

***“If they leave,  
who will help us?”***

**Who will lose if the WCCUSD Board  
eliminates Graduate Tutors**





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IF SHE LEAVE WHO WILL HELP US

**Words from a 10th grade Newcomer, English learner student who was taught reading and writing in English by her graduate tutor**

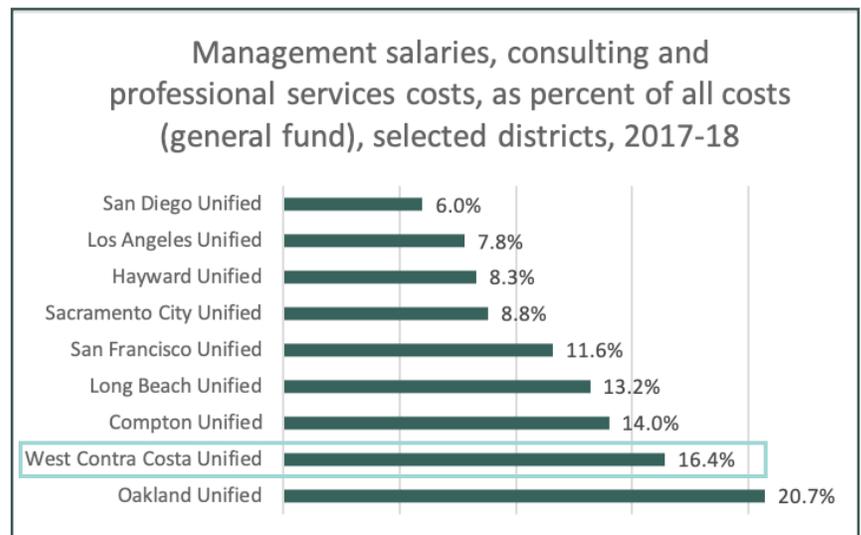
# What's at stake?

In December 2018, the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) Board of Education voted to cut graduate tutors effective next school year. Since then, graduate tutors, teachers, staff, parents, and students have rallied together to show the Board that graduate tutors are an indispensable part of what it takes to provide students who are struggling academically and students who are learning English with a quality education. Cutting graduate tutor jobs would have a devastating impact on individual student achievement and would eliminate one of the only safety nets this demographic can consistently rely on for individualized, small group support.

## ALTERNATIVES

Simply put, rather than cutting student access to direct academic support, the WCCUSD community would like to see cuts made outside of their classrooms and learning centers.

It is never ideal to eliminate any source of support. However, after reviewing a comprehensive list of WCCUSD's contracts with outside consultants and vendors, Teamsters 856 believes there are more than enough areas from which to cut that don't start in the classroom.



A recent study of nine comparable California school districts<sup>1</sup> shows that the average combined cost of consulting, professional services and management salaries is 11.8% of those school districts' budgets. WCCUSD dedicates 16.4% on consultants, contractors and management salaries — second only to Oakland Unified.

## IN THIS REPORT

You will find profiles of 16 current graduate tutors from 11 WCCUSD elementary, middle, and high schools. These profiles will show you who graduate tutors are and what impact they have on the lives and achievement of their students. The profiles will also give you a more in-depth look at the job of graduate tutors because, despite the misnomer that is their title, these individuals are educated, qualified, and experienced educators who are vital to student learning.

The profiles, data, and letters of support in this report from teachers and staff, students and parents will also show you who stands to lose the most if graduate tutors are cut — **students from immigrant families and students from low-income households.**

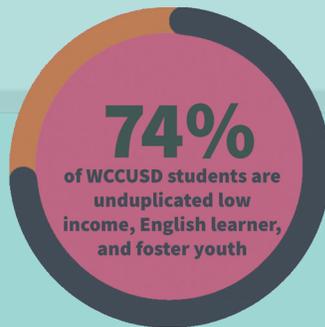
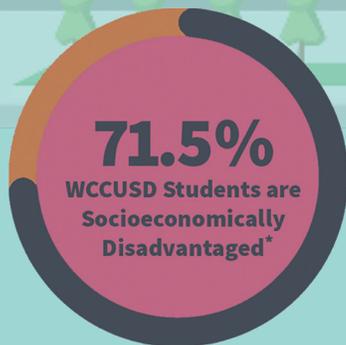
<sup>1</sup>Source: SACS unaudited financials. Object codes 1300, 2300, and 5800.



# GRADUATE TUTORS

## BY-THE-NUMBERS

### THE STUDENTS THEY SERVE



**1 in 3**  
WCCUSD students is an English Learner

**↑26**

60% of surveyed graduate tutors report that they work with 26 or more students daily.



### EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE



**70%** of surveyed graduate tutors have been in the position for **5 years or more.**



**100%** of graduate tutors have Bachelor's Degrees

**36%** of those surveyed report having a Master's Degree or higher

### COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY



**77%** of surveyed graduate tutors **Live in the District**

**100%** of those have lived in the district for 10 or more years



**Over 40%**

of surveyed graduate tutors either **attended a WCCUSD school** or **currently have a family member** attending a school in the District.

\*Students who are eligible for free or reduced priced meals; or have parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma.

Sources: <https://www.caschooldashboard.org>; <https://www.wccusd.net/Page/6712>

Teamsters 856 conducted an online survey of 22 current WCCUSD graduate tutors via [www.survs.com](http://www.survs.com).

Wilson Ordonez (L) is honored by WCCUSD Superintendent Matt Duffy at the 2018 Employee Recognition Ceremony.



## Bilingual grad tutor builds after school program to lift up struggling students

**W**ilson Ordonez and many of his graduate tutor peers go above and beyond their job description to provide their students with the quality education they need and deserve.

Just over six years ago, when Wilson first began working at Helms Middle School as a bilingual graduate tutor, he saw that the recently arrived English Language Learner (ELL) students needed extra support. ELL students are students with a limited understanding of English.

With the support of the school principal, Wilson designed an after-school program where he provides ELL students a space and time to review in their first language what was taught in the classroom during

the day. He also makes sure all students in the after-school support program complete their daily class assignments. Principals like Mr. De Leon (Richmond High School) and Mrs. Petrilli (Helms Middle School) supported him on this much-needed endeavor.

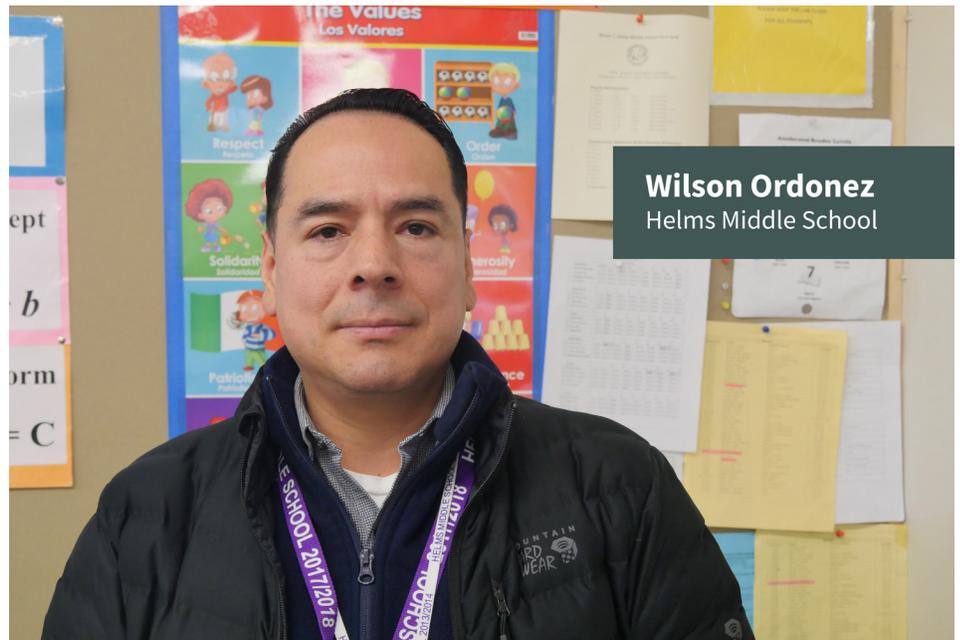
Since the program was established, Wilson has worked with over 200 students and their families. In addition to providing students with academic support, he also calls their parents once a week and sends them emails every day to update them on their child's academic progress and homework.

At the end of each school year, Wilson invites families to an after-school program celebration where all of his students receive a certificate of academic achievement and the families are able to

celebrate together.

Wilson has seen the impact the after-school program has on his students. There was one student who arrived in the U.S. at the beginning of eighth grade. When he got to Helms, he only spoke Spanish and was classified as ELD Level 1. He was shy and would not speak out in class. After working with Wilson in the after-school program, the student began to gain more confidence and he began to not only learn, but to help other students. When this student got to Richmond High, he was placed confidently in English classrooms and reclassified two levels up, as ELD Level 3.

But for Wilson, being a graduate tutor isn't just about teaching. It's also about being an advocate for his students. He has worked hard to ensure that one of his students is able to give a speech in Spanish in front of their peers and parents at every school graduation. Wilson also makes sure English Learners



are included in all field trip visits to the library, the local high school, colleges, and universities.

No matter if it is during the school day or in the after-school program, Wilson makes sure to bring his students together and help them see that they are not alone and they are not strangers, but rather a family that can support one another.

**Since the program was established, Wilson has worked with over 200 students and their families. In addition to providing students with academic support, he also calls their parents once a week and sends them emails every day to update them on their child's academic progress and homework.**

# Unbound by a classroom; graduate tutors are flexible educators

**W**hen I began working at De Anza, I met a tenth-grade student who was originally from El Salvador. After working with him, I realized he couldn't read or write and had no concept of reading and writing. He'd been moved along grade after grade and seen as a student with low skills, but his reading skills weren't low — he couldn't read at all!

If a student doesn't know how to read or write, it is our job and responsibility as educators to teach him. So, I sat with him for a year and taught him how to read and write in Spanish first to lay a foundation for learning in English.

This isn't the fault of our teachers who are busy teaching dozens of kids at a time. It's more a testament to the importance of graduate tutors. When you work in small groups or one-on-one with students, you notice these things and can address them. A high school teacher cannot stop everything to teach a student how to read and write.

I reached out to the district to figure out what could be done when a high school student is unable to read, and there were no additional resources. I was the resource and I was able to fill that gap, and in this district, the gaps are many.

The title 'graduate tutor' gives people the impression that we're just sitting next to students holding a coffee cup while they do their homework, and that couldn't be further from reality. With this student and many others, I am an educator and a support inside and outside of the classroom.

At the secondary level, graduate tutors are flexible educators. To our students, we are teachers who are not bound to a classroom. And in order



to successfully help my students, I have to be knowledgeable in all subjects. Today it may be algebra and tomorrow it may be biology — I have to be ready to assist our students in everything.

My official role is to support English Learners — students whose first language is one other than English. I help them in the classroom and outside the classroom by translating and reviewing any concepts they were not able to understand during class.

As a graduate tutor, I am also able to work with families. When parents come in trembling in fear at the thought of having to drop their child off at a brand-new school in a new country, I work with them. I welcome them and make sure they understand what programs are available to their children.

I've found that even the highest performing and motivated students benefit from my presence because even they can come to the point where it's tough to navigate an American high school by themselves. Knowing there's a person you can always go to is invaluable to all of my students.

“The title ‘graduate tutor’ gives people the impression that we’re just sitting next to students while they do their homework, and that couldn’t be further from reality.”

# Without grad tutors, newcomer students will be left out

When I learned about the school board's plan to cut our positions, I took it pretty hard, because it was tough not knowing what would happen to our students.

I know they receive support in the classroom, but there is no denying that many students rely on the extra support I can provide them as a graduate tutor.

Now, children from all grades are worried about where their additional academic support will come from if I leave. They have gotten comfortable coming into the Learning Center and getting the additional help they need.

