



1651 16th Street
Santa Monica, CA 90404
smmptacouncilpres@gmail.com

4/30/2020

SMMPTA Council
Representing
SMMUSD Schools
in Santa Monica

Edison Language Academy

Franklin Elementary

Grant Elementary

John Adams Middle

John Muir Elementary

Lincoln Middle

McKinley Elementary

Olympic High

Roosevelt Elementary

Santa Monica Alternative
School House (SMASH)

Santa Monica High

Will Rogers Learning
Community

SMMPTA Council Supports
SMMUSD
Child Development Centers

Dear Santa Monica City Council Members,

We are writing to you regarding your upcoming budget meetings in the face of the unprecedented economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. This letter, written on behalf of our full Council, which includes the PTA Presidents from each school site, expands on the concerns our Executive Board expressed to you on April 24, 2020.

SMMPTA has noted and appreciated that communications from the City of Santa Monica repeatedly declare that the **well-being of children and youth is a core value**, and thus, the City Council has proudly prioritized both its partnership with our schools, and its commitment to youth programming, recreation and services. This reflects the priority of the residents of Santa Monica, who have consistently declared their support for children and youth at the ballot box, voting that tax revenue be used to maintain Santa Monica’s public schools, most significantly with Measure GS and Measure Y.

We understand how disheartening it must be to make draconian cuts that affect so many. However, in response to a budget crisis of this magnitude, **our City must continue to care for the most vulnerable in our community**, and to this end, continue to run necessary programs and services for children and youth.

It is our hope that funding for these services will be protected because you, our City Council, considers this support to be an **essential service** to the City of Santa Monica, adding as much value as other essential services like law enforcement, emergency services, utilities, health services, etc.

In addition, **SMMPTA Council asks that educational specialists with expertise in existing child and youth focused programs and services be invited to take part in the process of finding creative solutions in response to the budget deficits, in order to minimize the negative effects to youth and families.** With the understanding that City programs and services will be affected across the board by the budget shortfall, specialists can offer valuable insights regarding the broad impact of the City’s before- and after-school programming, recreation and supervision, as well as mental health and case management services. With seats at the table, specialists can assist with finding creative solutions within the constraints of these dire economic times, and assist the City in continuing to **support the wellbeing of our children and youth** in the areas of learning and achievement, physical health and development, emotional maturity, and mental health.

Over the years, the City of Santa Monica and SMMUSD have built a positive and uniquely collaborative partnership. The City, like most other municipalities, has provided much-needed and well-utilized educational and recreational programming (CREST), and safety programs and personnel (water safety instruction, crossing guards), while SMMUSD has supported the community by maintaining high caliber classroom education, and by offering school site spaces (cafeterias, libraries, fields, etc.) for the City's out of school time programming, as well as opening and maintaining playgrounds, fields, and recreational facilities for use by residents. The Master Facilities Use Agreement formalizes this collaborative partnership.

Critical City-funded programming, like CREST (*Childcare, Recreation, Enrichment, Sports Together*) for example, which served 3,600 unduplicated participants last year, and provides Before and After School Care (till 6:00pm), Homework Club, Enrichment, Playground Access, Youth Sports, and CREST Camps (during school breaks), presents a broad approach to wellbeing for Santa Monica's students—one that extends beyond classroom walls and instructional hours, challenges longstanding inequities, reduces achievement gaps, and improves outcomes for all children and youth.

Yesterday, Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger stressed that educational and enrichment programs allow parents to return to work, which is crucial for economic recovery. We believe the City of Santa Monica's ongoing commitment to children, and to youth programming, will contribute greatly to our local economy's turnaround, and now, more than ever, reflects the progressive values of our community. To reiterate, SMMPTA Council urges you to **invite program specialists and members of our education community to the table**, and to consider your investment in our most vulnerable citizens —our children and youth—to be an **essential service** in our city, as you make spending decisions.

We know that you find yourselves in a position that, just a few months ago, was unimaginable. A position that requires gut-wrenching decision making. Thank you for balancing the budget mindfully through a social justice lens, and for remaining focused on Santa Monica's core values. In response to this crisis, SMMPTA continues to offer our proven volunteer power, including a robust communication network, and an unmatched commitment to advocacy for children and youth.

Respectfully Yours,

Claudia Seizer
President

Sabine Werk
Legislative Advocacy Chair

Patti Braun
Vice President,
Community Concerns