

Silver Oak High School - Board of Directors Minutes

Thursday, April 15, 2021 @ 6:00PM

28826 Bailey Ranch Rd, Hayward, CA 94542

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2616519564?pwd=K3FiUXRpakVzZGtRdmkvSDdEMnlyUT09>

or +1 669 900 9128, Meeting ID: 261 651 9564, Password: SOBoard



1) Call to Order

6:03pm

The meeting was called to order by LCJ

a) Attendance

A – Absent, AA – Apologized Absence, P – Present, T – Tardy

Silver Oak HS Board members

Bauer, Tom	P	Eckart, Helga	P
Bichard, Murielle	P	McMahon, Rick	P
Cespedes, Vinnie	P		

Golden Oak Board members

Compani, Amy	P	Espinosa, Jorge	T	Schenone, Joe	T
Casquejo Johnston, Luz	P	Gordon da Cruz, Cynthia	P	Stearns, Roman	P
Den Hartog, Doug	A	Rodriguez, Kristin	P		

b) Reading of Mission Statements, by Amy Compani and Murielle Bichard.

c) Acknowledgements

- Tom wished an early Happy Birthday to Elaine Blasi.

Order of the agenda was changed to accommodate the YM&C lawyers present on the call to help with items 4b & 4c. Those two items were moved up first, before Public Comment.

4) Items for Joint Meeting

b) Action item – Approval of the merger agreement

- Lawyers from YM&C were on the call: Kimberley Rodriguez and Anthony Serrao.
- This agreement is standard. Some provisions were added per request of the GO Board.
- Changes made:
 - Section 1.4: Names of board members were updated to reflect the new board elected on March 4th 2021.
 - Section 1.5: Added an exception clause regarding the employment agreements. The employment agreement from the GO Head of School won't be dissolved as the other contracts, but be assumed without renegotiation (only her title and job description will be amended). In addition, it is indicated that she will be employed as Principal.
 - Section 1.6: 2nd paragraph was added. Contracts will be issued under Silver Oak. No GO employee will receive a lesser compensation on their new contracts. And no termination will be due solely to the merger.
 - Section 3.2: Added this Collaboration paragraph, to ensure that both entities are continuing to work together and make decisions jointly until the effective date.

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- Amy said a change is needed based on the employment contract recent update. Good to align both documents, this merger agreement (under section 1.6) should indicate that contracts are issued by Silver Oak (not Hayward Twin Oaks Montessori).
- There is no need to add that the contracts will be reissued once the merger is effective. The Employee contract template explains that Hayward Twin Oaks Montessori will succeed Silver Oak. So the contracts will continue to be valid.

Motion: Approve the merger agreement, pending change to section 1.6, paragraph 2, amending the school name to Silver Oak (for issuing 2021-2022 contracts).

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 10	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	AC	TB	TB, MB, HE, RM AC, LCJ, JE, CGC, KR, RS		

Vinnie Cespedes was disconnected (internet issues).

c) Action item – Approval of the 2021-2022 employment contract template

- This is a standard at will contract, based on an annual renewal.
- Added section D in regard of the merger, meaning that Hayward Twin Oaks Montessori will succeed on the effective date, after than Silver Oak issues the contracts (into Spring 2021). Section D can be removed from the contract template next year.
- Murielle had questions about the Montessori credential (under section 7: Licensure): There are still references to the word “certificate” instead of “credential”. Acknowledged the requirement for teachers to get this credential, but does that means the school is paying the full price of the tuition (with no cap on the amount to pay)? It’s also not clear when they need to register and how long they have to complete the program. When does the continuation of employment for a minimum of 3 years start? At the date of hiring, or when they start the credential program?

=> Teachers will sign a promissory note containing all the details. They have 1 year to register to the program and 3 years to complete it.

=> The promissory note should be mentioned in this employment contract template.

- Amy thanked all who worked on these legal documents. She especially likes the collaboration clause of the merger agreement. This demonstrates the collaborative work being done tonight by the joint boards and the future work impacting the merge.

Motion: Approve the 2021-2022 employment contract template, pending using the correct official school name for Silver Oak and add reference to the promissory note.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 10	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	KR	MB	TB, MB, HE, RM AC, LCJ, JE, CGC, KR, RS		

Vinnie Cespedes was disconnected (internet issues).

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2) Public Comment

Luz thanked the public for their patience while we had to change the order of the agenda.

Short statements are summarized in this section. But full statements (emailed by each public member) can be found in the appendix at the end of these minutes. All public comments are regarding the Golden Oak reopening plan, which parents say doesn't provide enough hours back on campus, and they are advocating for a full school reopening in May.

- Jenny Brizzy thanked the board. She is trying to understand why the kids are not back in the classrooms. Distance learning is not good for the kids (for their learning and mental health). It's the legal duty of the school to provide education. Equity is not applicable here. She cannot stay at home with her kids (she's a nurse) and help them with distance learning. Students could be reassigned to a different teacher if that makes it possible to be back on campus. Families should have the choice. Otherwise kids will be behind if in-person school isn't resuming. Going into a circle, as staff needs to have their own kids back in school too. Want to hear a commitment from the school to resume in-person full-time learning this August for the new school year.
- Ivan Cuevas has a son at GO. The year has not been easy. It's safe to return on campus, but GO is not implementing it. Noticed a lack of communication from the school. Nobody reached out directly for their input. Just received a couple of surveys to answer. Community should be involved. Reopening is based on fear, not data. Administration claims it is based on County's guidance, which is not true. It's based on teachers' preferences. Lack of transparency and plan clarity for next school year. Parents need to know now, they cannot wait for 2 more months. Extract from the Board survey, about the dream to build an active community engagement, transparency in communications and shared decision-making. For GO, this won't be a dream (but a nightmare).
- Jen Inverno thanked the board for the merger. Supports the "Back to Campus" Task Force. Reviewed all the newsletters. Read quote from 1st newsletter (from Jen Heeter) about community resolutions supporting growth and collective goals. Surveys are not enough. Didn't receive good participation in those surveys (50% for last survey in January). Families were not invited to be a part of the Reopening Plan committee. No indication of willing to work together with parents. This triggered the decision to create this task force. This school is the only free Montessori education available. Part of this community, but her trust is broken. We need to work together to rebuild trust and community connection. Have a deep compassion for staff. Being patient. Believe we can find a new approach to educating our children. Families are asking to be included in this process. Prepared to help problem solving. Told to be divisive. Instead of engaging directly with us, Jen assigned staff to talk to the Task Force. From a personal point of view, my son's IEP evaluation process has been halted since last year. Then no