For our Newcomer students — students who recently arrived in the United States and do not speak English fluently or at all — I'm the only person who is able to speak with them in Spanish. Many of them were unable to attend school regularly in their country, so they arrive here not knowing how to read or write in their first language. I can provide them a foundation in their first language and build upon that as they learn in English.

Now, I'm worried about those Newcomers. I had one fifth grade student who only spoke Portuguese when she first got to Murphy. Her mother told me that she didn't even want to come to school because she did not know English. That broke my heart,



**Silvia Cuellar**  
Murphy Elementary

because at that age, kids should be excited about school. We worked together and now she can read and write in full sentences, and she is more excited and confident than ever.

**“I know that it is the Newcomers — the children from immigrant families — who will be hurt the most if we are cut.”**

I know what it's like to be a Newcomer. I came here when I was eight. I remember vividly what it was like for everything to be new — food, culture, language, school, everything.

I know that it is the Newcomers — the children from immigrant families — who will be hurt the most if we are cut. Without graduate tutors like myself providing that fifth grade student with additional help, she may still be too afraid to come to school, and then what would happen to her?

# Graduate tutors: A vital part of the education team

**W**orking with children has brought out my zeal for education, and I find it truly rewarding to see students develop and grow over time.

Graduate tutors do this work because we want to see students do well and we're honored to be a part of the team that helps them get there.

As the only graduate tutor at Ford, I tutor between 45 to 60 students who are far below their grade level, in six-week cycles.

Before I begin working with a group of students, I look at their STAR testing data to determine where they are and meet with the teachers to discuss on which concepts the students need to focus. I create lesson plans, do prep work, and print materials so that I am ready to teach when the students arrive. I like to adapt my personal teaching style to each individual student's needs and give them challenges in order to help build their confidence in each subject.

Most of my success stories come about because many students learn better in a small group setting. I can remember a young girl I worked with when she was in kindergarten. She was really shy and struggled to get sounds out when she read in the classroom, but in my small groups, she got the extra support she needed to succeed.

I'm committed to seeing all of my students succeed both inside of the classroom and in life.



**Wanda Williams**  
Ford Elementary

My small group instruction allows me to teach them phonics, fluency, letter recognition, reading comprehension, and other reading strategies that not only improve their grades, but also their overall confidence.

But the work of a graduate tutor does not stop there — I conduct assessments, evaluate and observe student progress. I've coordinated the annual Ford Elementary reading recital, and I'm a member of the COST/ Student Success Team and the School Site Council.

As a graduate tutor, one of the best things I can do is collaborate with teachers and exchange information, so that we are a well-functioning team that is able to find the best ways to reach our students.

**“We do this work because we want to see students do well and we're honored to be a part of the team that helps them get there.”**



**Bernice Wivagg**  
Lake Elementary

# Students need more help, not less

**B**ernice Wivagg grew up in Richmond and San Pablo, and has fond memories of her time in school. So, when it came to choose a career path, education just made sense, and working as an educator in her community was the ultimate dream.

She simply wanted to help give children an opportunity to have memories as fond as those she has of her childhood.

Bernice works with about 30 students a day in groups of four to five at a time. The students are recommended to her by their teachers based on their test scores. She says that many of the students

she works with are two to three grade levels behind in their skills, and worries that without her or her fellow Lake Elementary graduate tutor, Romeo

Osorio, there to help, they would fall further behind.

Bernice is able to give her students the extra attention they need to ensure they not only read, but also comprehend. She

has them read to her, discuss vocabulary, and talk about parts of a story.

She worries that the school board will make a tragic decision if they vote to cut graduate tutors, because students need more help, not less.

**...many of the students she works with are two to three grade levels behind in their skills...**



Alma Perez (left) & Ana Perez (right)  
Chavez Elementary



# Alumni grad tutors bridge literacy gap at Chavez

**A**lma Perez and Ana Perez (no relation) know this community well. Ana went to Chavez and graduated from Richmond High School, while Alma — a WCCUSD high school graduate as well — now has a daughter that attends Chavez.

If you walk into the school cafeteria at 8 a.m., you'll spot them both supervising and working with the students who still need a little extra help with their homework before the school day even begins.

Throughout a regular day, Ana and Alma provide about 36 Chavez students with intervention support

and about 100 go into the school's Learning Center for assistance.

At the beginning of each school year, the graduate tutors test each child individually to determine their reading and math levels.

They then use that data to identify the students who they will work with. They are also able to retest the children throughout the year to see where they are making progress and where they continue to need support.

In the morning, Ana works in small groups with the students they've identified in three kindergarten

“I was their age, but we didn’t have graduate tutors here yet. I struggled with no one to help me. Us leaving is going to leave so many kids like me who need it without that extra help.”

-Ana Perez

classrooms. After lunch, she heads to the school’s Learning Center to focus on math with third and fourth graders.

Alma typically spends the entire day in the Learning Center working with small groups of students.

She begins in the morning with first graders who need assistance in reading. Then after lunch, she sits down with first and fifth graders who need help with math.

Both Ana and Alma work with students of all grade levels during the after-school program.

Ana and Alma both worry that the literacy and math gaps will increase without the intervention support graduate tutors provide students who are behind.

As members of the community who know the population well, they understand that the vast majority of parents will not be able to afford extra assistance for their children if they no longer have access to graduate tutors.

For them, graduate tutors stand in the gap and work hard to make sure students have the extra support they need to succeed.

# Accommodating students' individual learning styles

**J**uliet Zamora lived many different lives before landing in her career as an educator. She's worked in radio and television production, non-profit sales and marketing, health care administration, and even ran her own licensed family daycare in Richmond for 20 years.

It was during those years as a child care provider, that Juliet was encouraged to apply to become a graduate tutor. She is now one of the most senior graduate tutors and has worked at Peres since she started.

Juliet says what drew her and has kept her passionate about her work is her past experiences. Born and raised in Sacramento, she grew up in a family where like many of her students today, her first language was Spanish. When Juliet started kindergarten, she didn't know any English, and she would be pulled out of her classroom for extra help and support by staff in her school who did a job similar to that of a WCCUSD graduate tutor. Because of the additional, small group help, Juliet was able to read in English at a seventh-grade level by the time she was in fourth grade.

Those early experiences have made Juliet the educator she is today. Having been diagnosed late in life with ADHD, she understands that all students cannot be expected to learn the same way at the same rate. Many, especially those who are Spanish speakers, rely on the extra help their graduate tutors provide.



**Juliet Zamora**  
Peres K-8

When the graduate tutor cuts were announced, Juliet began to worry about all of the students

she and her fellow graduate tutor, Jadda Lowry, work with. She thought of one of the Newcomers — a student who recently moved to the United States from another country — that she worked with who was in fifth grade.

**“I live five minutes away from the school. I am dedicated to this community. This is my life.”**

When they first began working together, the student felt like she couldn't do the work and wouldn't try. Juliet would not only teach her, but talk with her and build her confidence, and she gradually began to open up and get into the work. She knew she could make mistakes with Juliet without judgment, which gave her room to learn and grow. Now, according to the young girl's teacher, she is helping another Newcomer student and has become a support system for her. This major change in attitude and achievement took place in just one month of working with Juliet.

# What will happen to the extra support & help?

Jadda Lowry co-teaches the Newcomer program at Peres — a program for students who recently moved to the United States from another country. But not only does she co-teach, she also developed the curriculum and the materials with fellow graduate tutor, Juliet Zamora. They came up with the flashcards, games, lessons, and activities they use to teach their students. According to Jadda, they developed everything themselves, because the school doesn't have materials specifically for their Newcomers.

Their program gives students a chance to learn English by practicing basic skills and conversations — an opportunity they would not have in a traditional classroom setting.

In addition to the Newcomer program, Jadda teaches the third & fifth grade Intervention Support Program — a program that allows graduate tutors to provide additional assistance to students who are struggling academically. Jadda and Juliet are also starting a study hall after school at Peres for students who are close to failing their classes.

For Jadda, the passion to educate dates back to high school when she began teaching Sunday School at her church. She enjoys working with children and



seeing them learn and grow, not only academically but socially. She has a passion for working with

younger children because watching them reach milestones brings her joy. Now that graduate tutor jobs are on the line, she worries about what will happen not only to her students but the teachers who rely on graduate tutors to provide extra

support and help. It is graduate tutors who can provide students with a small group environment where they feel safe enough to fail, but also to get back up and try again. She's able to give her students the opportunity to speak and be heard, and build not only their skills, but their confidence.

That's why Jadda knows if graduate tutors are removed from the school, everyone will lose.

**“I graduated from Richmond High. I live in Pinole. My son goes to Olinda Elementary. I choose to stay here, and I am invested in the education in this community and school district.”**

# Preparing young immigrants to learn

**G**rowing up in Mexico, Carlos Castillejo found that he learned fast and loved helping his classmates learn as well. It was in those moments when was assisting another child that he realized he wanted to be an educator when he got older.

As a bilingual graduate tutor, Carlos works mainly with children in the Newcomer Program — kids who recently arrived in the United States from another country and whose first language is something other than English.

Many of Carlos's students are from Spanish speaking countries. To prepare them to learn in a classroom from a teacher in a brand-new country in a completely new language, Carlos often has to first teach his students Spanish.

The goal is to give these students — kindergarten through second graders — a foundation in their first language in order to transition them into English.

Carlos worries about what will happen to children like one of the newcomer students he taught last year if graduate tutors are cut.

The young child had just immigrated to the U.S. and was placed in second grade. He knew how to speak his first language — Spanish, but he did not know how to read or write it yet.

Through working with him, Carlos learned that because of his past home environment, the child had been unable to attend school until he got to Verde.

Despite this, Carlos quickly discovered the student was excited to learn. Carlos taught him basic English and basic Spanish and he began to understand, read, and write in English. According to Carlos, establishing a foundation in his first language made it a lot easier for him to then learn the same concepts in a new language. He says that once the student learned the basics, he was eager to go for more.



**“By taking away their graduate tutors, we’re assuming students no longer need help, but in reality, they do.”**

To Carlos, the work of graduate tutors is a great asset to teachers because they do not have the capacity to stop teaching a class to focus on the students who do not yet read, write, or speak English. Graduate tutors are able to focus on those students and also communicate those students' needs to their teachers.

Carlos worries what will happen to his students if they lose the extra educational support he provides.

# The importance of 1-on-1 education

Justin Johnson grew up in Richmond and graduated from El Cerrito High School. Now, he, his wife and children live in Antioch. Even as a teenager growing up, Justin knew his community was his passion and giving back to his community was going to be a major part of his adult life.

When he graduated from San Francisco State University with a degree in communications and an emphasis on educational media, Justin interviewed for a job at another school district only to discover that coming back to WCCUSD was his true calling.

So, he did just that. Justin has been a graduate tutor at Verde Elementary, working alongside fellow graduate tutor, Carlos Castillejo, for five years now. He also recently took on the additional role of athletic director at the school.

When asked what makes graduate tutors such an important part of their students' education, Justin says their work gives kids an outlet outside the normal classroom setting to open up and learn. It's a truth he's seen play out over and over with the students he works with.

One of those students, a first grader, had a lot of behavioral issues and struggled to focus in class. Justin began working with him in a small group setting, but soon determined that wasn't enough either, so he was able to set aside some time to work with the student one-on-one in the school's Learning Center. The student began to get used to working with and learning from Justin, and after conferring with his teacher, they determined the student was ready to go back into a small group. Their strategy worked. The teacher found that allowing the child to be pulled from his classroom and taught in a smaller group helped him build his confidence and improve his behavior in class. And on top of that, his reading level improved.



**Justin Johnson**  
Verde Elementary

**“Even when the school day is over, I go home and think about how I can reach my students and help them reach their goals.”**

To Justin, stories like these are the reason the graduate tutor program has been around for so long. He says hiring qualified and educated tutors who love what they do has allowed the district to give students who need it, access to higher service, and that is what they deserve.

# Investing in students and the community

**E**ducating children is an amazing joy, and I feel like I have it in my veins to teach. My mom and uncle were teachers, so I saw the importance of education at home when I was a little girl. What I do is my passion.

