



API Council Urges SFUSD Leadership to Prioritize a Safe Return To Schools

The advocacy organization stands in solidarity with BIPOC student leaders to denounce racism

San Francisco---In this extremely divisive climate that plagues our public schools, API Council stands in solidarity with BIPOC student-led movements and denounces the toxic racism, anti-Blackness, and anti-semitism that has left a violent mark on our school communities. We understand this racism to be systemic and the work to dismantle it must center the needs of our most marginal communities. This work goes beyond one single campus. It must encompass a systematic plan to uplift the quality of education and include a more equitable admissions process at all campuses. As an organization representing 57 Asian and Pacific Islander non-profits and community-based organizations, it is imperative that we add to a productive dialogue focused squarely on equity and to uplift concerns around the disproportionate impacts Covid-19 has brought to light. We are troubled by the recent data around learning loss and the lasting impacts they will have specifically in communities of color. Black, LatinX, and API students continue to fall further behind. Gaps in learning will grow into gulfs. Additionally, our students' mental health continues to suffer under the magnitude of stressors affecting their social and emotional well-being.

We must acknowledge that distance learning has only highlighted the stark disparities students and families face. Our clients represent immigrants, ESL, multi-generational, low-income, and working-class residents--a cross-section of some of the most vulnerable in our City and some of the most susceptible to disparities in a learning loss. APIs are not a monolith, and our needs are as diverse as our communities. Rather than focusing on politics, we must come together to prioritize the education and well-being of all students and their parents during this most challenging time. We have to do better by collaborating as a community on the safe reopening of schools in order to give our students the best opportunity to have access to quality education. This means creating space for ongoing community discourse on the best approach to achieve district-wide equity. We must prioritize our community's deepest concerns such as addressing academic and mental health for all students.

We are encouraged by the progress made by San Francisco school administrators, the school district, and our teacher's union toward a plan for safe reopening. A thoughtful plan for teacher's vaccination is critical. We strongly support this progress. Every student deserves a high-quality school where they feel seen, mentally and emotionally, where they feel safe, where they experience an education that reflects their own history and taps into their own potential. Further, it should be a place where that potential is valued and nurtured. We urge the district and SFUSD leadership to demonstrate the kind of leadership that is needed when called upon by both history and community.

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