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communication while other students were evaluated. Wondering about GO processes and equity of the SPED program. Trusted GO for 6 years with my daughter. But my son is struggling, as well as other students. Wondered if should file a complaint? Questions go on & on. Have opportunities to engage together. Make community resolutions.

- Cathy Keim has 3 students. Thanked staff and teacher for their dedication. It's been 4 years. Love the whole child education and sense of community. Understand the school closure was necessary. But now remote learning is not the best option anymore. One of my kids is struggling. Mental health and anxiety issues are realities. Not alone, many families are in this situation. Cannot stay home, she is an essential worker, and her family is losing their primary source of income. Need the children to be back in school to have the time to look for new jobs. Striving for equity: one size doesn't fit all. Recognize that the administration is in difficult place. But not doing ok. Want kids back on campus.
- Dr. Bobby Vaughn has a 4th grader, and has been at GO for 4 years. Disappointed about the reopening plan.
 1. Public health guidance is green. Know it is safe to reopen.
 2. Due to Montessori, need to stay on Zoom. The last year was not Montessori at all, it doesn't work on Zoom.
 3. Conservative approach to reopen. But slow just prolongs the problem. Distance learning is not working.

"10 hours in-person over 2 months" is not acceptable and he questioned the quality of the education. Why not reopening? If GO parents were wealthy, powerful and white, they would have the influence and the school will be open. This is not the case, and it is imposing on families who are suffering. Not worrying about the kids.

- Chelsea Vaughn is a nurse and parent of a 4th grader. Spent the past 2 months advocating for the reopening because public schools have obligation to open 5 days a week for in person learning. Teachers are vaccinated. Cases for depressions are increasing. Fear of covid is keeping the school closed. Safety protocols and vaccines are available. HOS is bending backwards waiting for staff to be ready to come back. This is wrong. Can work thru the problems. CA law mandates to reopen. This is the basis for legal action from parents. There is a sense of urgency, as kids are isolated. Kids don't have the perspective about 1 or 2 years passing by. Kids are suffering. Misguided fears. Is reopening hard? Or just inconvenient for some? School should be proactive, the time for excuses is over.
- Joe Lamberti thanked the board for listening. We have a choice to make for the new school year. Could reassign some students to another teacher? Have 25% of students continuing distance learning and the remaining to be back on campus. What Maria Montessori will think is more important, online learning or having the same teacher for less than 3 years?

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- Cynthia Brinkman is a Montessori alumni. This past year, her 6 year old kid now hates school. This is not Montessori education, not teaching love of learning. If we knew back in March 2020 what we know now, we won't have closed. It's safe. New guidance to support a safe back to school. Support for mental issue. Administration is not concerned by those issues. Was told that voice of advocacy is being detrimental for the community. Instead of fear, trust science and be motivated by the Montessori love of learning. Follow the child back to campus.

Joe joined at 7:07pm.

- Dr. Marci Ramos acknowledged that GO switched quickly to online learning. Was proud to be part of a small school, working in the best interest of the children. Thankful to Mr. Ben, very devoted teacher. My son struggles, inability to focus, and complete his work. He's in Middle School now and is missing the development needs provided by in-school learning. Increase of mental health issues in kids. Students of color are less likely to seek care. Long term impact. She's a volunteer, feels part of this school founded by parents. But not anymore, as she's labeled as a parent of 2 SPED students. Older child is depressed and suicidal. Thought she was alone but no, many GO students are suffering too. Fear is leading. Teachers work hard. But the school mission (regarding educating the whole child) is not followed by the leadership team. She feels unheard, administration is not listening. Find the spark for Montessori and allow the students to come back on campus.
- Zoya Raysberg mentioned that adults experience time distortion. Once in January, school year seems almost over. But should still take advantage of any school remaining time. It's not all about learning. Kids need extra help and social interaction. 1st months were hard for my older child. But she turned around and started her own YouTube channel and starting a business. Other son is a different story and he's falling apart, sad. Teachers have been supportive, but there's nothing more to expect while being in distance learning. If covid cases were still on the rise, she understands continuing with the current situation. Not the case, so reopening plan should change. 1 hour every week is not ok. It's safe to return on campus. If other schools are opened; she will have to take her son out. Asking to accelerate the current plan. Have multi-tier plans to adapt to the different options of time on campus. Some families are anxious due to the lack of education. Let's get back to school.

GO reopening plan will be on the agenda next week at GO board meeting (Apr 22).

3) Approval of Joint Meeting Agenda & Consent Agenda

- a) Informational – Superintendent's report
- b) Informational – Meeting minutes from the ABAR committee
- c) Informational – Institutional knowledge packet for new Board (from current board survey)

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Murielle pulled out the Superintendent report (item 3a).

- Merger Process section: YM&C advised that all GO staff be paid at SO salary levels effective 7/1/2021. Really surprised that this issue was not brought up before and is only briefly mentioned under consent agenda. This didn't come up at all, neither during the material revision (we had a table showing salaries adjusted over 3 years), neither during the 2nd interim. What are the consequences on the budget? Worried that contracts will be issued and the boards won't have seen the budget for next year.

