



March 27, 2014

Pasadena Unified School District Board of Education

**Re: West Pasadena Needs a Public School**

The West Pasadena Resident's Association opposes San Rafael Elementary School being declared surplus, and the Board of Education moreover should reconsider alternatives to closing the last remaining public school in West Pasadena. Our community comprises approximately one-fifth of the City of Pasadena; it would be a grave mistake to leave us without a single public school to fulfill the promise of an accessible, free education to all.

Less than two years ago, the District was breaking ground on \$4 million in structural upgrades to San Rafael Elementary School's historic buildings. Based on a single seismic report, which was not based on any trenching of the area, and which was questioned in a peer review, PUSD received a determination by the State of California that it must create a plan for the school's future: Either rebuild on a portion of the campus outside of the earthquake fault zone – an option that would require approximately \$10 million more than available bond funds – or move.

No one will argue that public schools across our state have fallen on hard financial times. A recent report from *Education Week* put California 49<sup>th</sup> in per-pupil spending in the nation. The outlook has improved somewhat in recent months, but we still have a long way to go to match the investment most other states make in public K-12 education.

But a temporary financial crisis is no reason to leave a community, an entire City Council District, and one-fifth of the City, without one of the cornerstones of public service, possibly forever. This is especially so because it will happen simply as a matter of timing. The District in 2006 closed Linda Vista Elementary School, rather than San Rafael Elementary School, without ever conducting any seismic testing anywhere. If seismic testing had been conducted by PUSD in 2006, San Rafael elementary school could have been closed then, and the City, PUSD, and the West Pasadena neighborhoods would not now be faced with this situation. The timing of how this has played out has been random, with an inequitable result to West Pasadena. Moreover, the District has made this decision without considering any budgetary sources other than money from the general fund and measure TT funding.

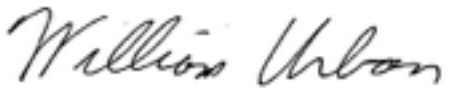
There are those who argue that the West Pasadena community does not care about public education. It is true that many West Pasadenans still send their children to private school, but the success of San Rafael has started to reverse that trend in its own neighborhood. Where few if any students from the community attended San Rafael five years ago, today 81 students from 91105 are now enrolled, with the greatest numbers in preschool and Kindergarten, showing the strong upward swing over the last two years.

Now is the time to take the long-term view and to think strategically. As we look back 100 years, we must look forward with the same perspective. As PUSD decides what to do based upon the probable findings that there are faults at the San Rafael

site, we urge the Board of Education and District and City leaders to consider the generational and political impacts of pulling up every stake in one-fifth of the City. We have returned to our neighborhood school in significant numbers. A large contingent of parents who are residents of West Pasadena are working hard every day to educate their neighbors, to improve the school further, and also to make sure that the benefits of their efforts help all of the children at their school, from whatever neighborhood, help PUSD more generally as well, and build community support for PUSD.

Please help us continue to build on this renewed trust and investment, help us continue to build support for public education in the City of Pasadena, and help us keep the "public" in education. Do not consider leasing out or selling either the Linda Vista Elementary School site or the San Rafael Elementary School site until the Board reconsiders its decision to close the last remaining school in West Pasadena.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Urban". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

William Urban  
WPRA President

cc: WPRA Board of Directors  
Pasadena Citycouncilmember Steve Madison