I'm Maria Ortiz and I have been a graduate tutor at Tara Hills Elementary since 2016. Before Tara Hills, I worked as a preschool graduate tutor for six years and before that as a teacher's aide.

The students I work with at Tara have been tested and then identified by myself and the school principal as needing intervention services — or additional support in order to keep up and succeed in the classroom.

When I get to work in the morning, I begin prepping for my first tutoring session. My sessions are 25 minutes each and I work with four to five students at a time. Then I head into the classroom and pull out students the teachers and I have identified as in need of intervention support and I work with them in small groups. I provide two hours of additional support after school.

To me, creativity is key. I use games like bingo and matching depending on what I am teaching to keep it fun and keep the children engaged. I've done a lot of research and spoken with a lot of teachers to make many of the materials myself that I use in my teaching.



**Maria Ortiz**  
Tara Hills Elementary

Every student is different and they learn differently. In one situation, I was contacted by the school community worker who asked me to tutor a particular first grader. She said his mom was stressed out because she'd been told he was in jeopardy of being kept back. I, of course, said yes and added him to my regular schedule.

We practiced, practiced, practiced. I used different strategies to reach him and help him learn. By the end of the year, he'd improved greatly and went on to the second grade.

I identify with this community because there are a lot of people of color here. I'm originally from Zacatecas, Mexico, and I have lived in San Pablo and Richmond for the last 40 years.

I feel invested in what happens here because all three of my kids went to WCCUSD schools and now my 10-year-old grandson is in fourth grade in this school district.

“I identify with this community because there are a lot of people of color here. I’m originally from Zacatecas, Mexico, and I have lived in San Pablo and Richmond for the last 40 years. I feel invested in what happens here because all three of my kids went to WCCUSD schools and now my 10-year-old grandson is in fourth grade in this school district.”

# Building confidence in English learners through small group education



**Marsha Williamson**  
Grant Elementary

**B**efore entering the field of education, I worked as a research geneticist. I decided to become a stay-at-home mom when my two kids were attending Madera Elementary School. It was while I was volunteering for their school's science program that I realized I had an interest in teaching children.

I worked as a science enrichment program teacher at Kensington Elementary for six years and then returned to research for seven years.

When my grant ended, I refocused on my real passion — education. In the next few years, I had several part-time positions working as an educator/instructor.

I was offered a position as a graduate tutor at Grant after serving as a long-term kindergarten substitute teacher. I've devoted myself to my position as a graduate tutor at Grant Elementary for seven years now.

I think education continued to call me because when I had my own kids, I realized how important childhood experiences are for kids. I really enjoy working with children because their minds are like sponges and they are open to new experiences and ideas.

At Grant, most of the kids are English learners. They don't always have a full grasp of their first language and then they are bombarded in English. They may go through the steps and learn the rules, but they struggle to understand and comprehend the power of words. That's where I come in, and through small group intervention, I am able to help them improve.

I have a PhD in genetics and an extensive background in science. I love to bring all of that to school and expose our students to more science.

I've done projects where I gave students a wire, battery, and bulb and told them to figure out how to

“A percentile increase from 5th to 10th percentile on the STAR test might be small overall, but for the child, it’s a 100% increase and a huge boost to their confidence that carries forward in the classroom.”

light the bulb. They love being given a problem and then finding the solution. That moment of discovery for them is the most amazing part.

When we look at the impact of graduate tutors, we have to look at individual kids not just averages. Graduate tutor intervention makes a lot of difference to the kids who are being served.

An increase from the 5th to the 10th percentile on the STAR test might be small overall, but for the child, it’s a 100% increase and a huge boost to their confidence that carries forward in the classroom. Students I worked with five or six years ago are doing really well because of early intervention. I am so proud of them.

# Building a foundation to help students succeed in class

I'm Carolyn Brown and I have been a WCCUSD employee since 2011, and a full-time graduate tutor since 2013. Before coming to Pinole Valley High, I worked in the Ford Elementary Learning Center where I taught children from kindergarten to sixth grade.

I work in education because I have a passion for it and my heart bleeds for these kids. Growing up, I always had my parents' support but a lot of the students I work with do not. I'm able to help them focus and let them know I'm there for them.

At Pinole, I work in the classrooms with our English Language Developer students (ELD). These are students whose first language is not English and need to be taught English in order to keep up in class.

As a graduate tutor, I am able to help the students who can't get everything in 55 minutes in a classroom setting.

I can think of a particular student with whom I had to go back to the basics. He, like many other students I work with whose first language is not English, had trouble reading. This is tough because his schoolwork is not in his first language, so it can be easy to fall behind.

In about a year of working with him, I have seen a vast improvement. I started by helping him figure out words and taught him how to say them correctly. Now, I'd say he is reading in English about 45% better than when we first began working together.

It's important to know that many of the students who attend this school are here without their parents. They may be staying with a sibling, aunt, uncle or friend,

so it's often hard to maintain their focus without the support a parent would provide. As a graduate tutor, I hear these stories, and I'm able to talk to the students and give them the encouragement they need. Me and Ms. Abby's (the other PVHS graduate tutor) presence in the classroom helps them because we are a consistent, trusted presence they see every day.

Our students should be afforded the same education and chance to learn as everyone else. Taking graduate tutors out of the loop makes the chance of that very slim.



**Carolyn Brown**  
Pinole Valley High

**“Our students should be afforded the same education and chance to learn as everyone else. Taking graduate tutors out of the loop makes the chance of that very slim.”**

# Preparing English learners for future success

I mainly work with students in our shelter classes — classes where English learners (students whose first language is not English) are together. I'm able to sit in the classroom with my students while their teacher lectures and support them in the concepts in which they need help. The benefit is that they're able to understand what is happening in the classroom despite the language barrier. And typically, when students don't understand, they don't do their work.

Teachers have to teach dozens of students in their classrooms at a time. I'm able to add that extra support for the English learners. When teachers give tests, I can take students out and translate the testing information for them. When a teacher instructs in English, I'm able to help my students understand the material in that moment.

I've been working with one of my students since she was a freshman — now she's a junior. She went to middle school in the district, but her foundational skills in English and in her own language, Spanish, weren't great when she got to high school. I discovered this when I first began working with her by watching the way she held her pencil when she wrote. It wasn't the way a person skilled in writing would hold their pencil.

Even though she still struggles in the classroom sometimes, I've been able to work with her in a small group setting and we have seen major improvements. Now, she has the confidence and



courage to ask questions in class and she turns in her assignments — two things she would not do when we first began to work together.

**“It’s also that moral support – knowing there’s always someone there who understands them and will help them.”**

As I taught her, we also talked about her future plans, and she has an understanding that the classes she's taking now are what she needs to graduate.

I worry about what would have happened to students like her if I wasn't

here and what will happen to our students if me and Ms. Brown, the other Pinole Valley High graduate tutor, are cut.

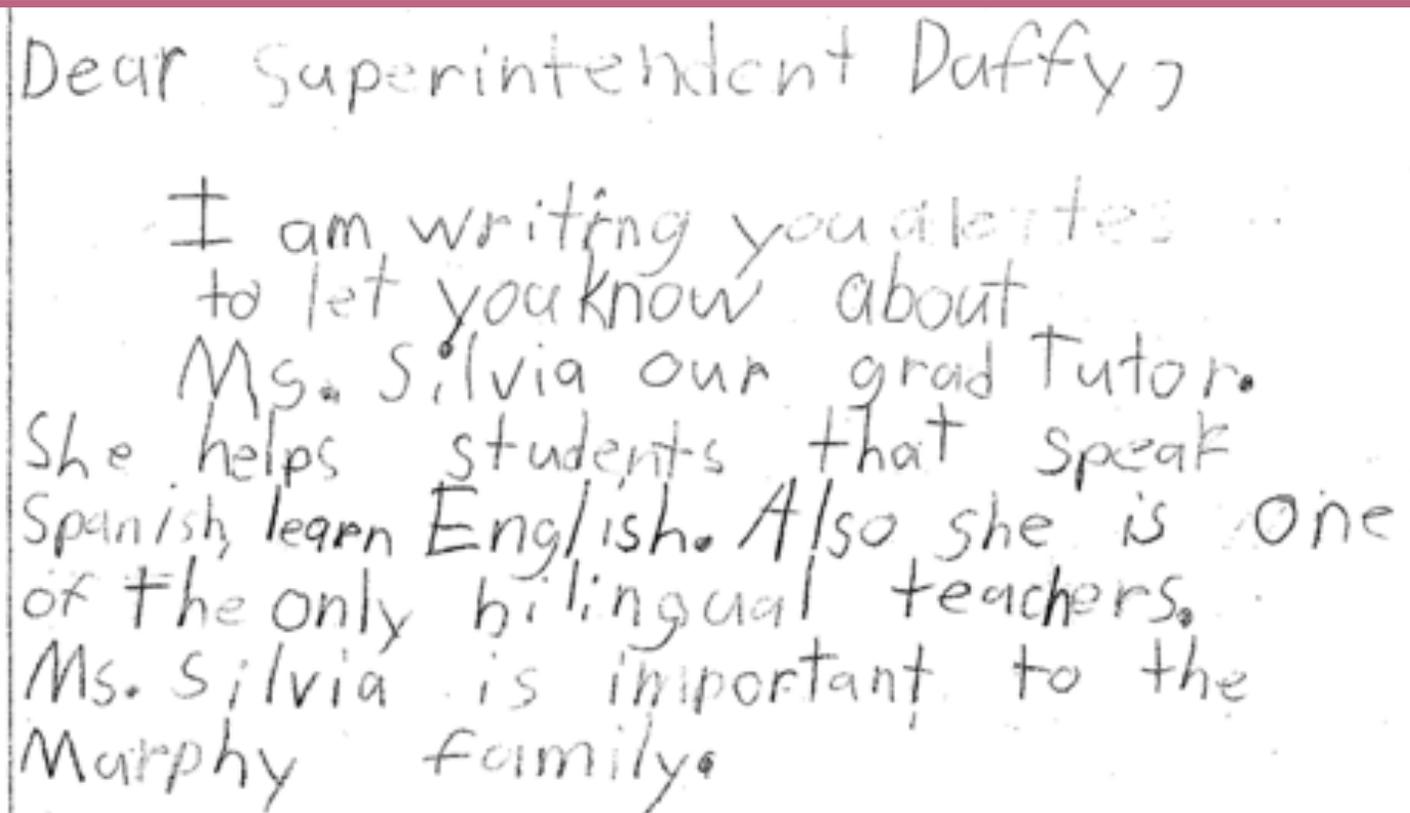
We've created these relationships and built trust with our students. It's academic, of course, and we make sure they're on track, but it's also that moral support — knowing there's always someone there who understands them and will help them.

# Letters of Support

As word began to spread that graduate tutors were in jeopardy of being eliminated by the WCCUSD Board of Education, personal letters of support began pouring in and now total over 130 from teachers and staff, students and parents.

Many of the student letters are from English learners and Newcomer students who have relied on the extra support graduate tutors provide as they transition into a new classroom, in a new school, in a brand new country.

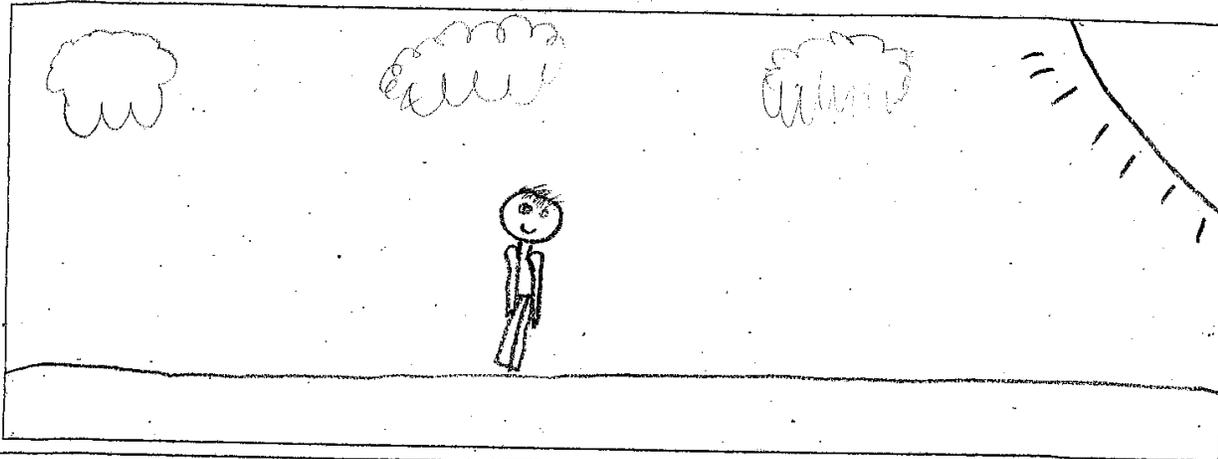
**The letters make one thing very clear: without graduate tutors, everyone loses.**



Dear Superintendent Duffy,

I am writing you a letter to let you know about Ms. Silvia our grad Tutor. She helps students that speak Spanish learn English. Also she is one of the only bilingual teachers. Ms. Silvia is important to the Murphy family.

Date 2/1/19



Dear MR. DUFFY, My name is [REDACTED]

I am in 4<sup>th</sup> Grade MS. Silvia helps

My get Beter at reading, math, writing

I started to come in 3<sup>th</sup> Grade

MS. Silvia is a great teache She is

realy helpful I Really Like the

Learning Center.

I am writing to you today about Ms. Ortiz, our tutoring teacher at Tara Hills Elementary. I have heard that you are going to take away her job. The reason I am writing is about how much she helped me. It is hard to admit but I was at a 3.9 reading level. Third grade!! I didn't want to go to tutoring. I thought that it was just the people that were bad at reading, then I saw that there were people that were at grade level. I went to her for six weeks. At the end I took my STAR reading test, I am now proud to say that my reading level is a 7.5, I am so happy and my parents were proud.

I am writing you a letter because I want to support Ms. Silvia, our Grad Tutor. She is important to us for many reasons. One reason, she helps a lot of kids <sup>with</sup> writing, reading, and math. Another reason is she is the only person who is bilingual. She speaks English and Spanish. This is important because we have many English learners in Murphy. The final reason is we want her to stay because she's part of the Murphy Team.

Dear WCCUSD School Board:

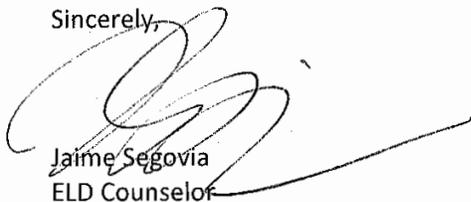
I am writing this letter in support of the Graduate Tutor Program at West Contra Unified School District.

I am currently employed as ELD Counselor at Walter T. Helms Middle School. I have had the pleasure of working closely with graduate tutors throughout my time at Helms Middle School for the past four years. I have seen the positive impact that graduate tutors have on the personal and academic development of this student population. Tutors have developed a rigorous tutoring program that has allowed EL students develop confidence within themselves leading them to realize their potential as future community leaders. Each year, Graduate tutors have nominated English Learner valedictorians and are responsible for students achieving honor roll status each quarter. They teach students that higher education is a realistic and obtainable goal and each year I see an increasing number of EL students gain interest in higher education.

Graduate tutors are also an integral part of not only the academic success of EL students, but also for creating a community among parents and Helms Middle School. Graduate tutors maintain constant communication with parents, keeping them informed of their child's progress and get them involved with their children's education. I have seen parent involvement with school activities due to the efforts of graduate tutors.

It is my firm belief that cutting funding for the Graduate Tutor program will create a large negative impact on academic achievement at our schools and the community as a whole. I strongly urge school board members to retain funding for the Graduate Tutor program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jaime Segovia  
ELD Counselor  
Walter T. Helms Middle School  
510.231.1423 ext. 24304  
jsegovia@wccusd.net

I am a student in ELD 2 class. One of the person to helped so much is ms tent She always helped our's. When I am come to De Anza I am did not know a lot English, because in the other school I'm did Student I not learned nothing of english and always than I need helped Ms.tent to help me, how I need to form one sentencis,

11th grader at De Anza High

Querida junta escolar WocUSD  
quiero dar mi opinion sobre  
la decision tomada de eliminar  
a los tutores graduados.  
Creo que es mala idea por que  
estas son las unicas personas  
que dan ayuda ala Sociedad  
Hispana por lo tanto si este  
acto sucede tendremos menos  
apoyos para sobresalir y ser  
mejores  
Febrero 7, 2019

"I think [cutting the tutors] is a bad idea because they are the only people on campus dedicated the Spanish-speaking population."

Student at Helms Middle

February 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

I have worked with Sheldon Elementary School's Grad Tutor, Tracey Kitaoka, for 3 years. She has been an integral part of our school community, having helped countless students attain grade level reading scores on STAR tests in the Learning Center.

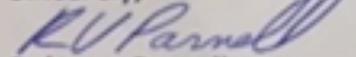
She is a great advocate for her students. If she notices a student has processing difficulties, she will take it upon herself to make a referral for assessment.

She has volunteered to take on responsibilities that are not under the purview of the Learning Center. All staff members know they can approach Ms. Kitaoka with any request and she will not hesitate to assist. She can always be counted on to go above and beyond.

Ms. Kitaoka is well organized. She runs her Learning Center groups in a beneficial and productive way. She knows, as well as her students, what goals are to be achieved and which objectives have been mastered. She is well liked by students, parents, and staff alike.

Ms. Kitaoka's absence will have a negative effect on the intervention services provided at Sheldon. I do not want her to leave our students.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Parnell

Sheldon Elementary School

ISP

I came from Yemen to the United States when I was a freshman, I did not even know how to say how are you doing. I learned in my ELD class but not as much I learned in the library with Miss Tent because what she use to do is she will explain everything for me slowly. She is the one taught me English grammar, she helped me with my math work. If she was not there, I would fail my freshman year. I cannot thank her in any way because the word thank you is not enough for what she did to me, my sister and other students.

Miss Tent did not just help us with our school work, she even help me get used to a new country where I dress differently than other people, where I have different religion than other and I speak a different language. She built a confident inside me and taught me to be proud how matter how people looked at me in a different way since I am Muslim. she is one of the nicest, kindest and sweetest teachers I have ever meet. She helped through my four years not just my freshman and she is still helping me. Miss Tent is the first person to listen to my terrible journey when I cam to the U.S. She is the one who taught me how to be patient, strong and brave.

When I first came I did not even looked at people and talked to them normally because I thought they will laugh at my accent but she taught me that I am still learning and I am already speaking one language which is Arabic. Miss Tent is the person who I feel comfortable talking to. I talked to her about our parties, celebrations and holidays and how we celebrate them. I talked to her about my family and country. She will never tell me that she is busy she cannot help me. I went through a very hard time getting used to be in the United States but I over became that because of her.

Those new students need her, they need her support and they need someone that will make them feel that they are in a safe place. They need her to motivate them and to make English an easy thing for them. Words cannot describe her, she sometimes made me feel that she is my mom.

Miss Tent has a very important job and I think all other teacher that have the same job as her. I wrote a lot but that is half what she did to us.

**Student at De Anza High**

This letter is written in support of the Grad Tutor program in general, and in particular support of Ms. Deya, who is the Grad Tutor at Pinole Middle School.

Grad Tutors are necessary if the District expect its policy of full inclusion to succeed. Full inclusion results in a wide spectrum of skill and grade level competencies - so much so that in 7th grade math, we have to differentiate among all 7 grade levels, and maybe even more, because a few students may exceed grade level.

There are other classroom helpers - but - those are dedicated to Special Ed students. That means that **Grad Tutors are the only classroom paraprofessional available to non-Special Ed struggling students.**

Given the great amount of differentiation, Grad Tutors are essential in reaching students with language issues, issues that result from students lacking basic skills needed for grade level curriculum, and behavior issues that are intertwined with all the above, and other issues as well.

Grad Tutors provide professional level academic content to these students as individuals, or in small groups. **The full inclusion classroom requires a high level of differentiation, and it should be obvious that Grad Tutors are central - and not peripheral - if the District hopes to approach academic success with full inclusion.**

When Grad Tutors are present, the teacher is also free to work with individuals or small groups in a way they cannot without Grad Tutors. Two adults can be synergistic in terms of classroom effectiveness.

Ms Deya is the Grad Tutor in my math 7 classroom for 2 periods a day for the last three years. She effectively helps with all the issues associated with full inclusion. I would say that she is a natural teacher. She knows the material well, and the kids respect her.

Ms Deya also provides afterschool tutoring - which really helps with kids who need help with the basics, and others, too.

John Irminger  
Math 7  
Pinole Middle School

RE: Maria Ortiz

It has been my privilege and pleasure to be a colleague of Maria Ortiz at Tara Hills Elementary School for the past three years.

Maria is a very effective grad tutor and has worked with many of my students who were below grade level. She gives them the small group instruction and one-on-one support they need to perform at grade level. She helps struggling students with their reading, writing, and basic math facts. This kind of extra support is truly needed at Tara Hills. She has helped many students perform at grade level, as well as advancing their skills.

She consistently displays great initiative and enthusiasm in every aspect of her job. She possesses the skills of a confident, successful, and experienced grad tutor with a true passion for working with children.

Maria provides both individual and cooperative learning experiences which promotes the development of academic skills, social competence, positive self-esteem, and creative expression. Her knowledge and ability to implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum is outstanding.

Maria's ability to work effectively as a team player with the staff at Tara Hills, other staff members and school personnel is excellent. Maria has a very confident, pleasant, and warm way of relating with people. This exemplifies her way of relating with students and parents. Maria's endearing, natural manner captivates them.

I highly recommend Maria Ortiz without hesitation for an elementary teaching position or any position working with young children.

Sincerely,

Missy Erickson  
Second Grade Teacher  
Tara Hills Elementary  
(510)231-1428 (Work)  
(515) 661-3037 (Cell)

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Dear WCCUSD School Board,

I am writing you in support of grad tutor, Wilson Ordoñez. He is selfless, committed to student success and an irreplaceable member of the Helms community.

Ordoñez arrives to Helms Middle School at 7:00 AM and works until 5:30 PM daily. These additional hours past his contractual time are spent writing letters or calling parents, communicating with teachers to review materials or planning his own tutoring lessons for ELD students. He holds himself to high standards to be a model for students to achieve the same.

He is committed to student success because he pushes students to be their best selves. For instance, he has ELD students complete homework assignments in both English and Spanish to promote students learning the material while encouraging them to expand their language acquisition. In addition, during math review he has students lead the classroom by completing math problems on the whiteboard.

Lastly, Ordoñez is a valued member of this community. He has committed 6 years to Helms Middle School, growing his tutorial program, building better relationships with families and teaching professionalism to students. He is a strong support to teachers when pushing into the classroom. He gives students more individualized instruction when it is not possible for one teacher to give equitable attention to 36 students at the same time.

I believe Ordoñez to be one of the strongest members of our team at Helms. He is an essential part of this community. He gives without expecting praise in return and I find myself fortunate to work beside such an individual.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Dana King

I come to the United States. I am an immigrant person  
For the first day I come to school I saw  
her and my class start and I don't speak any  
English and she starts to help me in my English  
she starts to help me in my ELD class she  
help me a lot she is a wonderful person in my  
life I like her very much. She help me in my math  
class I no English now and I no to write because  
her she is say you will learn [REDACTED]

11th grader at De Anza High

Señores de la junta WCCUSD.

Me dirijo a ustedes con la iniciativa  
de pedirles si nos ayuda a nosotros  
como estudiantes dejando las posiciones  
de tutores graduados ya que necesi-  
tamos de su apoyo en los salones y  
tambien en el programa de tutores des-  
pues de la escuela [REDACTED]

"I write to you to ask that you help us students by keeping the graduate tutor positions because we need their support in the classroom and also in the after-school program."