=> Elaine said that this is the law, not a recommendation, for employees to be paid at the same level than SO. Salary estimates for next year budget is similar to the budget approved for the 2nd interim. CSMC confirmed it.

- Capital Campaign: At the December board meeting, presentation to hire a Capital Campaign manager (primary responsibility is to support the leadership team in carrying out a campaign). What is the reasoning for now hiring a Strategic Engagement director (grants, communication, marketing materials) instead? Do we still need to hire a Capital Campaign manager/director?

=> Elaine said that the Strategic Engagement person may become the capital campaign. She started by doing foundation work, like aligning database donors.

- Rebranding: Clarification about using Charter School Capital (not CSMC).
- Amy mentioned her concerns about the same issue as Murielle. Asked to confirm that the budget can sustain the salary scale. Rick attests the constant budget monitoring.
- Helga wanted to know if facility questions should be sent to Elaine.

=> Yes, Elaine will forward them to Hugo at Red Hook. Suggestion to have Red Hook gives an update to the new board and a wrapped up to the joint boards.

Motion: Approve the agenda, and consent agenda.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 11	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	LCJ	MB	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM AC, LCJ, JE, CGC, KR, RS		

Joe Schenone had left the meeting.

4) Items for Joint Meeting

a) Action item – Approval of the salary grids for classified teacher assistants and classified middle management

- 3 classified salary grids presented: middle management, assistant teachers, and Office.
- Compared to HUSD, minus 5% to compensate for benefits (not paid by HUSD).
- Murielle had questions about the classified middle management salary grid. This reflects exempt positions, but this grid doesn't comply with the minimum salary requirement of

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exempt positions. Effective 1/1/2021, it is \$54,080/year (for up to 25 employees) and \$58,240/year (for 26+ employees). With the merger, the school will have more than 26 employees. The salaries of the 2 first lines for “Associates” column and the first line for “Bachelor” column are too low. Also it seems that those employees will be working more days than before. Are they aware of that?

- Amy asked if the leadership team work on it together. => Yes.

Motion: Approve of the salary grids (classified middle management, classified assistant teachers, and classified Office), pending change to remove the “Associates” column of the classified middle management grid to be in compliance with state minimum salary requirements.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 11	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	CGC	KR	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM AC, LCJ, JE, CGC, KR, RS		

d) Informational – Presentation of financing options to acquire new campus

- Presentation by Rick describing the recommendation summary from Ed Ops. Fundraising is critical for Phase 2 (\$12 million needed for buying out Red Hook and the construction of the new building)
- Amy mentioned that Joe gave this presentation at the exec meeting, and incorporated revisions to answer the questions asked.
- Cynthia emphasizes that we are going to be ok. Going to hit the \$12 million. Different from funding deferrals, this is not a problem anymore.
- Kristin wondered how the work from the foundation is going. She would like to hear an update during one of the next meetings.

5) Adjournment of the joint meeting

7:59pm

Adjourn joint meeting.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 11	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	RS	MB	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM AC, LCJ, JE, CGC, KR, RS		

Kristin acknowledged the milestone of approving the merger agreement.

6) Approval of the Agenda

8:01pm

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 5	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	MB	RM	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM		

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7) Consent Agenda

- a) Approval of Minutes from the prior Regular Meeting on Thursday, March 4, 2021
- b) Communications
 1. Treasurer and Finance Committee
 2. Principal's report
- Murielle pulled out the Principal report (item 7b2). Enrollment question for class of 2026, as admission for that cohort is not opened yet, and those families will have to reapply.

=> Elaine acknowledged that a family applied by mistake for siblings and will reapply next year.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 5	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	TB	HE	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM		

8) Items for Board Consideration

- a) Approval of the 2020-2021 school reopening plan
 - The plan has not changed much since the last time it was presented to the board, mostly reformatted. Added a few more details. Plan is to get seniors back on campus. Based on the latest survey, only 40% of seniors' parents want their student to come back on campus. But seniors want to spend time together before graduating.
 - Starting May 3rd, IEP students will come back on campus in small cohorts.
 - Helga asked if this plan is ready to be implemented for reopening at any time if we want to. How many cases of covid reporting so far?

=> Only one, from someone dropping something.
 - Was there a recent survey sent to parents of the other grades? => No.
 - CAASP testing for juniors students will happened on campus in May.
 - Elaine said that she has not heard from any SO parents who wanted to reopen sooner than August. At last family meeting (about 2 months ago), she received positive feedback about online learning. And it didn't look good with vaccination at that time.

Motion: Approve the 2020-2021 school reopening plan.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor - 5	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	VC	RM	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM		

- b) Approval of community hours requirement exemption (current juniors and seniors)

Community service hours have not been possible virtually. Especially as many students wait to accomplish those hours during the 2 last years. Allow juniors/seniors to graduate with the hours they have. But encourage them to continue next year.

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Motion: Approve the community hours requirement exemption (for current juniors and seniors).

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor - 5	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	MB	TB	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM		

c) Approval of the vaccination requirement policy for staff

- YM&C has a conservative approach. Need to make sure all precautions are taken.
- All vaccines required so far were not Emergency Approved (no permanent approval).
- 2 exemptions (grounded religious, medical). Some feels strongly about it. Some staff can work from home, not teachers. So it means unpaid leave. It was mentioned in YM&C webinar to have some policy in place.
- Murielle: What are staff feedbacks on this policy? Only 2 staff not yet vaccinated. Not sure if there is any issue, Elaine has not heard anything.
- Helga: Laws mandating vaccines are not clear. Not FDA approved. Education would be useful. People to make decision on their own. Vaccine is another layer, but can still get sick. Procedures are most important.
- Rick: Use of all tools to protect staff/students. Education.
- Vinnie: Didn't want to get vaccinated. Threat from union. Strongly recommended. Don't want to be mandated.
- Tom: Don't support policy now. Know of one charter school that did it. Emergency. Public Health crisis. Staff wants students to be vaccinated. Will need a policy. Want to know more.

=> Tabled. But strongly recommend that teachers and staff be vaccinated.

d) Approval of the Parent and Family engagement policy

- Template for Title I. Taking steps for engage community. Basic template to have a policy. How to promote creating this group (thru parents group, or site). Not enough need to be more specific.
- Tom approves this template / general policy.

Motion: Approve the Parent and Family engagement policy.

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor - 5	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	MB	VC	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM		

9) Items for Discussion

- a) N/A

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10) Announcement & adjournment into Closed Session

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE

(Gov. Code section 54957(b).)

11) Reconvene into Open Session

No action taken in Closed Session.

12) Adjournment

9:13pm

Approved	Motion to Approve	Seconded	In Favor – 5	Opposed - 0	Abstain - 0
YES	VC	MB	TB, MB, VC, HE, RM		

Notices: Silver Oak High School, a Public Montessori Charter School, is nonsectarian in all its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations. The school does not discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and upon request, Silver Oak may furnish reasonable auxiliary aids and services to qualified individuals with disabilities. Individuals, who require appropriate alternative modification of the minutes in order to participate in Board meetings, are invited to contact the School at (510) 370-3334.

Appendix - Public Comment full statements

Jenny Brizzi:

I'm really trying to understand why our children are not back in the classroom b-We can all agree that distance learning is not ideal

-In fact I think we can all agree that it's even detrimental not just to learning but to our kids mental health, self determination, physical health (this is all supported by data) So about our children's lack of a robust return to campus:

-Is not about safety - we know it's safe to be on campus

-Is not about legal issues because CA state Senate Bill SB98, states we have a DUTY to offer classroom-based instruction. Surrounding communities are pursuing legal action against districts that are providing more than GO is.

-Is not about equity. The only way distance learning is equitable is if ALL families have someone that can be at home to help children with distance learning. Yes, distance learning is not equality based. I am an essential worker. As a nurse, I've been working through this pandemic from the start. My 2 children are at home distance learning. They are NOT getting the same education of many of their peers who have someone at home who is available to work with them.

Then there's the bigger equity picture - the surrounding community, the state and the country.

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The children in surrounding communities are going back to the classroom, the children in the state as a whole are going back to the classroom, the children in other states have been back in the classroom - where's the equity for our Golden Oak children compared to their peers regionally, statewide and nationwide?

We CAN make classroom learning happen - we are choosing not to by prioritizing teacher/student pairing over in-person learning. If we prioritize allowing families the choice, then each family can do what is best for their situation whether it's at home or in the classroom. Make no mistake about it... you ARE leaving children & families behind when you don't allow kids to resume their classroom education. Please don't fool yourselves by thinking distance learning is safe for all.

Lastly here's something I've been pondering... Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?... a staff member recently said to me that if Jen told them they had to return to school starting May 1, this individual would have to tell Jen they are not returning....Why? Because they have to get their own children to school and would not be able to take care of their family and do their job. Be clear that the decision makers have a bias that is far from what is best for the school and it's learners.

I need to see the school's commitment to return to the classroom, full time, this August. Not a "goal" or a "plan" but an actual commitment - there should be no reason why after 17 months, vaccines, research data that shows safety, we cannot commit to our learners the in-person school experience they deserve. And if we can't do that, then ask yourself what kind of school are we? Not meeting the health needs of its children, not providing an adequate (let alone optimal) learning program, not heading the recommendations from the experts.

Ivan Cuevas Statement:

This year hasn't been easy for anyone. Nobody could escape the pandemic. At the same time it's been amazing to see how many people took on their shoulders the responsibility of keeping the society working (healthcare workers, policemen, food retail and restaurant workers... you name it) - everyone but the Golden Oak school.

Now that it is safe to return to campus, Golden Oak is not doing their part to support the community. Consistently they have made this community's life more difficult. Let me explain how:

- 1.- The Lack of communication: in this school year, the administration has had only 2 general meetings with parents. Nobody has reached out directly to us to have a better understanding of the current situation of our kid. We've been surveyed about the name of the new school as many times as about our kid's well-being. When we asked for more communication, the response was (quoting School's administration email to my wife) "while you both have messaged care and respect for staff and the community, given the approach and word choice shared on social media, it's actually detrimental. We ask that you allow the community to focus attention on implementing the current plan". Apparently we are not part of the community because we don't agree with the administration. We have to be quiet because a superior "entity" is taking care of

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us and we are a bunch of bratty parents.

- 2.- The approach to reopening is not based on science but on fear. The administration insists that the reopening is based on county guidelines, which is far from true. The administration keeps imposing their own rules based on personal preferences and fears. This is very clear when changes to the current reopening plan are based on the teacher's vote and not the guidelines. Since when do we have to vote for science and state/county health guidelines? Why does my kid's well-being and my family's life have to be up to vote? Apparently we don't have the right to make a decision about it ourselves. And when we do speak up, the administration tells us to be quiet. Citing the same email from the school administration that I mentioned before: "My intention when suggesting collaboration was to share that I'm interested in family feedback but did not mean to indicate that decisions about this would be arrived at collectively".
- 3.- The lack of transparency and plans for next school year: in the newsletter, the administration says it's committed to a full reopening next year. When we talk to teachers and other parents, many of them think we'll continue with the current "hybrid" plan. It's clear the message is not reaching everyone. We all (parents and teachers with different positions about the reopening) need to know what the school is going to do next year. For many parents our livelihood depends on school availability. We can't wait 2 more months. We need to have a clear commitment supported by a detailed plan.

