



February 8, 2013

**To: Blanca G. Cavazos, Chief Instructional Officer, Kern County Superintendent of Schools  
Christine Lizardi Frazier, Kern County Superintendent of Schools**

**From: Lynda Resnick and Noemi Donoso**

**Re: Paramount Bard Academy Next Steps**

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Paramount Bard Academy's ("PBA" or the "Charter School") founding leadership sought to develop a first-rate educational program. The founding leadership believed that Bard College ("Bard") could provide certain services and support to help PBA execute this vision of academic excellence.

To its credit, Bard was largely responsible for drafting much of the educational philosophy set forth in the Charter, which is utilized successfully at PBA today. However, it has become clear that Bard is unable to provide the services and support originally contemplated in the Charter. This issue must be rectified so that PBA can focus its attention solely on increasing student academic achievement at the Charter School. It has become clear that in order for PBA to be successful and ensure students reach their full academic potential the Charter School should end its relationship with Bard as soon as possible and assume responsibility for the services that were supposed to be provided by Bard.

### **How Will Bard's Removal Impact PBA?**

#### **A. Removing Bard Will Not Significantly Impact PBA's Operations**

The removal of Bard would not negatively or significantly impact the day-to-day operations of PBA or the delivery of student services; indeed, the Charter School believes the removal of Bard will result in positive gains in student academic achievement and Charter School operations. The PBA Charter lists Bard as an "Instrumental Partner," intended to provide support to PBA's educational programs and mission. The Charter states that Bard will provide four types of services, which are either not material to the Charter School's educational program, mission or vision, or which have been assumed directly by PBA. PBA affirms that the educational program described in the charter petition remains intact; only the methods of providing the support and services have changed. According to the PBA Charter, the following four services were to be delivered through Bard's Master of Arts in Teaching ("MAT") program:

310.966.5700  
Fax: 310.914.4747  
11444 West Olympic Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90064

1. *Partnering with PBA teachers in curriculum development, instructional design, classroom research, and the assessment of student work for purposes of improving student achievement.*
  - a. PBA's current leadership team has directly taken on the roles of curriculum development, instructional design, classroom research, and assessment of student work and standardized test scores, utilizing a team of qualified experts with a broad range of experience, including: Noemi Donoso (see attached biography); Jill Hamilton Bunch, a noted English language development professor; Louis Mangione, an expert in differentiated instruction; and other County professionals. Additionally, research-proven data structures have been established at PBA, such as quarterly schoolwide benchmarks, monthly data teams, monthly classroom walkthroughs and improved teacher accountability systems.
2. *MAT faculty members are responsible for developing and teaching college courses for PBA students to earn Bard College credits.*
  - a. PBA students currently earn college credits through Bakersfield College, with Bakersfield College professors coming to the PBA campus to teach PBA students.
3. *MAT faculty members provide professional development opportunities to PBA teachers, such as helping teachers satisfy National Board Certification in their first years of teaching.*
  - a. The PBA leadership team is providing a variety of professional development opportunities, addressing specific student needs with academic coaches, workshops, seminars, expert presenters and weekly sessions devoted specifically to teacher development. Third party consultants have also been hired to improve teacher effectiveness in differentiated instruction, math fluency, and meeting the needs of our English learners.
  - b. Due to budget cuts, the Charter School has been unable to provide teachers with the additional support it hoped to make available for National Board Certification.
4. *MAT graduate students serve as teaching assistants in PBA classrooms throughout the school year.*
  - a. The MAT graduate students serving as teaching assistants have not yielded the benefits initially envisioned by PBA. In an effort to support the educational program of the Charter School, PBA has hired three academic coaches with significant experience in the subjects of literacy, math and science. All three coaches spend considerable amounts of time in PBA classrooms working directly with teachers. Additional staff have been hired to support PBA students in a comprehensive math intervention program.

Bard has fallen short of meeting each of these four primary forms of support in varying degrees, and PBA has filled the void. In the areas aimed at directly benefiting or supporting PBA

students and teachers, PBA has stepped in to provide resources where Bard fell short, including curriculum development, assessment of student achievement, college credit offerings (which are now offered through Bakersfield College), and PBA teacher development. Discontinuing Bard's MAT program will not negatively impact PBA or its core, material responsibilities under the Charter. Any services or support provided by the MAT program have been or will be assumed by or through PBA and, where necessary, another third party.