Student at Helms Middle

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Ms. Deya. She is a grad tutor for the math department at Pinole Middle. She is very good at what she does, and she has a good relationship with the students. She is good at supporting teachers in the classroom, and explain how to do the problems the way the teacher teaches. She helps with making sure students are on task during notes, and when doing group work. Students do not hesitate to ask her for help. She does the after school program for math which many students attend. It would be a great loss if Ms. Deya is not here next school year because she is a valuable to helping students with their education.

Sincerely,

Rachel Williams

Math Department Chair

To Whom it May Concern

Grad tutors have been an essential support to our ELD students at Helms. Grad tutors provide in class support and academic tutoring after school. In many ways the Grad tutors serve as an unofficial social workers working closely with students and families to overcome barriers and allow for increased opportunities to learn. Helms is a long established Community School and Mr. Ordonez has been instrumental in connecting students to resources on campus like the Health Van, Families in Transition services, trauma and grief counseling and attendance support. It is my belief that the ELD student's success is supported by Grad Tutors and to do away with grad tutors would be detrimental to the student's success.

Sincerely,

Megan White  
Beacon Director Helms Middle School  
510.231.1423 x24329

Para lo integrantes de la Junta Escolar  
Yo como estudiante de Helms Middle Schools  
pienso que eliminar los fondos para lo  
tutores es una mala decision porque  
estos dos años me han ayudado  
mucho como el Señor Martinez y  
el Señor Ordoñez y yo quiero que  
mi hermana menor aprenda  
mucho como lo que yo he aprendido.

“As a Helms Middle School student, I think eliminating the funds for the tutors is a bad decision because these last two years the tutors have helped me a lot. I want my little sister to learn a lot the way I have.”

**Student at Helms Middle**

I came to the U.S in October 2018  
I'm from Mexico and I'm student  
in ELD 2 class and Ms. Tent helped me  
in a lot of thing, she helped me  
in enroll in a class ~~of~~ algebra 1  
because I need have more credits,  
also she always help me in my  
pronuntation and vocabulary a lot.

**11th grader at De Anza High**

Dear Ms. Diaz,

I am writing to express my support for WCCUSD's graduate tutors generally, and especially for Shakima Williams at Juan Crespi Middle School.

My teenage, twin sons currently attend De Anza High School. Last year they attended Crespi Middle School. My kids did not work directly with Ms. Williams, however as president of the Crespi Parents' Club (PTSO), I had lots of contact with her. In short, Ms. Williams was one of my favorite people at Crespi, and I learned from our members that she provides indispensable educational support to some of the most vulnerable students at the school.

Shakima Williams is kind, intelligent, and hardworking. She is a constant and energetic presence on the campus – a familiar face that always has a smile for students, parents, and coworkers. If Crespi Middle loses Ms. Williams, the effects will be felt well beyond the students she works with directly. Ms. Williams is not only a tutor, but also a mentor. Middle school can be a tough time, and Ms. Williams is a reliable, respected adult on which all the students can rely. She is a wonderful singer who helped revitalize Crespi's Black History Month Celebration, and she also provides unwavering support for other campus projects and events.

There are many students in the WCCUSD system who will never recover if they lose the educational and mentoring support of Ms. Williams and the other graduate tutors. WCCUSD should not attempt to balance its budget by cutting direct support services to the kids who need these services the most.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Buckner (mother of Jackson and William Saulovich, 9<sup>th</sup> graders at De Anza High School)

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as my personal recommendation for Maria Ortiz. I have known Maria for more than three (3) years, so I feel qualified to speak on her behalf in terms of character. I can say that she is a woman of great integrity, is extremely dedicated to teaching children, and is responsible and hard-working.

Maria has pulled out of my classroom, children that work below grade level and English Language Learners that struggle to give them special individual attention that the classroom teaching cannot do. As a result of this one-on-one and small group support, I have seen my students advance a whole grade level as well as demonstrate more confidence in the classroom.

Also for the past three years, Maria has help our English Learners prepare for their writing test that has helped many Tara Hills ELD students Fep out.

Also Maria has helped students in their basic Math facts such as multiplication and addition/subtraction when the students have been several grade levels behind and not able to keep up with the regular Math class.

This kind of extra support is truly needed at the Elementary Grade Level. Maria has shown great patience, kindness, and stern discipline when needed to help our students perform at grade level as well as advance toward their individual goals.

For your information, I am an Elementary School Teacher of twenty three (23) years and consider myself a good judge of character. I have worked for West Contra Costa Unified School District for over twenty-seven (27) years and have had good relationships with many West Contra Costa students and families. Maria is a great asset to our community. If I can be of further assistance, please call me at (510) 231-1428 or contact me by email at mcastro2@wccusd.net.

Yours in the service of our students,

Martha Castro  
2nd Grade Teacher

El tutor bilingue En helms Sr. Wilson nos ha ayudado mucho con el desarrollo de nuestros hijos les ayuda con las tareas y les despeja dudas que tuvieron durante el día sobre sus materias les ayuda con todas sus materias para que ellos mejoren sus grades practican la lectura todos los días. a nosotros como padres nos mantiene al tanto de nuestros hijos informándonos de los trabajos y tareas que tienen que entregar a sido muy importante en el desarrollo de nuestros hijos. Como padre estoy muy preocupado que el distrito elimine los tutores les pido que evaloren lo que ellos hacen en las escuelas

“The bilingual tutor at Helms, Mr. Wilson, has helped us a lot with our children’s advancement. He helps them with homework and can resolve any doubts they walked away with after the day’s lesson”

**Parent of Helms Middle Student**

Para mi como madre es una gran preocupacion porque mi hija [REDACTED] recientemente llego a este pais y como alumna nueva a este distrito han sido de gran ayuda los tutores en especial sr. Wilson el ayuda en el aprendizaje, le despeja dudas de sus clases anteriores es guia para que mi hija logre terminar las tareas y trabajos el sr. Wilson nos informa sobre el comportamiento y el aprovechamiento en clase de mi hija.

“As a mother I am very worried about the district eliminating the positions of the bilingual tutors. I ask respectfully and cordially that the district revisit this decision and that they see the value that the tutors have in the academic achievement of our children”

**Parent of Helms Middle Student**

02-10-19

ESTIMADOS CONSEJALES DE EDUCACION  
DEL DISTRITO WCCUSD

Por medio de la presente me dirijo a ustedes con el respeto que se merecen nos enteramos que el distrito terminara con los puestos de los tutores.

por lo cual nos encontramos muy tristes por que los tutores bilingues ayudan mucho a nuestros hijos para que ellos sigan adelante y no se queden estancados por no saber o no entender el idioma del ingles yo en lo personal estoy muy agradecida con el tutor bilingue SR. WILSON de la Escuela HELMS

Por que gracia a su trabajo que desempeña en esa Escuela mi hijo esta aprendiendo y esta saliendo adelante poco a poco en lo que va del año con su ayuda por que el pone mucho de su parte y esta muy pendiente para que nuestros hijos se superen dia a dia y así puedan ellos salir adelante y no quedarse estancados por no entender y no saber el idioma del INGLÉS. Como tambien nos mantiene muy informados dia a dia de lo que pasa con nuestros hijos y en que podemos ayudarlos o ponerlos a terminar sus trabajos De la manera mas atenta les pido que recapaciten y miren el mal que les puede causar si esto termina

“Thanks to his [Wilson’s] work, our son is learning and is getting ahead, little by little. He [Wilson] puts in a lot of effort and is very attentive to our children so that they advance every day and keep moving forward, instead of staying stuck because they don’t understand the English language. He also keeps us informed day to day about what happens with our children and how we can help at home.”

**Parent of Helms Middle Student**

“Ms. Tent works hard to support our students every day. She pushes into my ELD class daily to provide one on one support to my students, all of whom are immigrants and English language learners. During independent work-time, she helps students by providing additional language support, along with writing, reading, and speaking tutoring. Ms. Tent not only supports my students in ELD class, she also pushes into their math and science classes to provide language support and assistance with classwork during independent work time. Ms. Tent also supports students each day after school by providing tutoring after school. She helps students with homework from all of their classes. Students tell me all the time how much they appreciate the help they get from Ms. Tent.”

**Willa Simmet**  
**ELD 2 and English 1 teacher**  
**De Anza High School**

Ms. Williams is patient and conscientious as she works with students who need extra support in reading skills. She has helped students from my first grade class who were struggling to improve their letter names, letter sounds, sight words, spelling patterns, and decoding skills. Ms. Williams has consistently helped students reach grade level expectations, and, with her friendly and positive attitude, she also reinforces positive behavior and motivates students to do their best.

**Doris Garry**  
**4th Grade Teacher**  
**Ford Elementary**



Bay Area  
Community  
Resources

February 8, 2019

Dear WCCUSD Board Members,

I am a social worker at Helms Middle School and I am writing this letter in support of our graduate tutors who provide critical assistance to some of our most vulnerable students and families.

Mr. Wilson Ordonez, for example, works with our newcomer students. Students who have immigrated to this country within the last year find themselves adjusting to new family members, a new language, and an entirely different school system. In addition to enduring the shock of a new culture, they are often grieving or healing from what they left behind. Mr. Ordonez provides consistent and comprehensive support to these students and their parents during this often difficult transition. He accompanies students to their core classes to help them to access the lessons. He provides both academic and emotional guidance throughout the school day. After school he assists this group with their homework and with learning English. Beyond the classroom, Mr. Ordonez is in regular communication with the parents and guardians of his students so that they can better support and advocate for their children as they navigate the challenges of integration.

Mr. Wilson, and other graduate tutors throughout the district, provide invaluable assistance to students who are at risk of getting lost in the system and of falling behind or dropping out. They help us to narrow the achievement gap by offering the support students need to overcome significant obstacles to be able to access a quality education and to excel.

Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,

Joyce Synnott, MSW

3219 Pierce Street, Richmond, California, 94804  
Phone 510.559.5550 Fax: 510.559.5552

██████████  
██████████  
Pinole Valley High School

**Ms. Brown & Ms. Murguia  
(Tutors)**

Pinole Valley High School has many students who are English learners, so the school needs the help of tutors like Ms. Murguia and Ms. Brown. We consider that they should stay at school because with our low level of English we tend to have difficulty doing work; for example, essays, projects, exams, etc.

I have had a great performance at school thanks to them. I have learned many things in all this time since I've known them. They have always been willing to help us and teach us everything we do not understand. All students are satisfied with having tutors at school, and with the help they offer teachers can work easier with students.

I like to spend my time with them, every day during class hours and tutoring. They are my tutors, teachers, counselors and friends at the same time. All students are blessed to have professional help at school. Which is why we believe that we continue to have the help of Ms. Brown and Ms. Murguia.

I have had the opportunity to talk with parents of students who are deficient in the English language. I have been told that they are happy that their children receive the help of tutors as they have the opportunity to continue studying, learning and developing their education in school.

The importance of having tutors has benefited all students with low levels of English, teachers and parents. We would like to continue receiving the help of these great tutors who are always willing to help and are also hard workers, they are always aware of the students and every work that we have. They have provided everything on their part so that each day we are better students.

Cordially, ██████████

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Mr. Wilson Ordonez to stay on here at Helms Middle School. I have known him since the beginning of the 2013 school year, and have been working closely with him over the past four years in relation to our ELD students, classes and his tutoring program after school. He is an excellent, kind and giving man who takes great pride in nurturing our students academically as well as emotionally. He is irreplaceable, and I feel that without him on our team, we will not be as successful as we have been in the past, meeting the ELD community's needs.

In the years that he has taken the time to teach and mentor our students within the classroom setting and outside the classroom setting, I have witness his students develop personally and academically. They not only attained high grades in my class, but continue to exhibit their skills in class discussions and brainstorming. He has demonstrated both his ability to reach these particular students in a way that they are more confident, more able and willing to write and utilize their time in my class.

**Robin L. A. Goodbeer**  
**English Teacher**  
**Helms Middle**

Our graduate tutors provide invaluable support, particularly to our growing population of newcomer students. Though we have several graduate tutors, I will speak primarily of Mr. Ordoñez, as he and I have for this past year been working closely together. When our newcomer students arrive at Helms, often at untypical start dates, often with spotty educational records, Mr. Ordoñez is one of the first welcoming adults they meet. He helps them acclimate to our school culture, norms, and expectations, helps them prepare for their first days of school, and becomes a regular point of contact for the students and their parents.

Aside from support during the student's intake and first days of school, Mr. Ordoñez provides continued support throughout the year. He provides in class support to assist English learners with their work. This is incredibly helpful in a history class that relies heavily on primary source documents: if students who are fluent in English are having difficulty with these documents, you must imagine the incredible obstacle they present to English learners. Mr. Ordoñez helps our students through the work, with occasional translation, encouragement, and help with reading and writing.

**Jeremiah Romm**  
**U.S. History Teacher**  
**Helms Middle**

To Whom It May Concern-

I am writing this letter begging you to reconsider cutting Grad Tutor funding. Juliette Zamora, the irreplaceable Bilingual Grad Tutor I have had the pleasure to work with, has made an integral positive difference in my students' learning experiences. She and I have worked side by side for the last eight years. Ms. Zamora has supplemented my teaching by heading small groups, pulling individuals and bridging the language gap for my Spanish speakers and families. I cannot imagine my classroom without her support. I do know that my students' academic and social success will be greatly diminished without her assistance.

Susan German-Zec  
Peres Elementary

Juliet Zamora is an important part of our successful team at Peres. She works directly with children and teachers as well as demonstrating techniques to parents in how to work with their children at home. Grad tutors have become a necessary part of our support staff.

Alia Shamim John Peres K-8

Last year, Ms. Jadda was an integral part of my 6th grade classroom. It was my first year teaching all 6th grade subjects and Ms. Jadda assisted during math. The math levels of the students ranged between 1st and 9th grade and it was challenging to teach to each level. She worked in the classroom and pulled out students to work in small groups. The students connected with her and I believe that she made a difference in their learning.

Lori Morrison Peres K-8

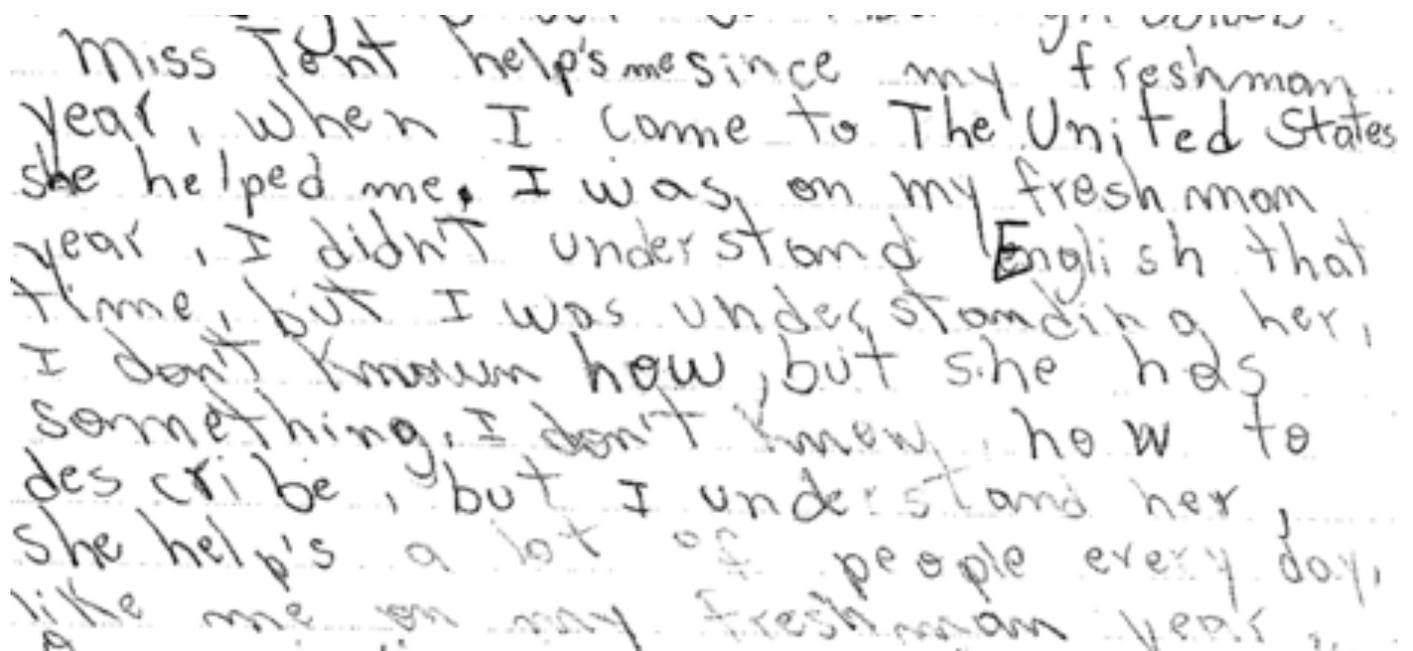
Teachers are resilient and resourceful but what really makes us function at capacity is knowing we have support. The best kind of support is another professional adult in the room or at the grade level, particularly at the primary level. When grad tutors are present, more students have the attention they need and therefore have a greater chance of success. That has always been the goal of our community: student success.

Please consider making cuts at upper level management, or with contracts and consultants, and leave in place those hard working and respected grad tutors that work directly with our student population.

Laura Buffi, NBCT Peres K – 8

I am writing this letter to tell you how important Verena Tent is to me. I came to the United States 2 year and the half ago and I did not know anyone in this school and the first person that I met first was her. I am very grateful with her because if it were not for her I did not any English now. She was the person that always was there helping me, not just with English also emotionally. She became very important to me in a way that I have a lot of confidence in her. I have known her all this time. She had been in my ELd classes, in my math classes, and also after school helping me with my classwork and homework. I think she is a very special person because she loves to teach all my classmates that speak Spanish or any language and want to learn English. She teach us how to pronounce the words and when I was in eld 3 she used take me to the library and teach me how to study the words in English and memorize them. In moments of despair Ms. Tent was there helping how to do my homework and giving me advice. She always gave me ideas of how to do my work and how to use the English I knew. I will not ever forget all what she did for me and how important her help was in my life. I have told her a lot of things about my life that make me feel bad and she always have been there supporting me and trying to make me feel better. I consider her as a great person with a big heart and a very good academic work. She speaks more than 3 languages and when I knew any English she spoke to me en Spanish to tell me what I had to do. I think all of eld students need her because she helps them a lot and she should stay in this school helping all of them as she have been doing since she came to this school. She has a lot of patience and has a lot of experience working with all of us and I know that if she leaves she will be very sad because she will miss us and also we all will miss her a lot because she is a wonderful person and a lot of people want her in this school.

**Student at De Anza High**



miss Tent help's me since my freshman year, when I came to The United States she helped me, I was on my freshman year, I didn't understand English that time, but I was understanding her, I don't know how, but she has something, I don't know how to describe, but I understand her, she help's a lot of people every day, like me on my freshman year.

**11th grader at De Anza High**

The grad tutors provide so much support for the teachers and students. Their hard work and dedication makes it possible for our school to be as successful as it is. They work tirelessly to make our school a better place and losing that would be an absolute shame and a real loss for the school.

Jonah Tristman Peres K-8

As a first year teacher, it is hard enough balancing a class of 33 students. It becomes even more challenging when the students have such widely varying needs, from being significantly below grade level to having little exposure to the English language. Ms. Juliette, Ms. Jadda, and Ms. Lucero provide a vital service to all of my students, including those that they do not directly serve. By pulling out students for 45 minutes a day, they allow all of my students to receive individualized lessons at their developmental zone. These 3 are absolutely vital for the continued success of these 33 readers, writers, and mathematicians.

David Gordon  
Peres K-8

Like all classrooms at Peres, my classroom is home to an eclectic assortment of learners, students at a wide range of academic levels. As a first year teacher trying to learn all the tricks of the trade, I find it challenging to balance extreme content differentiation on top of everything else (organization, behavior management, lesson planning, etc.). By pulling out my lowest performing readers, our grad tutors reduce the academic range of learners in my class. This allows for far more targeted and individualized instruction of the students that remain in my class. For the students that get pulled out of my class, the grad tutors provide valuable targeted small group intervention. As a result, all students in my classroom have access to instruction that meets them where they are. Since starting the pull-out tutoring program, the growth in ELA has accelerated and the increase in excitement surrounding our academic content is tangible.

John Wells Peres K-8

## Letter of Support for Marsha Williamson January 2019

The above-named educator has been a colleague of mine since September 2011, at which time she joined the staff of Grant Elementary School in Richmond, California. My role at that time was that of Literacy Coach serving grades K-6. Presently, Ms. Williamson is still serving as a graduate tutor at Grant. Over the span of 8 years, Ms. Williamson has served as a graduate tutor assisting small intervention groups of students. We worked closely in these respective roles since the 2011 school year.

During this period of 8 years, I've gotten to know Ms. Williamson and can speak to her strengths in the classroom under supervision of certificated staff and as a person. Ms. Williamson is currently assigned to several classrooms which contain predominantly English Language Learners. Ms. Williamson, as a graduate tutor has completely dedicated herself to becoming a knowledgeable and proficient reading interventionist. She is self-directed in this quest, as well as being completely teachable and coachable in the area of reading. She has taken on this responsibility with full enthusiasm and dedication. **An outstanding quality of Ms. Williamson is that she teaches with the whole child in mind; she is serious about academics but does not lose sight of the social and emotional needs of her students.**

Ms. Williamson is also a member of the CARE/SST teams where she presents data, both observational and assessment related. Marsha has become completely familiar with all reading assessments, new and old, which she can administer and interpret in order to monitor progress or lack of progress in all students.

The contribution that Ms. Williamson has made to Grant Elementary as a graduate tutor has been invaluable. The support that she gives the classroom teachers in giving that extra attention to students benefits everyone!

Ms. Williamson has been a joy to work with these past years. It is my great hope that the School Board sees the importance and value of keeping dedicated graduate tutors to support all students who are struggling in reading at the early grades.

Ruth Okubo  
Former Literacy Coach Grant Elementary School Richmond, California

Dear Superintendent Duffy,

I writing to you in support my colleague, Silvia Cuellar. My name is Stacey Kaufman and I am the Resource Specialist Teacher that coordinates the Learning Center at Murphy Elementary. Ms. Cuellar and I have worked closely together since 2015. I was recently informed that her position, as Grad Tutor, could be cut for the 2019- 2020 school year. I am writing this letter to ask you to reconsider this decision.

There are many reasons Ms. Cuellar is an important member of our Learning Center team. Ms. Cuellar works with both Learning Center and IEP students, she is exceptionally dedicated to the forty students that she sees five days per week. She is also an after school tutor. Ms. Cuellar understands how to use assessments and data to drive instruction. She is able to differentiate instruction while working with students in small groups. She is kind, but firm, and genuinely cares about each student, their academic achievement as well as their social and emotional well being. In addition, Mrs. Cuellar is the only bilingual person on staff in the Learning Center. Ms. Cuellar is an essential member of our Learning Center and of the Murphy family. She is an asset to our students, their families, and our school district. Please reconsider funding the Grad Tutor positions for the 2019- 2020 school year.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Stacey M. Kaufman, MA Resource Specialist Teacher  
Murphy Elementary

I've heard as a PVHS student that you are trying to eliminate Ms. Abby and Ms. Brown's Grad Tutor positions from our school. I personally find it irritating because it's hard to find a teacher who makes you feel comfortable and can personally trust and actually learn with them and not feel afraid to ask, and that's how many of us feel with Ms. Abby and Ms. Brown.

Another good reason for you to NOT take them away from us students at PVHS, would be that Ms. Brown helps us a lot in after school tutoring. Having a lot of different subjects like biology, economic, history, and she helps students who doesn't speak English very well with their homework or class work; and the kids from ELD including me are happy with her presence in the class.