It's interesting that in the Silver Oak and Golden Oak Board Wisdom: Summary of our Exit Survey. Under dreams / Community Input, we can read:

"[I dream/hope that] we elevate the voices of students, parents, and staff to build their agency, active engagement, and ownership while we co-design and co-create with a culture that embraces full transparency in communications and shared decision-making." That, for the Golden Oak administration, is not a dream, but a nightmare.

For all those reasons, I request a clear, detailed, comprehensive and well communicated plan to reopen the school next year before May.

Jenn Inverno Statement:

Good Evening Board Members,

My name is Jenn Inverno. I have two students at GO: Cosmo, 3rd grade, and Sophia, 6th grade. I am here tonight to support the Back to Campus Task Force and expanding time on campus for our students.

As I was preparing this statement, I reviewed old GO newsletters and videos to remind myself of all the information we have received over the past year. I came across Jen's words from the first newsletter of 2021, "**I implore us to make community resolutions to support our growth and how we re-envision our structures and systems to meet our collective goals.**" This statement is everything to me. It truly speaks to the transformative times we are facing together, both in society and in education, and it inspires.

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The problem is that I have not experienced or seen these community resolutions or much community connection from Jen regarding expanding time on campus. Surveys are not enough. That proof is in the 50% response rate to the last survey in January, and the ~18% response rate to the school climate survey. Again, surveys are not reaching all our families and do not represent our community completely. In addition, the fact that families were not initially invited to be a part of the Pandemic Planning Committees, and still have not been invited into the process is a clear indication that we are not working together. For a school that was founded by families for families, this is a misstep, and a contributing reason as to why this group of families felt it necessary to form a task force.

Before I get further into my story, I preface with this: Golden Oak, and future Twin Oaks is the only local, free, public Montessori education available to our family. We are part of this community and here for the long haul. In my experience, mistakes have been made, hurtful words have been said, and trust has been broken. We can only face this collective trauma and find healing by working together to rebuild trust and community connection. Acknowledging and taking accountability for missteps and miscommunications is a start.

I hope you can understand my point of view. I have deep compassion and appreciation for all our teachers and staff at GO, especially as we stand on the brink of societal and educational transformation. I have trusted the process and remained patient to see how this entire new era of Montessori education unfolds and works. I believe that we can find a new approach to educating our children; a new model that can work, and work well, with transparency and partnership at the front of any initiative or program. And, in order for me to move forward with confidence, I'll say again, there has to be acknowledgement and accountability.

This task force of families advocating for more time on campus has been met by Jen and some staff with defensiveness. This group of families is asking to be included in the process so that we can understand and help drive the sharing of fact and science-based information with families and inform GO that our students' social/emotional health is at risk. We are prepared and experienced to help problem solve. Instead of championing the initiative, we are told that our advocacy is, "detrimental to our community", and to stop sharing up-to-date science-based facts about covid transmission and current governmental guidance. We are told that we are being divisive when the fact is that the divisiveness is starting at the top. Rather than agreeing to directly engage with this group of family advocates, Jen has assigned staff to speak with us. It is disheartening and demonstrates lack of leadership or interest to build community connection directly. It also breaks trust.

My own personal experiences with GO with respect to my son, Cosmo have too been met with silence. Cosmo is struggling with distance learning and has been all year long. We started his IEP evaluations last year and were forced to pause because of the pandemic. When I inquired if we could pick this back up, I was told that I would have to wait until we were back on campus. Recently I learned that other families have received these services over the past year that led to support and IEP's for their learners. When I brought this up in email to Jen and Jessica, this

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miscommunication was not acknowledged. Instead I was told that the reason for the delay to my request was because it came over spring break, and that I could expect more information and a request for digital signature this week. It is Thursday and I still have not seen a response to my request for Cosmo's evaluation process to resume, nor have I received any digital signature request.

All this leads me to question the efficacy of GO processes and the equity of the SPED program. By not responding to my message, I hear that miscommunication does not matter because we are taking care of it now. I hear that my feelings as a parent do not matter. I know in my heart that is the furthest thing from the truth, but it is hard to reconcile what I know intuitively with what I am seeing and experiencing with specifically Jen, Jessica and Jennine.

I have put my trust in GO with my children's education for 6 years. I trusted the process because I have seen it work with Sophia. I trusted the information I was getting, both with Cosmo's evaluation process and the back to campus plans because, beyond being a mother, I do not have a background or expertise in child development, nor did I have the energy to wrap my arms around current covid updates. I lean on GO admin, staff and teachers for guidance and help in all matters pertaining to my children's education and GO. Sadly, because of this misinformation, and my blind trust, Cosmo has not received the services he is due, and he is struggling with his learning. Beyond our family's experiences, our community and children are suffering. I hear stories from our community members that their children are depressed and crying. Every. Day.

My trust is broken, I am disheartened, and it does not feel good. I am now left questioning all things GO: How many other families have been given misinformation when asking for help? Is this unique to me for some reason? Do I need to file a complaint with SELPA or other agencies? What other misinformation is being passed along. How are other programs affected by miscommunication (specifically middle school, which I will address separately) Do other families want to speak up, but don't out of fear of losing services or being branded as divisive and troublemakers, therefore instilling fears of being ostracized? My questions go on and on. In all the newsletters and recorded meetings that I have reread and watched over again, it feels like Jen is prioritizing the pedagogy, the program and teachers needs above the needs of our students.

We have an opportunity to engage with one another and find healing together. We have a chance to help our students with their social and emotional needs, today. But we can only do that with a leader who is willing to engage with us directly. A leader who is willing stand by definitive decisions that prioritize the emotional health and safety of our children and our community. A leader who is willing to share the load with those who want to help. In Jen's own words, **"I implore us to make community resolutions to support our growth and how we re-envision our structures and systems to meet our collective goals."**

Thank you for allowing this platform to be heard and seen so that we can move forward, together, united in our goal to support our children and our community.

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Respectfully,

Jenn and Manny Inverno

Catherine Keim Statement:

From Catherine Keim, parent to Louis, Elliot and Nathan Keim

Good evening, I want to thank the Golden Oak staff who have worked long hours to keep our school afloat this past year. Many of you are also parents, so the demands placed on you have been considerable. To my students' teachers, your hard work and dedication has been relentless and I am so grateful.

When our family joined Golden Oak 4 years ago, we were drawn to the school's focus on social justice and equity, as well as the diversity of the families that attend. We have also loved the whole child philosophy of the Montessori method, paired with the sense of community and belonging that Golden Oak brings. I understand that the school closure has been a necessity for keeping our community safe from covid-19. However the most recent guidelines no longer require that children remain in isolation to keep our families safe. In fact, the truth is that remote learning is no longer what is best for many of our children.

Online learning paired with the social isolation from their peers has impacted my children deeply both mentally and emotionally. One of my sons particularly is struggling with poor mental health, and I know that he is not alone. Depression and anxiety are realities particularly in lower income homes where the focus is no longer only on whether or not we will contract Covid, but whether or not we will be able to continue to pay our bills.

Many families are struggling with strained marriages, job loss and mental health crisis. We are not hearing their voices because they are too busy trying to stay afloat. Others are not comfortable sharing publicly that distance learning is not working for them and that they'd choose to return to school in person because they fear being seen as divisive, I have felt this way myself.

Anxiety over returning to social spheres is understandable after what we have experienced in 2020 but many of us have not been able to afford to stay comfortable this last year. Many of us, as essential workers, have had to put ourselves in stressful situations at work because it's how we earn a paycheck.

At the end of this month my family will be losing our primary source of income, and we need our children to return to school so that we can find new jobs. I am asking that Golden Oak open its doors for the sake of our children's mental and emotional well being and for our school to step back in line with its core values that drew us to join it in the first place.

I've heard many families say that they are more comfortable at home, that they feel safer and that their children are doing just fine. I understand, as an adult with social anxiety, I would much rather stay at home.

Striving for equity, to me, looks like putting our comfort to one side, and returning to in person

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learning so that the children who are struggling can receive the support that they desperately need, and so that parents can go to work.

I recognize that the administration is in a very difficult place, with so many differing needs. I however urge you to listen to our stories and that you hear the urgency behind our words. We are not doing ok. Our family stands with the GO back to school task force in requesting a swift and full return to campus. Thank you.

Dr Bobby Vaughn Statement:

My name is Dr. Bobby Vaughn, a cultural anthropologist and university professor. I am the father of a 4th grader at GO and this is our 4th year. I can't tell you how disappointed I am in the demonstrably pathetic reopening plan and the closed process by which it has been hatched. This plan is the result several factors:

a) a disingenuous reading of public health guidance (one that hunts for reasons to stay closed), rather than see the clear opportunities to reopen fully; it is irrefutable that public health guidance is giving us the green light to fully reopen, yet we stay in Park, pretending the light isn't really green after-all. Meanwhile, the other cars pass us by and wonder what is wrong with us. We know it is safe, yet we won't reopen.

b) it is argued that because we are Montessori which so unique and fabulous, that we need to stay on Zoom more than other schools, in order to preserve that which is so special about Montessori. Let me be clear: we've been at GO for 4 years, and only 3 of them have been Montessori. Let's not fool ourselves – Montessori doesn't work on zoom, despite the heroic efforts of teachers.

c) We are also told that we are taking a “conservative” approach to reopening, as if conservative is necessarily “responsible.” Slow and conservative prolongs the suffering needlessly. Embedded in this conservative approach is the underlying idea that the status quo is working. Distance learning is not working and that I have to spend some of my 3 minutes stating the obvious shows absurdity of where Go finds itself!

This conservative approach is recklessly, willfully, and needlessly harmful to our children. That the Board would sanction such a harmful approach is disappointing. That you, the Board, looked at “10 hours in-person over 2 months in tents, with the rest of the time at home on screens” and said “sound good to us” makes me question your commitment to equity and, frankly, to quality education.

So, for months, GO has known that it has been safe to reopen but refuses to. You

should be asking why. A few final thoughts:

If our parents were wealthy, powerful, and white, we would be listened to, and GO would be open.

An anti-racist school would not say, “many families are doing just fine with distance learning” and therefore impose it on the families who are suffering.

In my view, our school – a school I cherish – has become less worried about our kids crying and miserably falling apart, and far more worried about the “comfort level” of a handful of our vaccinated staff threatening to quit if they have to come back. Let's get our priorities straight,

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follow the law, follow the science, and open up GO.

Chelsea Vaughn Statement:

Hello, my name is Chelsea Vaughn, a critical care nurse practitioner who has taken care of covid patients in the ICU since the beginning of the pandemic, and parent of a 4th grader.

Over the past two months some of us parents have been staunchly advocating for a more robust reopening plan for Golden Oak because public schools have an ethical and legal obligation to open 5 days a week for in person learning. Our case numbers in the county and state have plummeted to the lowest levels since the pandemic began.

Teachers were prioritized and all GO teachers who want to get vaccinated have been vaccinated, along with more than half of all California adults. At the same time, cases of depression and suicidal ideation in the young have increased exponentially while children continue distance learning.

I believe that the school not reopening is completely unrelated to the Covid disease. The pandemic is why we closed, but a poor understanding of the disease and a general fear of covid is what is keeping us closed.

Science has shown us that masking keeps us safe and children wear masks when they are in school. And that people do not get covid from surfaces, so kids can use their classroom materials safely. And vaccines prevent us from getting and also transmitting the disease, even those pesky variants. So why, when schools should be the first sectors of a society to open, would we be the last?

I think the head of school is bending over backwards to wait until all the staff are “ready” to come back-- that is a very kind thing to do, but it is wrong. Leadership cannot let a couple of people hold the school hostage in reopening. She must decide it is time because of empirical data--then educate the teachers and staff about the safety, abide by the guidelines, and use the army of parent volunteers at your disposal to fill in the gaps if necessary. We can work through the problems, not use every excuse in the book to stall and try to run out the clock.

The thing is, it doesn't matter what any of us parents or staff think. Ultimately, the law tells us what to do. And racial equity informs us of the morally responsible thing to do. California law mandates that public schools, including charter schools, must do everything in their power to open for in person 5 day a week instruction. This is the basis for legal action around the state--mostly parent advocate groups frustrated with hybrid learning and wanting full time--so we're not even talking about this 1 hour a week business. (I have three letters from separate law firms representing parents from local school districts that I can share with you).

We have a sense of urgency because every day that goes by with our kids isolated, in front of screens, does them harm. They do not have the value of perspective, to know this is only a year or two out of their lives. Some of them are isolated and lonely, and school is the only thing they have and now they can't stand it. Some are in home environments where they are abused or neglected. They are living in dark times through no fault of their own. This is not a disease that causes severe illness in children, and yet they are the ones to suffer most and longest? They are some of the safest people to be around, yet their teachers fear them? Or at least that is

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what is communicated to them? How do you tell your child that school leadership and a handful of staff with their own agendas or misguided fears are preventing them from getting the quality school experience they are entitled to? Because reopening is hard? Or inconvenient for some?

This isn't a threat, it's a prediction: if GO fails to reopen more substantially in the coming weeks, Go will find itself on the evening news. It may be because a group of parents is suing over failure to comply with state law mandating reopening, or because one of our students has killed himself, or one of our students was tortured and killed by a parent at home. You can be proactive or reactive. The time for excuses is over.

I am proudly with the GO back to campus task force and I respectfully ask you to wake

Joe Lamberti Statement:

Thank you board for listening to all our concerns. I will be brief and pose a single question that I would love to ask Maria Montessori if she were here.

We have a choice to make for the new school year. We can keep all of the students at home and with a large portion of their learning coming from a modern TV channel called YouTube. Or, we could break from the Montessori policy of the same teacher for 3 years and reassign 25% of the students to specific teachers who would conduct distance learning. Teachers and students who don't feel comfortable returning in person could continue to learn at a distance. 3/4 of our children could safely return to in-person learning. So the question is: what is more important in-person learning for the majority or having the same teacher for a minority? How would Maria Montessori answer this?

Cynthia Statement:

Having been educated by a Montessori school myself, I was ecstatic to have my own son join Golden Oak and was confident in their mission to nurture, inspire, and empower lifelong learners, just as my school had fostered that love of learning in me. In fact, I love learning so much that I've dedicated the last 15 years of my life to education as a college success coach and consultant for universities across the country. Imagine one of your own Montessori grads now stands before you and is advocating for the very same education that ignited that passion for learning within her. How would you respond to her?

This past year of distance learning has vanquished the love of learning in my 6 year old child. He hates school now. Because, for him, school is not a place where he gets lost in discovery and learning, but rather a 30 minute zoom session from his bedroom on a day that is otherwise marked by social isolation and worksheets. This is not a Montessori education that is supporting my son's love of learning.

Dr. Jeanne Noble, the Director of Emergency COVID Response for UCSF medical center stated that "If we knew in March what we know now, we never would have closed schools as a public health intervention." What we know NOW is that **safe in person** learning *is possible and* that distance learning has been seriously harming children's social emotional wellbeing. Oakland

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Children's Hospital has reported that suicidal ideation in children ages 10 and up has gone from 6% to 16% since being in shelter in place. Consequently, public health officials published new guidelines to support a safe return to school.

Our children can break out of their depressing isolation and SAFELY return to that amazing in person Montessori education we all know and love and they can do it NOW! :)

Why is this NOT exciting news for Montessori school leadership?

Why is the collective voice of nurses, school psychologists, college professors, educational advocates and fellow parents whose children and families are really suffering with distance learning being met with continued resistance from our Montessori leadership?

Why, when we approach our school administration with our concerns and our offer to help, are we told to be quiet and wait for two weeks while they steadfastly cling to this outdated plan?

Why are we being told that our voice of advocacy for the education and wellbeing of our children is detrimental to the community?

More importantly, why is the voice of advocacy for the education and wellbeing of our children not considered a part of this community?

Fear is why. What would it look like if instead of fear, we could trust the science and be motivated by the love of learning that founded this very school in the first place. What if we used these guidelines to support the love of learning instead of to squelch it?

I am with the GO back to Campus task force and I invite you to follow the love of learning and follow the child BACK to a safe campus NOW.

Dr Marci Ramos Statement:

Good evening, my name is Dr. Marci Ramos, thank you for listening to my statement tonight. In March of 2019 the COVID19 pandemic triggered the shuttering of schools in California for what was thought to be a few weeks. Golden Oak shifted quickly to a distant learning program while other schools wallowed. I was proud to be part of a small community public charter Montessori that was following their mission and working in the best interest of the children.

I will be forever grateful for Ben. It is easy to see how much extra time he puts in and devotes to the children in his classroom. But even with all of Ben and Iris time, my son still struggles with sadness and at times, academic engagement and an ability to complete work.

The effect with middle school has been more mixed. I know the teachers work hard. But the complete loss and lack of focus on the development needs of this age that can only be supported in-school has been particularly detrimental for my older son.

Let us face the truth. Long term remote schooling is NOT working. I am not even talking about the educational impact which to me is no longer the important point.

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While there may be a new study stating that there is not an overall increase in suicides during the pandemic globally a look at regional differences paints a very different picture.

Children's Hospital in Oakland and Kaiser Permanent both note an increase in admissions and demand for mental health services in our youth

Referrals to residential services (where a child is no longer able to live in the home safely) have risen dramatically.

Even the CDC published a studied outlining the significant difference in mental health between children that remote learn versus in-person.

Add to the fact that students of color and low-income students are significantly less likely to seek care when they're experiencing mental health problems and we are looking at a catastrophic failure of our children.

According to the National Alliance on Mental illness, 50% and 75% of all lifetime mental illness develop by age 14 and 24 respectively. They are expecting 1/3 to have problems severe enough to impact education and work performance long term.

But these are all points that you all should know about, so why am I here? As a parent of children in the school for 6 and 8 years, I always felt a sense of community and support. As cubmaster, room parent and often volunteer I felt part of a school founded by parents with a vision, and mission of educating the whole child using Dr. Maria Montessori's educational methods.

Now, as a parent with 2 children labeled special needs, I feel marginalized. As my oldest slid into anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation, I thought that I was alone. But as I struggled to get off of wait lists for mental health services it became apparent that I couldn't be. Recently I have talked with other parents, I realized that many GO kids are suffering. Other parents started to speak up and I watched as the leadership and some parents undermined their point of view, called them bullies and tried to turn their stories, fears and concerns against them. Some would even label this as gaslighting.

Fear now appears to be the driving factor of the school. Fear is leading a race to the bottom and will result in less equity for those that need it most. The teachers work hard but the leadership's view of the mission of the school is no longer focused on the "whole child". I feel un-heard. I feel un-important. I feel that my children are something that the school leadership has to "deal" with, a mark against their score on district, council and state lists.

I urge the board and leadership of GO to search deep and find that spark that is the Montessori method. To find a way for our children to be in-school. To not think "it is too hard". Be the innovative school that made us fight to be part of this unique community.

Zoya Raysberg Statement:

As adults, we have a bit of a me distoron. Even before the pandemic, it sort of seems like, once

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we get over the hump of January, suddenly it's February, and the school year feels mostly over (even though it's only the halfway mark). Many of us feel like "it's practically June already" so why even worry about what's left of the year? We still have at least 1/4 of the school year left... is that really nothing?

It's actually a lot and it shouldn't go to waste. I shouldn't say that. It's not really a waste. Both of my kids have learned a lot. But it's not all about learning. My kids, especially the younger one, really need that social piece. And he, especially, really needs someone who can see he needs extra help before he melts down onto the floor, off camera, taking a half an hour for me to put him back together.

Our teachers have been absolutely wonderful. My older child, who's in Spruce, had a really tough time the first months of distance learning, with simple things like asking a question, but mostly with social isolation. But she has really made the most of it, starting her own YouTube crafting channel. Even launching a business with her designs. She misses her friends and teachers, but I feel like she's okay.

My little guy is a completely different story. He falls to pieces multiple times a day, cries because he misses his friends-- I'm not even worried about his academics. What I'm worried about is his overall sense of sadness... no matter what do. I feel like his teachers and the school have been so supportive of him and of us. There's nothing more I could ask or expect of them in a distance learning model. If COVID-19 cases were still on the rise, with experts saying school was not safe, to stay home, we would suck it up and continue to deal. But with new developments and experts, armed with data and science, telling us it is not only safe but healthy and beneficial to return to in-person learning, I would think that we would be jumping at the chance to benefit from this gift. It's like, if you were planning to take the weekend to clean the garage, but then you got a surprise gift of an amazing all expenses paid trip for that weekend... what do you do? Turn it down and stick with your plan to clean the garage? No way! You have to jump on that gift. That is what we need to do here... We need to change the plan and take full advantage of this gift.

We love our amazing teachers and community. But, if we cater to people's fears and continue to take an excessively cautious approach, we will find ourselves in the same place when it's time for back to school in August. Then by the time some surveys are developed for October, what if there's another spike? A new variant? Another lockdown? And then, come January we'll start talking about a return and then we'll find ourselves in the exact same place next March... 1 hour every other week? That is NOT ok. Especially not when Public Health recommendations are to return to in-person learning. We need a much more efficient way to adjust schooling in response to expert recommendations. If they say "lock it down," we are prepared to lock it down and have a learning plan in place. If they say it's safe to return, we should have a plan already designed that will allow us to quickly and efficiently return to the recommended amounts of in-person learning. If our school is like this again next year, while other schools around us have returned to classroom learning, *following the science*, then, for my son's well-being I would have to take him out of Golden Oak. That's the last thing I want.

We understand how painstakingly GO's phase-in plan was crafted, based on the best

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information that was available, at that time. Now, just as the plan rolls out, we suddenly find ourselves in a new situation... vaccine rates are climbing, infection rates are dropping and the Health Department is sharing information that shows we can safely return to classroom learning. Based on this amazing and unexpected gift, other schools in our area have taken decisive measures to provide students with in person learning and, in light of this, our current plan can be safely accelerated.

We need to make sure as a school community that we are able to return to in-person instruction for our learners, while staying in line with Health Department guidelines, as they are released.

We need multiple tier plans. That way we will be ready with different options: Plan A for a very conservative reopening, Plan B for half days 4 days a week in a person, and Plan C that is a full return for full-time in person learning. And each plan would provide for exceptions for those who must remain on distance learning. With that being the exception rather than the rule. I understand that there are both families and staff who feel anxious about returning, but I believe that thier anxiety is largely due to misinformation or lack of information going out to our community from our school. So many people still have no idea that the Public Health guidelines have changed. It is time for information and action!

I stand proudly with the GO Back to Campus Task Force and, for our children's well being, let's get back to school!

Sincerely,

Zoya Raysberg-Bellman, LMFT

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

GO Parent of 5 years, 2 eager kids