**B. Removing Bard Will Not Impact Charter School Governance**

In the Charter, Bard is included as a member of the founding group, along with the Resnick Foundation and Paramount Farming. The remaining founding members could absorb the duties of the founding group, which are diminishing and evolving into school administrative duties, as the Charter School is now in its fourth year of operation. While Bard currently holds a seat on the PBA Board of Directors, the Charter gives the Resnick Foundation authority to remove and replace any member of the Board. The removal of the Bard PBA Board member is imminent. The Board will be able to carry out its duties without Bard.

**C. Removing Bard Will Not Change PBA's Core Mandate Under The Charter**

PBA's Educational Philosophy and Key Principles for Learning will remain intact. Removal of Bard from PBA does not change PBA's core mission, vision or educational program, but rather this action will take away an ineffective member of PBA and allow the Charter School's leadership to better meet student needs.

**If Bard Were To Be Removed, What Would Be The Impact To The Charter And The MOU?**

**A. Charter**

As described above, Bard was tasked as a vehicle to deliver support services surrounding student achievement and teacher success. If Bard were removed, the Charter School's educational program and goals would remain the same, but all responsibility for delivering the support to achieve these goals and monitoring these goals would be assumed by PBA, a third party contractor, or the Board. No material revision of the charter would be needed.

It is PBA's goal to change its name to Paramount Academy, effective July 1, 2013. This would require notification to the California Department of Education, and addressing the business aspect of a name change, including, but not limited to, internal documents, marketing materials, etc. Updated language demonstrating Bard's removal from the Charter School would be reflected in the charter renewal petition, submitted to the County Board in the fall of 2013.

**B. MOU**

None. The MOU is silent as to Bard.

**Noemi Donoso, Ph.D.**  
**Senior Vice President, Education Initiatives**  
**Roll Global**

Dr. Noemi Donoso leads local and national education initiatives for Roll Global LLC, a Los Angeles-based company that has invested millions of dollars to dramatically improve educational outcomes for students in the Central Valley, California and across the country. Dr. Donoso brings two decades of proven experience as a senior school administrator, principal, teacher, and teacher coach to her work as Senior Vice President of Education Initiatives for Roll Global.

Dr. Donoso has spent her career focused on creating life-changing opportunities for all youth by guaranteeing college and career readiness. Her accomplishments include achieving unprecedented gains for urban students across the United States, designing and executing systems to ensure academic rigor, turning around low-performing schools, creating college-going systems for all, recruiting and developing top talent, and promoting high-stakes accountability in highly complex districts such as Chicago and Denver Public Schools.

In her current post, Dr. Donoso is leading Roll's many educational initiatives in California's Central Valley, including the Paramount Summer Youth Academy serving K-9 students in multiple schools and districts, the Paramount Bard Academy which is an early college 6-12 charter school, and the launching of career technical partnerships between local high schools and community colleges that will ensure students graduate from high school with an AA degree, real-world work experience and technical expertise. She is also working with the Aspen Institute on a national campaign to educate parents on the potential of Common Core State Standards to dramatically improve the academic performance of K-12 students.

Prior to coming to Roll, Dr. Donoso served as Chief Education Officer for Chicago Public Schools under Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Dr. Donoso helped implement a longer school day and school year, district-wide Common Core training, and a comprehensive teacher and principal evaluation system. In her post, she oversaw 19 regional offices that supervised 380,000 students at more than 500 schools. She also had jurisdiction over all of the city's central education departments, including K-12 professional learning, college and career pathways, special education, early childhood education, leadership development, and research and accountability programs.

Dr. Donoso previously served as the Chief of Innovation and Reform for Denver Public Schools. She co-led the District Charter Compact to equalize access, funding and accountability for all schools. She also implemented new systems to improve local charter school performance and triple the number of district-run innovation schools that benefit from charter-like autonomies. Under Dr. Donoso's leadership, charter schools and district-run innovation schools represented the top quartile of all student achievement gains in the district.

Dr. Donoso had a distinguished career as school educator. She was the Chief Academic Officer and a founding principal for Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, one of the highest performing charter networks in Los Angeles. She also served as a high school English teacher for eight years in South Central Los Angeles and a turnaround principal of K-8 public schools in Los Angeles and in East Harlem, New York. Approximately 70 percent of her students became the first in their families to attend four-year universities.

Dr. Donoso earned a Ph.D. in Education Policy and Planning from the University of Southern California, a master's degree in public policy from Rutgers University and her undergraduate degree from Mount St. Mary's College.