Now Ms. Abby, she speaks Spanish which is not so common to the teacher at PVHS, she helps us and takes her time to explain the classes we don't get, like math, history, phycology, etc and even if is not her favorite subject or most known class she still help us and gives the best of her. You don't find that anymore. That's why I beg you not to take their positions out.

  
Student from PVHS

IF SHE LEAVE WHO WILL  
HELP US. YOU DID NOT ASK US  
WHO'S YOUR TEACHER WHY?  
YOU HAVE TO ASK US. OK

you guys take alot of taxes why don't you pay for  
mstent. she is really good teacher.

10th grader at De Anza High

To Whom it May Concern:

It is with pleasure that I write this letter of support for Marsha Williamson. As a classroom teacher at Grant Elementary School I worked closely with Marsha for seven years.

Marsha played an important role as a Graduate Tutor in our Reading Intervention program. She worked with students across grade levels with a primary focus on teaching foundational literacy skills to our youngest and neediest students. She used data analysis of multiple measures to track and monitor progress of the students in her program. She built and maintained close relationships with the most vulnerable students of our school.

She was a member of our CARE team- a team of experts that receives, reviews, and responds to individual student referrals made by teachers. Her contribution was highly valued as she built close relationships with her students and often knew the students' academic history and needs due to her deep commitment to the RtI program and the students it served.

Marsha worked tirelessly to improve the outcome of her students and I highly valued her as a colleague.

Sincerely,  
Tiffany Okubo Chieudjui

WCCUSD Teacher of the Year 2017

To whom it may concern,

I am a substitute teacher currently working at Pinole Valley High School as a long-term substitute. I have a grad tutor who works with me during my first period class (Ms. Carolyn Brown). I was told that grad tutor positions may be eliminated. I just wanted to express my appreciation for the work that Ms. Brown and the other grad tutors do here. They are an integral part of the community and have built strong connections with the students here. The students look forward to working with Ms. Brown. They feel comfortable with her and ask her for help with their work on a daily basis. To eliminate this position would be detrimental to student success, particularly the EL community. Please consider this when making a decision. Thank you.

Kind regards,

Tiffany Ballestrasse

Senores integrantes de la junta escolar  
WCCUSD me dirijo a ustedes por este  
medio para dar mi critica acerca de  
las decisiones de eliminar la ayuda  
de los tutores graduados. Pienso  
que es una mala idea ya que  
estos tutores son muy importantes para  
la sociedad latina ya que nos  
brindan mucho apoyo y recursos  
necesarios que nosotros los inmigrantes  
necesitamos para ser mucho mas  
exitosos

Febrero 7, 2019

“I think it’s a bad idea [cutting the tutors] because they’re very important for the Latino community on my campus. They give a lot of the support and resources to us immigrants that we need to be successful.”

**Student at Helms Middle**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to support the continuation of the grad tutor program at school sites. I have been a teacher at Grant School for over six years, and have seen first hand the benefits of the grad tutor program. For several years, I have been lucky enough to work with Marsha Williamson. Ms. Williamson is an exceptional grad tutor. She is prepared, skilled, and dedicated. Her work with the students is informed by data that she keeps meticulously and eagerly shares with teachers or at CARE meetings. She and I collaborate regularly on how to support the progress of my students in reading. Over a school year she may work with different groups of students. Usually it has been those students who score at the Intervention level on the STAR assessment.

The grad program is the only intervention program at our school that can respond quickly to student need in reading. In order for students to receive services through other programs there is a sometimes a long referral process or students must qualify in some way. The grad tutor program is essential in allowing the teacher and the school to meet the needs of all its students, especially those "at risk" in reading. It provides support to my neediest students at least 4 times a week. Without the grad tutor, it would be extremely challenging to support all the various reading levels in my classroom and our students will not make the progress in reading that they need to be successful as students.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Santos  
Third Grade Transitional Bilingual Education Teacher

December 12, 2018

Dear WCCUSD Board of Education

During my past year and a half at Grant I have seen the enormous effect that our grad tutor Marsha Williamson has had on our students. As part of our CARE team she administered all sorts of assessments to many of our students and at a moment's notice was able to tell us exactly where a student was in terms of the various stages of reading acquisition based on multiple assessments.

She constantly is in contact with classroom teachers to let them know how the students in her groups are progressing and if they are not progressing accordingly, she collaborates with us to see what else we could all be doing to help students improve.

Marsha works with several groups throughout the day. She is an expert in teaching phonemic awareness and high frequency words, something many of our Newcomers and ELD students struggle with. She is always searching for high interest material to meet the needs of particular groups. If there was no grad tutor at Grant, there would be no pull out intervention for kids who aren't reading. **Not only do we need our grad tutor, we need another one just like her to service our upper grade students.** I cannot imagine our school without our grad tutor.

Thank you,

Ana Huidobro, Newcomer Teacher @ Grant Elementary

I am writing this letter of support for our graduate tutors at De Anza High School in Richmond.

It has come to my attention that as a result of impending budget cuts, there is a possibility that graduate tutors will not be coming back to De Anza High School next year. I would like to take a moment to express how important of a role they play here. **These tutors are instrumental to the positive student success of certain, specific populations. When students need help or someone to talk to, graduate tutors are there when a teacher or administrator can't be.** These tutors also provide an extra set of eyes and ears that help make observations and recommendations that ensure safety and student success. They are also here to help support new teachers who are still figuring out the best way to support their students. **Figuratively speaking, they are the glue that keep students from "falling between the cracks".** Especially with the high turnover rate among teachers here at De Anza, graduate tutors seem to be the one consistent staff member students can rely on year after year. In short, eliminating graduate tutors would be devastating the the overall culture of our school.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Ted Schwab  
Teacher  
De Anza High School

December 12, 2018

Dear School Board Members,

I am a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher at Grant Elementary. I am writing this letter on behalf of our grad tutor, Marsha Williamson. I am very concerned about the fact that grad tutors are on the chopping block for next year. **We have a real need for grad tutors due to our large population of ELs.** Many of our students here at Grant are 1 to 2 grades below their grade levels. The grade tutors are vital to helping these students with trying to gain some growth in their learning. It is impossible for us teachers to be able to accomplish this on our own. We need as much support for our students as we can possibly get.

Every school year I seem to get more and more students who are not at grade level. Many are coming into my second grad class at kindergarten level or barely 1<sup>st</sup> grade level. Unfortunately, it seems to get worse every year. More than half of my class this year are below grade level. Out of those, half are at kindergarten level. Without our grad tutor's help, it would be so much more difficult to try to help these students feel some sense of growth in their academics. Please do not cut grad tutors from the budgets. Thank you!

Mrs. Wagner

December 12, 2018

Esteemed members of the Board;

Grad Tutors have been a vital part of the success of my students. Each year the range of student abilities and needs seems to expand. I do my best to differentiate but in the younger grades even our advanced groups struggle to work independently. With growing numbers of critically behind students; truant students, newcomers, and those simply without access to appropriate early childhood play and learning, we have to choose whose needs are met and whose aren't. When Grad Tutors are involved, you eliminate the "aren'ts."

Grad Tutors are like second teachers; second sets of eyes, second sets of hands that can keep a group on task and motivated. They take on the role of small group teacher and communicate to the teacher insights that aren't obvious in whole group. They perform progress monitoring and stay on top of data and ever changing new goals; exiting and taking on different students as they go.

As we go into a future with disbanded NSH classes and TBE classes, the need for small group work is heightened. Some students can't work with the noise of a class whose members include those who need to make noise. Being pulled out to a quieter space is a wonderful opportunity we shouldn't deny our academically neediest students.

Classes, groups of students, and many, many individual students will suffer if this program ends. We need Grad Tutors.

We don't need the closets full of curricular materials that publishing company's pad out to make more dollars. In fact, if we're teaching to the standards, we don't need huge adoptions. I realize this might not be the popular belief, but I don't know any early childhood teacher who wants whole class sets of readers that can't be read and boring workbooks to teach exciting hands on topics like science or social studies. Keep that money. Use it where we need it - for those who can engage, inspire and connect with our students.

Thank you for your time.

(Former Grant Elementary primary grade teacher who wishes to remain anonymous. She worked closely with Marsha Williamson for seven years.)

I am in 12 grade

at De Anza High School. I came to

the US in two and half years. I am from

Qatar, I'm in ELD2 and ms. Tort was helped us in

ELD1 and ELD2 and she halping us For ever thing

and she do the best for her job. If she

Leave No one will help us.

**12th grader at De Anza High**

Señores de la WCCUSD en mi opinion el Programa de tutores bilingues debe continuar tanto en salones como despues de escuela. Hay una enorme cantidad de estudiantes que como yo necesitamos el apoyo de los tutores. Sin su ayuda crecer academicamente tomaria mucho mas tiempo, la verdad es que recién he llegado a U.S.A y el no saber ingles hace mas dificil aprender, y si me quedo puedo aprender mas, ya que en casa no hago nada.

“In my opinion the tutor program must continue in the classroom as well as after school. There is an enormous amount of students that like me, need the support of a tutor. Without their help, growing academically would take lot more time. The truth is I recently arrived to the U.S. and not knowing English makes learning more difficult.”

**Student at Helms Middle**

February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019

WCCUSD School Board

Dear School Board members,

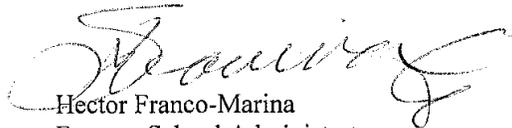
I am writing this letter of support on behalf of Mr. Wilson Ordonez, the Bilingual Tutor at Helms Middle School, after learning that the needed positions of School Tutors and Bilingual Tutors are being terminated.

Mr. Ordonez has worked for more than six years at Helms Middle School supporting English Learner students who do not speak the language. As a former SIOP District Coach, I visited the after school program that he established at Helms to support non-English speaker students. I was delighted to see students helping and learning from each other. Later as a math and algebra teacher at this school, I worked with him for three years in a daily basis in classes where new language learner students were enrolled. During this time, I witness how dedicated he was in the learning of all students not only those in his care.

In his after school program for English Learners, Mr. Ordonez reviews not only the daily concepts from all subjects but also makes sure that students complete their homework. Further, he encourages students to read, at their current English or Spanish level, a book from the school library each week. After their reading students are encouraged to take an online test before passing onto the next book. Also, Mr. Ordonez uses simple English grammar lessons to improve students' English. In addition, Mr. Ordonez maintains daily contact with parents on the academic progress and behavior of their child. Finally, everyone knows that he is the first to arrive to school and one of the last persons to leave.

I truly encourage you to visit Mr. Wilson Ordonez after school support class for ELD 1 and ELD 2 students, so that, you can witness the safe environment for learning that he has created over the years at Helms. I hope that you see how important it is to have for those students who do not speak the language someone as dedicated as Mr. Wilson Ordonez.

Sincerely yours,



Hector Franco-Marina  
Former: School Administrator  
District Coach  
Mathematics Teacher  
Adult School Teacher

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of keeping graduate tutors at Pinole Middle School. My name is Tai Tran and I am a Math and Science teacher for 7th grade students at Pinole Middle School. Ms. Deya is the graduate tutor for my 2nd period Math class and I cannot stress enough the impact of her positive influence and academic help in my classroom. Like many teachers, I have a challenging classroom of diverse learners but unlike other teachers I have the help of Ms. Deya who has been instrumental in making sure all students in my classroom achieve academic success. Her experience, classroom management skills, professionalism, and communication with me as the lead teacher has benefited the entire classroom. Her presence in my 2nd period Math class has significantly contributed to the success of my students and I can only wish to have her in my 1st period Math class as well. Her contributions in challenging students' academic learning on top of making sure they are on-task and focused are why I truly believe my 2nd period class is my best class.

To no longer have her in my classroom would be to the disadvantage of my students and all students and teachers that she has served. I implore the district and all others associated to reconsider taking Ms. Deya's position away because of the positive impact she has proven to the classroom environment and to our students. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns as I would be happy to answer them about how Ms. Deya has benefited the academic lives of my students.

Sincerely,  
Mx. Tran (*Pronounced Mix Tran*)  
My pronouns are She, Her, Hers  
7th Grade Math and Science Teacher

**Email:** [tai.tran@wccusd.net](mailto:tai.tran@wccusd.net)

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Jamie Forrest and I am a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Dover Elementary School. I am writing in regards to the news of the proposed elimination of Grad Tutors for the 2019-2020 school year. My hope is that in interest of students and teachers alike that the Grad Tutors not be eliminated for the following school year.

The Grad Tutors always have been, and continue to be, one of the most valuable resources for student success at Dover School. As a newer teacher with a full load of 32 students it can be challenging to deal with all of the demands of teaching, managing behavior, and pulling small groups. The Grad Tutors have been essential to student success in this way. They push in when needed, they pull small groups to get students reading at grade level, and they offer school-wide support. These are only some of the ways they help our school.

My fourth grade team has had the honor to work with Mr. Ingraham as the assigned Grad Tutor to our grade level. Mr. Ingraham is professional, hard working, holds high expectations for students, is well planned, and is an asset to our school community. Mr. Ingraham has been pulling 2 groups of students for small reading groups for each of the classes in the fourth grade. Most of the students in his group are much closer to grade level than prior to working with him. Some even hit grade level reading scores in the short time they worked with him. It would be a shame not to have Mr. Ingraham and the other Grad Tutors at our school not be asked back due to funding. Students would be the primary group to suffer.

It is essential that all the Grad Tutors be able to continue their work here at Dover Elementary and across the district. They are all doing great work to ensure student success. Please consider this letter as a plea to continue to put student education and success first. If you have any other questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at 1 (510) 695-1545.

In Partnership,

Jamie Forrest

December 14, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a 4th grade general education teacher at Dover Elementary. I was recently given the news that our grad tutors may be eliminated from our school. I wanted to write a letter to express my concern regarding that issue.

In my four years as a teacher at Dover, I have seen so many areas of need that we need assistance with in order to succeed. Over 90% of our student population at Dover consists of English Learners, and we are striving everyday to reclassify our students and bring their reading skills to grade level. One of the many important duties that our grad tutors is responsible for is the pullout of specific groups of students with similar reading needs to help them reach grade level reading. My students' learning needs vary drastically and differentiated instruction is necessary in order for their success. Through these pull-outs, my students are able to receive the small group instruction they need. It also helps the rest of my students by allowing me to focus on a smaller population and provide more attention to them and their needs as well.

The grad tutors also assist with my IEP students by providing them with additional support inside the classroom. I have five students with IEPs this year, and all of them have the accommodation to have text read out loud to them. That can be very overwhelming and overbearing to me when I have to read their quizzes, tests, projects, worksheets, and homework out loud to them while also monitoring my other 28 students. There is simply not enough support that is being provided to our students. Our grad tutors relieve the mountain of stress and responsibilities off our shoulders by providing this much needed extra support.

I hope you will think over the consequences that we will be facing if our grad tutors are taken away, and take the time to reconsider. Thank you very much for reading my letter and listening to my concerns; your time and hard work is greatly appreciated.

Best,

Mrs. Jennifer Lee  
[jennifer.lee@wccusd.net](mailto:jennifer.lee@wccusd.net)

December 20th, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

I'd like to introduce myself- my name is Andrea Myovich, and I am a fourth grade general education teacher at Dover Elementary. Recently I was given the news, that due to proposed changes in the budget for the 2019-2020 school year, there is the possibility that graduate tutors will be eliminated. I was extremely disheartened to hear this news due to the impact that graduate tutors have on our students, and their academic success.

At Dover Elementary our student body consists of a high population of English Language Learners (93% of the student population). As a school, one of our SMART goals is focused on improving student's STAR literacy scores in English, and thus helping them reclassify as English Proficient. I have worked at Dover for three years now, and as an upper elementary teacher my class roster has fluctuated from a "low" of 28 students to as high as 33 students. With 28-33 fourth graders in the classroom at once, it is almost impossible to provide them the one on one support that they need daily. However, graduate tutors have served as an invaluable resource that has helped provide support around this issue. Both my students and I have benefitted from working with graduate tutors (such as with Mr.Ingraham) who pull a small group of 3-4 of my students for a little less than an hour to practice reading fluency skills, and help build their confidence with what they're reading.

Again, in my experience, I have witnessed the students that work with our graduate tutors come back to class more confident, and engaged in their learning. I believe this stems from the students being given the small group support that they need to truly know where they stand, and how to succeed moving forward. In addition, our graduate tutors at Dover go above and beyond to build relationships with students: ie. holding them accountable for attending each session on time, being engaged in the material, and rewarding their efforts. Each time I sit down for a meeting with a graduate tutor at my school site- to discuss student progress- it is apparent how well they know my student, and what they need to reach their academic and social goals. These dedicated professionals deserve the right to continue providing a much needed service at our school site.

I truly hope you will reconsider the decision to eliminate graduate tutors for the 2019-2020 school year due to their undeniable significance. I appreciate you taking the time to read my letter, and please feel free to reach out if you have any follow-up questions.

Thank you again for listening to my concerns,

Ms. Andrea Myovich  
andrea.myovich@wccusd.net

To whom it may concern,

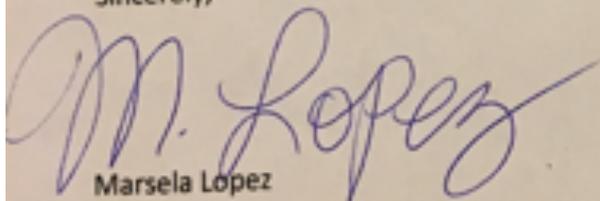
I'm writing this letter in support of our grad tutor to return and continue her work she has done with our students.

I have worked at Tara Hills for two years and Ms. Maria has a dedicated passion for working with our students. She has contributed immensely to our after-school program by developing curriculum and providing extra support for our students.

Ms. Maria is wonderful in creating great relationships with all the students she works with and my students look forward to their time with her. She goes above and beyond working with different grades. Ms. Maria always looks for feedback and is dedicated in improving in any way she can. Loosing a grad tutor like her would be a loss for not only the after-school program but for the whole school.

I hope she can continue her work and to see her students grow and continue to develop the skills she has taught them.

Sincerely,



Marsela Lopez

Tara Hills ELP Site Director

510-435-5120

mlopez@ymcaeastbay.org

To the members of the WCCUSD School Board:

I am writing to you regarding the board's recent decision to eliminate funding for grad tutor positions.

Since I first started teaching in 2015, the grad tutors here at Helms middle school have been an integral part of the school's culture and community. When I first started at Helms and faced the many challenges that are familiar to all new educators, the several grad tutors that I had the privilege of working alongside provided me with the support and stability I needed to finish and grow in my practice. I gained an immediate appreciation for their inclusion in our community. Since then, however, I've come to rely even more on their continued assistance.

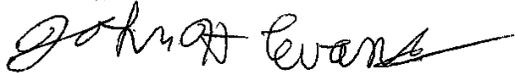
As I've grown as an educator, I've also found the proper ways to utilize their strengths; grad tutor support is now not only a part of my classroom culture, but one that has been integral in shaping the learning experiences of my students. As an ELD teacher, I work with a population that faces its own set of difficulties, as do the many other teachers that work directly with our English Learner population of over 300 students. Grad tutor support has been essential in ensuring that these students get the kind of attention they deserve.

Grad tutors have the ability connect with these students on a different level, and this connection has been a driving force for student growth. Furthermore, grad tutors are not only a part of our school's program, but a major part of the culture itself. Their dedication and effort send a message to students that here, they will get what they need to be successful.

Grad tutors go above and beyond their job descriptions; their versatility and creativity have opened the door to a host of opportunities, from Mr. Ordonez's after school tutoring program for English Learners to Mr. Jann's work with tracking English Learner progress towards reclassification. They are truly a powerful corps of leaders, and a tightly-knit part of the community.

Before making the final decision to eliminate them, I strongly urge you to consider all that will be lost in doing so. Please reconsider your decision to take this benefit away from future generations of learners.

Sincerely,



John Henry Evans

Señores integrantes WCCUSD

Yo como estudiante de la escuela Helm Middle School no estoy de acuerdo que eliminen a los tutores graduados.

Porque el Sr. Ordonez me ayuda bastante a mi. Porque yo vine de otro país y no se hablar el inglés y como el habla los dos idiomas el me ayuda con mis deberes que hay que hacer en la escuela, porque si eliminaran a los tutores graduados no tendría quien me ayudara.

"I have from another country and don't know how to speak English, and because he [our Graduate Tutor] speaks both languages, he helps me with my school work. If you eliminate the tutors, I would have no one to help me."

**Student at Helms Middle**

Ms tent help me alot. Because of her today many students are speaking English and learning more thing. She help in my Math homework. The citizen don't now when they come to high school. they don't understand. so always ms tent help them. it's so bad if she go. Because in the school there is so many student will lost. right now Because of her many student are going on good way.

**10th grader at De Anza High**



**Jacquelyn Meinen, M.S., NCSP**  
West Contra Costa Unified School District  
Helms Middle School  
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February 6, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

As the school psychologist of Helms Middle School, I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Wilson Ordoñez. Mr. Ordoñez has been an immense support to our students and families for over 6 years. He goes above and beyond in his role as a Bilingual Graduate Tutor. In addition to supporting our Spanish-speaking 8<sup>th</sup> graders in their classes, Mr. Ordoñez tutors over 30 students daily in his after-school program. He assists them with their assignments and maintains consistent communication with their families via email and phone calls. Mr. Ordoñez has also attended educational field trips with students as well as intervention nights for those in need of extra help.

Mr. Ordoñez always demonstrates the utmost respect when working with Helms families and staff members. His professionalism and compassion for students is unparalleled, and I cannot imagine what some of our students and parents would do without him. His services are crucial to Helms given our population of Spanish-speaking newcomers, and Mr. Ordoñez has proven himself instrumental to their success.

For additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J Meinen".

Jacquelyn Meinen  
Bilingual School Psychologist

December 12, 2018

Dear WCCUSD School Board,

I have 10 students that meet with Ms. Williamson every day for more support with decoding, phonics and literacy skills. These are students who are very far below grade level. We are supporting them with intense early intervention so that they can have the extra push they need to catch up to their classmates and grade level to further their education in their future years. These students do not have much support at home due to language barriers or working families. The support they receive from Ms. Williamson is the only time they can dive deep into understanding how English works and hone their skills to catch up with their peers while working with students struggling with similar challenges. They get intensive and individualized material so they can feel successful in the classroom when participating with their peers that are approaching or at grade level. Without this time with Mrs. Williamson these students will not meet our district's goal of grade level proficiency in reading and will only fall further and further behind. Students learn to read at different speeds, just like babies learn to walk at different times. It is our job to support these struggling students and prepare them to be college and career ready. This will not happen without intervention at our school.

**Primary Grade Teacher at Grant Elementary**  
*(Wished to remain anonymous)*

As a Bilingual Aide, I have been working along with Maria with new comers, English language learners and far below basic grade level students where I can see her giving them special individual attention that the teaching classroom cannot do. I have seen that these children have advanced tremendously with her professional help.

Also Maria has helped students in their basic math like addition/subtraction and multiplication facts when students cannot keep up with their regular class and they are several grade levels behind.

I also know as Bilingual Aide that this kind of extra support is truly needed at the elementary grade level. Maria has shown great dedication, patience and discipline when needed to help our students to reach their grade level and to achieve their academic goals.

**Alicia Edna MacLean**  
**Bilingual Aide**  
**Tara Hills Elementary**

**This report was prepared by Teamsters 856.  
The WCCUSD community of graduate tutors, parents, students, teachers, and classified staff provided  
invaluable contributions to the report's content.**

**Cover art by Yulia Issa, Teamsters 117.**