

## SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER (MAY 2017)

### [AUSD In The News](#)

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[Project Begins To Restore Historic Alameda High](#)

[CDE Announces Two AUSD Schools as Gold Ribbon Schools](#)

[Alameda High Students Create "Goodness" in March](#)

[Foundation's Salute to Education Celebrates Schools' Innovative Programs](#)

[Alameda's Lum Elementary Found at Risk in Quake](#)

[AUSD Announces Next Steps in Lum Seismic Analysis](#)

Dear community partners and stakeholders,

One of my favorite tasks as a superintendent is reporting good news — such as school awards, innovative teaching practices, student successes, and measures of community support that astound and enrich us year after year. We have had many reports of good news in the past year and in the years before that, and let us always remain mindful of and grateful for our wonderful schools.

However, an equally important part of my job also has to be leading our school communities through difficult times, including those times involving uncertainty, anger, fear, and grief. Last week was one of those times when I had to share news none of us wanted.

Many have now heard that engineers have recommended that we no longer house children at Lum Elementary School. This is due to a troubling combination of soil that is at high risk of liquefaction and foundations not adequately built to withstand that liquefaction. Engineers have warned us that the situation at Lum Elementary could be unsafe in the event of a 100-year (6.8 on the Richter scale) earthquake. And many of us also know that some experts say the Bay Area is now overdue for a major seismic event long predicted along one of the several different faults that run through the area.

You can learn more about the technical issues involved at Lum on [our website](#). Today I want to emphasize my — and my staff's — commitment to keeping students and employees safe, to giving you as much information as possible about the situation, and to engaging the community as we move toward seeking out solutions. I know that all our families and staff have strong connections to their school sites and school communities. I know that this news is devastating to many in the Lum community and many others who are impacted also. I know we need to have a series of conversations about what ultimately will be decided by the Board of Education as the best solution for Lum students, Lum staff, Lum families, AUSD, and the Alameda community at large.

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- Upcoming Events**
- May 1-5**  
National Teacher Appreciation Week
- May 6**  
ASPED Families Resource Fair
- May 6**  
Lego Robotics Tournament
- May 9**  
Board of Education Meeting
- May 13**  
Bike Festival & Rodeo
- May 17**  
Lincoln Middle School Grand Finale Concert
- May 19-21**  
EHS Spring Play "Sylvia"
- May 20**  
Encinal Extravaganza of Bands

Some members of the Lum community have formed their own committee to represent their concerns and advocate for keeping Lum open. I have thanked them for doing so, and I appreciate their efforts to work together on behalf of their school and families. Please know we aim to listen closely to the committee members with open minds and with respect. I hope all of us will also listen to AUSD staff and engineering experts with open minds and respect. All of us have a part to play to make sense of this difficult news.

We need to respect the need for inquiry to understand what we must discuss going forward, and we need to respect this process that ultimately impacts us all. I am convinced that this community can navigate this issue to move forward. But I also know firsthand from past experiences in similar situations that we can only do that if we all work together, listen to one another, and advocate for a way forward that is deliberate and thoughtful. I respect those who are asking us to slow down and talk about this, and I also know that the Board of Education and AUSD staff do as well. Meanwhile, in my role as superintendent, I am mindful that we must focus on protecting the physical safety of students and staff throughout, and our recommendations to the Board going forward must be always based on that legal, moral, and professional responsibility.

Please know we look forward to continued conversations so we can access the great strength of the Alameda community as we chart a way forward. We welcome input from community members and staff as we look forward to Board of Education meetings ahead. Thanks to all who are working to support one another throughout.

Sincerely,

Sean McPhetridge, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools