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News Release

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LAUSD OFFICIALS KICK OFF INNOVATIVE CAMPAIGN TO FIGHT DROPOUT PROBLEM

“My Future, My Decision” Campaign Will Utilize Cutting-Edge, Peer-to-Peer Communications and Door-to-Door Visits to Connect with At-Risk and Dropped Out Students

Los Angeles --- Today, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board President Mónica García, Board Member Richard Vladovic and Superintendent David L. Brewer III joined former dropouts to kick off “My Future, My Decision” – an innovative new campaign to reach at-risk and dropped out students about LAUSD’s resources to help them earn a high school diploma.

Developed by LAUSD’s Dropout Prevention and Recovery program, “My Future, My Decision” takes an integrated and comprehensive approach to meeting the critical challenge of reducing the dropout rate. The ongoing campaign extends LAUSD’s current outreach efforts through cutting-edge, student-friendly communications channels – including radio promotions, text messaging and peer-to-peer outreach through social networking Web sites – that truly resonate with students.

Following a press conference at David Starr Jordan High School, LAUSD officials joined 50 recovered dropout students to congratulate them on their re-entry into high school.

“We have a drop-out crisis in LAUSD, and we must act boldly and aggressively to offer our students every opportunity to succeed,” said Board President García. “The launch of ‘My Future, My Decision’ is an important next step towards reaching a 100% graduation rate.”

“The ‘My Future, My Decision’ campaign underscores our deep commitment to reducing LAUSD’s dropout numbers every year, including a 5 percent reduction this current school year,” said David L. Brewer III, LAUSD Superintendent. “We are working aggressively to reduce our dropout rate through better data, new dropout prevention counselors and expanded alternative education programs. By tapping into students’ peer network and enlisting widespread community support we are redoubling our efforts to ensure that every student graduates college-prepared and career-ready.”

“My Future, My Decision” is based on research that found a strong sense of personal accountability and self-empowerment among targeted students. The new campaign will unify the efforts of the Dropout Prevention and Recovery program into a single, targeted outreach program that addresses the needs of potential dropouts and their families, and widely promotes

(more)

LAUSD's resources and alternative education programs. "My Future, My Decision" embraces the non-traditional media channels that students utilize most for information, including:

- A campaign-specific Web site, www.MyFutureMyDecision.org, that highlights LAUSD's ongoing recovery efforts, provides information and resources for students, parents and other stakeholders and featured content from recovered students, Diploma Project Advisors (DPAs) and administrators.
- An online social networking campaign, including directed peer-to-peer interaction on MySpace, where recovered students will build a network and engage in dialogue with at-risk and dropped out students. Student and DPA testimonials will also be posted on the popular video-sharing site, YouTube.
- A radio campaign with popular stations Power 106 and V100, featuring paid advertising, Web site promotions and message delivery by popular on-air DJs to engage at-risk students and direct them to the campaign Web site for more information.
- Viral text messaging, motivating students directly through their mobile phones. Students who send a text message with the word "FUTURE" to 30364 will receive instant information about the value of a diploma and how to learn more at the campaign Web site.

A signature element of LAUSD's program is the placement of 80 DPAs and more than 300 Pupil Service and Attendance Counselors at schools with high dropout rates and/or numbers of students at-risk for dropping out. These on-the-ground specialists focus specifically on dropout prevention, intervention and recovery -- working directly with students, parents, teachers, community agencies and school administrators to develop and implement individualized educational blueprints to ensure every student has the opportunity to earn a high school diploma.

"I support this effort to bring back our kids," said Board Member Vladovic. "We can never do too much to engage them and bring them back to school. They deserve nothing less than our full commitment."

"I always knew having a diploma would help me get the job I want and have a better life," said Miguel Gomez, class president of the fifth year seniors at Jordan High School. "But I wouldn't have returned to school if not for my DPA, Mr. Millender. He worked with me to develop a plan to earn all the credits I need, and now I plan to graduate at the end of this year."

Other key elements of LAUSD's Dropout Program include a new Parent-Student Resource Guidebook that outlines the many options available to help students earn their diploma including continuation schools, adult schools, skill center programs, independent study and online credit recovery programs; a new partnership with the Los Angeles Community College District to provide community college programs that offer concurrent high school and college credit; and an expanded youth employment program in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles.

For more information on LAUSD's Dropout Prevention and Recovery efforts, and the "My Future, My Decision" campaign, visit www.MyFutureMyDecision.org.

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