District Letter to Parents About Pandemic Pods

Template Letter for Districts to Customize

Dear [DISTRICT NAME] families,

All of us recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has created uniquely challenging circumstances in public school education. As [DISTRICT NAME] starts the fall semester in a fully virtual instructional model, we acknowledge the significant burden placed on families to simultaneously manage childcare, schooling, and work.

On the surface, **pandemic pods**—also referred to as learning pods, educational pods, or microschools—seem like a promising way to alleviate this burden, mitigate students' learning loss, and create connection and community. While we appreciate parent resourcefulness in creating pandemic pods, we do want to outline some associated **health, safety, and equity concerns**.

Our top priority is the health and safety of all students and families. According to CDC guidelines, we should limit in-person interactions, maintain social distance, and wear masks. Pandemic pods, with regular close-contact interactions among different families, could contribute to COVID-19 community spread and potentially delay the safe reopening of school.

Further, we are concerned that pandemic pods will exacerbate socioeconomic segregation and deepen academic achievement gaps in our community and across the country. Not every child has equal access to a pandemic pod. We ask that you take equity into consideration if you decide to form a pandemic pod.

At [DISTRICT NAME], our goal is to create welcoming and inclusive learning environments. As such, we have spent considerable time and effort at each school to intentionally build classrooms that meet every child's academic and social-emotional needs. **Therefore, schools will not grant requests to place students in classes and with teachers based on pandemic pods.**

Thank you in advance for your understanding. We look forward to partnering with you to ensure all students have a successful 2020-2021 school year.

Sincerely,

[School and/or district administrator]

Sources: Oakland Unified School District, "Learning Pods and Class Placements"; Calarco, Jessica, "Preventing Pod-Based Opportunity Hoarding", *Indiana University*; Poudre School District, "2020-21 School Year FAQs"; EAB interviews and analysis.