

Dear Families,

We are writing this letter in the hopes that it will answer questions perhaps not adequately addressed through other means.

The imbalance of the language allocations in the immersion program at Flynn was a problem that resulted from a mistake made at the district level, not at the school site level, and as such the Flynn position from the moment that our teachers discovered this imbalance was that the district needed to find a solution to its own mistake. The superintendent made the decision to reassign families.

As teachers, we are committed to ensuring that **all** of our students receive the same high quality, academically rigorous education. At Flynn, we do this with both personal and programmatic integrity, professionalism, and a great deal of love. Moreover, we do this with an understanding, born of our commitment to social justice and in accordance with the goals of SFUSD, that closing the achievement gap that exists between different groups of students is imperative. One of our priorities at Flynn and, indeed, one of the priorities of SFUSD, is assisting our children who are English language learners in closing that achievement gap. SFUSD presents immersion programs as one of their key strategies to close this gap.

It was with a commitment to safeguarding the integrity of our immersion program and our understanding of the need to serve our English language learners according to the best practices of our profession that we engaged in a conversation with the district in which Flynn made it clear that a solution to the actual mistake that was made needed to be found. To be clear, according to EPC, this was a computer coding error resulting in far more English language speakers than Spanish language speakers being assigned to immersion. By the way, Alvarado School experienced an error of a similar nature 2 years ago which resulted in more English language speakers being assigned to their immersion program than Spanish language speakers. Alvarado informed the district of the error and they were told it would be fixed for the next year and it was not; currently they are in the same muddle that Flynn is in now. Adding even greater immediacy to Flynn's push for the district to correct its mistake was information that came to us indicating that at least some Spanish speaking families were egregiously misinformed by EPC regarding Spanish immersion. These families were told, incorrectly, that Spanish immersion is not a program for children who already speak Spanish but a program for English speakers to learn Spanish.

The two solutions to this mistake as presented to Flynn by the district, while having the appearance of solving the language allocation imbalance in a manner that would maintain the integrity of our immersion program and serve our English language learners were either to increase class size in order to strike a 50/50 language balance or to create a "bubble" class. Please allow us to explain to you, from the perspective of teaching professionals who work with students in the classroom every day, why it is that Flynn requested of the district to correct its error rather than accept band-aid measures that would have put the burden of a solution on Flynn and would have negatively impacted our programs:

- **Increasing class size:** Given the number of Spanish language speakers on the incoming student roster, our immersion classes would have needed to add 8 or 9 more Spanish speaking students per immersion classroom to strike a 50/50 balance regarding language. For the sake of the integrity of our immersion program, this 50/50 balance must be maintained. Clearly it is not in the best interests of **any** student for class size to be increased from 20 to 28 or 29 even with theoretical extra support. In the primary grades

generally, and in Kindergarten particularly, students require – and families expect – diligent supervision. Kindergarten is a child’s first year of formal education and Kindergarten at Flynn is every student’s first year as a member of our community. As such, Kindergarten teachers bear a special responsibility as we strive to inculcate within our students the behavioral norms that our school community will expect them to uphold during their 6 years with us. Even with a class of only 20 students, this special responsibility is a challenge as we work to meet the social, emotional, physical and, of course, the academic needs of all 20 individuals while maintaining a safe and secure environment. It is impossible to imagine successfully meeting our students’ individual needs, our own professional goals, SFUSD’s academic expectations, or the state of California’s standards with classroom sizes increased to 28 or 29.

- **Creating a bubble class:** A “bubble class” that moves up through the grades at Flynn would have placed a huge burden on our school over a period of 6 years in a number of ways:
 1. A bubble class would have strained our already over-worked staff. For example, with every year that the bubble class rises through the grades, a classroom would need to be equipped -- from scratch -- with ALL of the materials necessary for that grade level (curriculum for all subject areas, books, play materials, science materials, math materials, environmental prints materials such as charts, word walls, and much more), much of which would need to be discarded at the end of the year and replaced with the appropriate materials for the next grade level. Additionally, many of our most important materials are teacher-created and cannot simply be purchased at any price.
 2. An even larger burden on our teachers would have been the need to hire and train a new teacher on a different grade level team each year. It is quite an undertaking to bring a new colleague up to speed on what we do on each of our highly collaborative grade level teams at Flynn in order to maintain the high quality of instruction that we deliver to **all** of our students, and we would have been investing all that time and effort only to have that teacher move on at the end of the year, at which point the next grade level team would have had to begin the process anew. Moreover, we would likely have had a difficult time attracting talented and experienced teachers to a series of one-year temporary positions.
 3. Adding 20 more students to the Flynn population would have negatively impacted the safety and learning of all our students due to space and resource constraints. Our hallways, bathrooms and play yard are already overcrowded and not optimally safe with our 80 Kindergarten students - imagine squeezing in more! Finding space for another class would have been quite a challenge, as we are already in a space crunch for the coming year due to adding a 4/5 class. If space for a bubble class could have been found, it probably would have meant sharing a classroom with the district after school program, which would have compromised our ability to create an optimal learning space. Additionally, had another class been added to the school it would have meant that all students would receive less time with our specialists such as our librarian, PE teacher and Reading Recovery teachers. The number of instructional minutes in the Kindergarten classrooms would have decreased as well due to each transition period (i.e., bathrooms, snack, recess, lunch) being increased to accommodate 100 students feeding through the various common areas of the school.
 4. One of the keys to our excellent program at Flynn is that we work hard to build a community that includes all the classes at each grade level, already not an easy task with 80 students in a grade. Nonetheless, in Kindergarten, we build such a tight

community that all students know each Kindergarten teacher and each teacher knows **all** 80 students' names. Adding a bubble class would have forced us to curtail many whole-grade activities. For example, for every field trip that we take in Kindergarten, 2 large school buses are required for all 80 students and chaperones. Without going into too many details about the challenges of arranging our visits to accommodate all of us at the same time or securing our free buses from the district (which, depending on the date, is often not possible), suffice it to say, that with 100 students, the difficulty would increase greatly (i.e., requiring a reservation for 100 students; requiring 3 school buses that we may be paying full price for). Furthermore, we can just barely fit our 4 classes on the stage for Kindergarten-wide cultural performances or into one of our classrooms for community meetings. With 100 Kindergartners it would become impossible.

5. In suggesting the bubble class stop-gap, the district offered a new teacher and supplies for 4 years. What then? What happens to that class when it gets to 4th grade? 5th grade? Whatever the district may have offered in terms of extra resources to help support a bubble class through the years, the reality is that those resources may not have come through. We know that in these times of uncertain budgets, we could have ended up handling a heavier load of students without additional support.

Please pause for a moment to consider the above points. Are these circumstances that you want your child to be educated under? Are you confident that the fifth class, the bubble class, will have the integrity of Flynn's original Kindergarten program?

Believe us when we say that we feel deeply for the families who have been reassigned. We know how wrenching it can be to send a child off to Kindergarten under the best of circumstances and how stressful the school assignment process can be even if it operates as it is supposed to. The current situation must feel like a nightmare. It is a terrible shame that the mistake occurred in the first place, and we hope that the system for assigning students to immersion classrooms is fixed so that this never happens again.

Sincerely,

The Flynn Kindergarten Team