

August 31, 2020

Ms. Talamantes,

We bring these concerns as Burbank educators, essential members of the Burbank community, and representatives of numerous other staff members too scared of retaliation to join us in publicly sharing widely-shared concerns regarding campus reopening plans. We are a group of concerned professionals who hope to ensure the safest possible return of teachers and students to the classroom. We strive for safety procedures that are both clear and well-defined. We love this school and the community it serves, and because of this dedication to the Burbank family - exemplified in the anchoring phrase echoed throughout our campus, "Ubuntu - I am because we are" - we feel it is our duty to speak out on their behalf.

**As educators, our primary responsibility is to preserve and act in defense of human life. We assert that the Burbank reopening plans, as presented on 8/27, are not adequate to the task that confronts us.**

Last week's scheduled meeting to discuss safety protocols and procedures left many members of our campus family alarmed and concerned over the lack of a robust and explicit plan for a safe reopening. In a two hour meeting, few concerns were addressed, few questions were answered, and many of us left feeling dismissed, disrespected, and disheartened. Educators (of varying years of experience) across our campus have shared that they felt disrespected by campus administration; their concerns minimized or ignored; answers to their legitimate questions not forthcoming. Many have spoken of the dehumanizing experience of being treated as little more than a replaceable cog in the campus machine - a far cry from our understanding that we are members of a Burbank family dedicated to the love and support of its staff, students, and community. Basic questions - about whether all teachers would be teaching face-to-face, whether classrooms would have power strips for students using technology, about screening procedures when students arrive at our large, open campus, about air conditioning in our old buildings - were ignored, had to be repeated to obtain a response, or were not answered with sufficient detail or clarity to inspire confidence. Most alarmingly, our principal's response to these serious questions was dismissive to an extreme degree. Educators were told, "I thought we'd already answered these questions," (clearly not) and informed that they had only one choice: to return or to leave their employment with the district. It would be difficult to imagine a more contemptuous statement to make to educators who have devoted their working lives to serving the Burbank community - underpaid and overworked - for years.

Staff concerns were compounded by the realization that the 8/27 safety committee meeting - held immediately prior to the faculty meeting detailed above - had provided few answers and little clarity. Following directions from administrators to be "part of the solution", many of us joined the safety committee during or immediately following our Burbank faculty meeting. We were alarmed when Friday's scheduled safety committee meeting was canceled at short notice - the administrator leading the committee explaining only that he had something else he had to do at the same time. What could be more important than convening the safety committee to address educators' concerns is a mystery to us, and the cancellation of a scheduled safety committee meeting little more than a week before students return to Burbank, is concerning and frustrating to those of us who were told to engage in that space to develop solutions. Moreover, we are baffled that this committee wasn't formed months sooner,

when the virus raged throughout the city and country. It's unacceptable that the committee only recently formed, has only met once, and failed to meet a second time.

Thus far, no written plan for safely reopening Burbank has been provided to staff. All we have seen is a skeleton - little more than a few bullet points that were displayed at our safety briefing. The explanation came across as ad-libbed by administration, the consequence being a meeting which led into brainstorming solutions to problems that should already have been solved. The solutions should have been provided to us via email attachments in updated campus policies, procedures, and protocols. To be clear: the safety and reopening presentation we received was significantly less robust, detailed, and serious than any other presentation we have received since returning this school year. **We assert that safety and the preservation of human life and health should be the primary focus, and that our staff, students, and the community we serve deserve better than this.**

Staff have raised concerns directly with administration throughout this period of time. Protocols at our campus are not being followed, enforced, or taken seriously. Masks are not being worn; breaches of protocol ignored by leadership. Rooms are not being properly sanitized; custodians not adhering to MetroHealth guidelines. Individual members of staff have communicated their concerns to our leadership, but so far, none of these concerns have been addressed, and the issues raised remain unsolved.

**We call on you to address the following by Thursday, 9/3, at 2pm, when the entire campus staff should be reconvened for a presentation of our campus reopening plan.**

- The Burbank Safety Committee and the Campus Leadership Team should approve our school reopening plan. A vote should be held in both spaces, with a majority of member votes needed to approve. Minutes of both meetings should be shared with all campus staff.
- Student representatives should be included on the Safety Committee. Our students will be most directly impacted by school reopening decisions, and should be given a voice in making them.
- All staff should be sent a written plan for a safe reopening at least 24 hours before the next campus reopening procedures meeting. Staff should be allotted time to read and discuss the plan with their peers, and to raise concerns. All PLC time on Friday, 9/4, allowing the full day if necessary, should be dedicated to discussion of the plan in departments, and as a campus staff, to troubleshooting and problem-solving.
- There should be a consistent line of communication between administration and staff about daily changes and updates. Communication should occur via email and sent 002, rather than communicated to department chairs to share with their departments.
- Administration should work towards a consistent approach and reaction protocols when addressing issues to individuals, groups of individuals, and the staff as a whole.

This plan should include, at minimum, the following:

- Detailed safety procedures.
- Detailed explanation of the phases by which students will return to campus.
- In the first weeks of the phased return, the fewest possible amount of students should be brought back to campus. Protocols allow for *up to* 10% of the student population; we assert that the smaller the returning percentage, the safer everyone is. The first phase returning percentage should be *less than* 10%.
- The Burbank staff should determine the number of teachers and support personnel needed to teach up to 10% of students face-to-face, and should only require that number of educators to return to

campus on 9/8. Requiring all teachers to return to their classrooms at this time creates unnecessary risk to staff, students, and the community we serve. The purported academic benefits do not outweigh the increased risk to human life.

- Written criteria for HVAC safe operation should be shared with all staff, along with data demonstrating that ventilation in all areas of the Burbank campus, including, but not limited to, all classrooms, meets these objectives, measurable criteria for safety.
- Written explanation of procedures to follow in the event of an HVAC failure - a frequent occurrence at Burbank - should be shared with all staff.
- Outdoor spaces should be created for instruction. Furniture no longer needed in classrooms with reduced occupancies should be used until time allows for the purchase and installation of outdoor-specific seating and tables.
- Written criteria by which students are being prioritized for return should be shared with all staff.
- The criteria prioritizing students for return should be focused primarily on identifying the students whose physical, mental, and emotional well-being are most at risk during this time.
- A list of students returning for face-to-face instruction should be provided to all educators, who should be told which students they will be serving, and in what numbers.
- All staff should receive training on cleaning protocols to use with the cleaning supplies they are being provided. Cleaning protocols should meet OSHA criteria.
- Staff should receive training on the notification procedures in the event of exposure, and quarantine processes to follow.
- All staff should be notified if positive cases and/ or possible exposures are reported at Burbank. All FERPA requirements for confidentiality should be met, but staff should be informed on the same day that incidents have occurred.
- Written expectations for how teachers should engage in simultaneous face-to-face and virtual instruction should be shared with all staff.
- Organized plans for student and staff movement should be shared with all staff in writing. We assert that movement and mixing of students should be kept to an absolute minimum, and that cohorts or pods of students should remain together throughout the day.

**We ask that the concerns detailed above be addressed in time for an all-staff safety meeting to be held no later than 2pm on Thursday, 9/3, via Zoom.** A detailed, written plan for the safe reopening of Burbank High School should be provided to staff no later than 2pm on Wednesday, 9/2, to allow all staff to read and evaluate the plan prior to the campus meeting. The entire work day on Friday, 9/4, should be dedicated to department and whole-staff discussions regarding safety protocol implementation, troubleshooting, and problem-solving.

We only have one chance to safely reopen our school. It is our responsibility to ensure that we do so, with integrity.

Signed,

Concerned Burbank Staff