



**METROPOLITAN LEARNING CENTER (MLC)
PARENT TEACHER STUDENT ASSOCIATION (PTSA)**

2033 NW GLISAN ST, PORTLAND, OR 97209

www.MLCPTSA.ORG

February 12, 2026

RE: MLC PTSA Response to Proposed Closure of our High School

Dear Superintendent Dr. Armstrong, Chief of Schools Dr. Carona, and Members of the Portland Public School Board of Education,

On behalf of the MLC PTSA, we are writing in response to the recent announcement that PPS intends to close the MLC high school at the end of this academic year.

Our community is grieving. But we are also galvanizing, and we hope our collective voices will lead to deeper understanding, meaningful engagement, and a reconsideration of what is at stake.

Students who found refuge and belonging at MLC are now facing the loss of the educational environment that allowed them to reengage with school. Families who chose MLC precisely because it offered an alternative to large comprehensive high schools feel blindsided. Staff who have dedicated their careers to relationship-based, student-centered learning are confronting both professional and personal loss.

We recognize that decisions related to enrollment, funding, and program sustainability are complex and difficult. We also recognize the broader fiscal realities facing PPS and the chronic underfunding of public education at the state level. We stand alongside district leaders in advocating that Salem fully fund education.

At the same time, this alarming development, and the manner and timing of the announcement, have created profound distress across our school community. Families, students, and staff learned of this decision without the benefit of a transparent public process. There were no community forums, impact discussions, or opportunities for stakeholder input prior to the determination being made. This absence of engagement has significantly eroded trust, not only in this decision but in the district's commitment to collaborative governance.

MLC's high school, while small, serves a uniquely important role within PPS. It provides an alternative pathway for students who have not thrived in traditional comprehensive settings, including students seeking smaller learning environments, stronger relational support, and flexible academic models that keep them on track toward graduation. For many, MLC is not simply another school option. It is the place where they found belonging, safety, and hope.

MLC's impact is profound. Many of our students are queer, trans, neurodivergent, disabled, historically marginalized, bullied, or otherwise underserved in traditional systems. Our school provides a community where young people are known, valued, and supported as whole humans.

Our high school students also play a vital role in shaping the fabric of MLC. They serve as mentors, classroom assistants, and community leaders, modeling our character traits of integrity, respect, self-discipline, compassion, and courage. Their presence strengthens cross-grade relationships and helps sustain the deeply relational culture that defines our school.

We want to explicitly lift up the leadership of our students in this moment. We have witnessed powerful student voices emerge in response to this news. Our high school students are organizing, speaking publicly, and advocating for the

preservation of a program that has changed, and in some cases saved, their educational trajectories. We were inspired by the powerful student and staff presence at tonight's School Board committee meeting. Testimony shared during the public comment period reflected both the life-changing impact of MLC's high school program and the deep concern surrounding its proposed closure.

We are dismayed that this decision comes at a time when MLC was actively working to address enrollment challenges. This year, we welcomed a new principal who arrived with a clear commitment to strengthening our school community and growing enrollment. The PTSA has been partnering with her in this work and we were heartened to see signs of momentum: a growing freshman class, a waitlist for incoming students, and recent transfers into both our middle and high school classes. Recruitment efforts for our K-5 program are actively underway. The more families who understand that MLC exists and understand who we serve, the more our school can thrive. This closure announcement has introduced uncertainty at the very moment we were making meaningful strides forward.

We deeply respect the vital role that neighborhood schools play in our district. They are the backbone of public education. At the same time, alternative models like MLC serve an equally important purpose. A healthy public school system must include diverse pathways that meet the needs of students who do not thrive in traditional environments.

Given the magnitude of this decision and its ripple effects, including the displacement of vulnerable students, the loss of beloved staff, and the loss of the many ways our high school students enrich and support the broader MLC community, we urge you to reconsider the closure of MLC's high school. Instead, invest in strengthening and sustaining alternative models of education within PPS. We acknowledge the Superintendent's commitment to hosting a listening session at MLC on February 18 and agree that creating space for families and students to share their experiences is an important step. That said, authentic engagement must be paired with meaningful openness to impact.

If reconsideration is truly not on the table, we call for a transparent and responsive process that includes community engagement and public testimony; clear articulation of the criteria and evaluation process used to determine the closure, including how student outcomes, school climate, and alternative education needs were weighed alongside enrollment and budget factors; and thoughtful transition planning that centers student wellbeing.

MLC has been an essential educational space since 1968. Public education must make room for students who do not fit conventional molds. Decisions of this consequence warrant a process that is as thoughtful and inclusive as the students and educators it affects.

We ask you to stand with our students, honor their advocacy, and take the time necessary to ensure that any decision reflects both fiscal responsibility and educational justice.

We ask you not only to allow our high school to exist, but to meaningfully invest in its ability to grow and thrive. Our students, and the future students who need MLC, deserve nothing less.

In solidarity with our community,

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