extra challenge and/or extra support; (2) help coach classroom teachers on how to differentiate specific pieces of content; and (3) work with advanced learners who need a level of challenge that cannot be provided within the regular classroom context;

**5. Continue teacher professional development in differentiation and GATE.**

Intermittent teacher coaching is not sufficient to help all our teachers learn and apply consistent differentiation. Teachers learn best in different formats. We encourage the district to: (a) look to hire more teachers who are GATE certified; (b) provide incentives (e.g., stipends) for teachers to receive training in differentiated instruction and/or GATE certification; (c) offer more on-site differentiated instruction training for all teachers, beyond coaching/consultation; (d) strengthen the differentiated instruction coaching model recently put in place; (e) reoffer on-site GATE certification, such as the 2012-13 training program at PUSD with Dr. Susan Daniels, supported by ALPS;

**6. Increase FTE for district-wide differentiated specialist/teacher coach.**

Current coach Amy Symons Burke can coach more teachers in Piedmont with greater funding. ALPS supports increasing her contract as a resource for teachers beyond .4 FTE;

**7. Offer individualized differentiated instruction plans for advanced learners.**

Parents of advanced learners want to know how their child's needs are being met. We advocate creating a brief, written plan for each advanced learner or GATE-identified student to document educational

needs and goals and identify concrete steps that will be taken to meet them. Plans could be shared between teachers during yearly and school transitions and shared with parents early in the academic year.

We have tried to make these recommendations specific, reasonable, and actionable. Our group would be happy to discuss the fundraising implications and resources needed to support these goals. We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with PUSD to achieve as many of these goals as possible in 2017-2018 and beyond. If you have any questions or feedback, please email us at [piedmontalps@gmail.com](mailto:piedmontalps@gmail.com).

Regards,

Piedmont ALPS 2016-17 Board and Members

Board: Elizabeth Shook, Julie Caskey, Kathleen Crombie, Christina Hsia, Jim Govert, Aaron Fisher, Joshua Posamentier, Kim Fisher, Dana Lung, Shari Fuji, Cindy Wire, Julie Drassinower, Cristie March