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BOARD APPROVES SUPERINTENDENT BREWER'S HIGH PRIORITY SCHOOLS PLAN

Targets LAUSD's 34 Lowest-Performing Secondary Schools

Los Angeles –The Los Angeles Board of Education today unanimously voted 7-0 to approve a strategic plan created by Superintendent of Schools David L. Brewer III to improve 34 of the lowest-performing middle and senior high schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

The Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools with a friendly amendment was passed by the seven-member board, which agreed with Superintendent Brewer that the District must act now to improve instruction and student achievement at its most challenging secondary schools.

“We are all on the march to improve all of our schools,” said Brewer following the vote. “This is a living document; it’s about an evolving District. The plan and this District have to be flexible. It’s not a 100 percent solution, but an 80 percent solution. Accountability is foremost.”

The Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools, which Brewer characterized as a “road map to academic improvement,” will require all students to have access to a rigorous core curriculum based on state standards, and high quality instruction designed to significantly improve students’ learning and academic achievement. In addition, the plan gives local control to school sites with support from local district leadership in executing the plan, and it will rely on measurable and research-based strategies to help students at high priority schools achieve academic success. The plan also provides professional development for teachers, and empowers parents and school communities to collaborate on common goals to ensure students improve academically.

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A total of 309 schools in the LAUSD are designated as Program Improvement (PI) schools because they have not met the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandated adequate yearly progress goals. Ninety-five schools in the District have been on Program Improvement (PI) status for five or more years.

“It is my hope and expectation that with implementation of this plan, Superintendent Brewer and his team will scale up reform efforts and dramatically increase graduation rates at our highest need schools,” said Board President Mónica García.

An amendment introduced by Board Vice President Yolie Flores Aguilar asked the Superintendent to integrate several issues within the strategic plan including recommendations to improve the learning needs of English Learners and Standard English Learners, special needs children, and dropouts.

“As proposed by Superintendent Brewer, the plan not only addresses our lowest performing schools, but begins to confront the truth about who this District has failed to serve. Believing it needed to be bolder, I appreciate the Board’s inclusion of my amendment that builds more focus and coherence on addressing the learning needs of English Learners, students with disabilities, and students that drop out; builds more buy-in from teachers and other key stakeholders; increases accountability; shifts the central office to a robust support center for schools, and establishes clear benchmarks and outcomes,” said Board Vice President Yolie Flores Aguilar.

Brewer said his strategic plan outcomes include increasing the number of students performing at “Proficient” or “Advanced” levels in English Language Arts and mathematics on California Standards Tests (CST). Anywhere from 42 percent to 75 percent of students at the 34 High Priority Schools scored “Far Below” or “Below Basic” on the CSTs in the 2006-2007 school year.

The LAUSD is classified as Program Improvement (PI) District Year 3 status for failing to meet all of its Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements for three consecutive years. As a result, the District is subject to state corrective actions and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) sanctions.

Before the vote, board members expressed hope that the strategic plan would provide much-needed support and assistance to the District’s lowest-performing middle and senior high schools.

“I have endorsed this plan because it is grounded in the belief that all of our students can and will

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succeed,” said Board Member Marlene Canter. “Today we have given the Superintendent, our schools, our students and the community, the authority and resources needed to begin the hard work of transforming our lowest performing schools together.”

“The Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools is a good first step and a good frame work for reforming our lowest-performing schools. Ultimately, the plan’s success is dependent upon its implementation,” said Board Member Richard Vladovic.

“While far from perfect, this plan has the potential to improve schools that have failed too many of our children through the years,” added Board Member Tamar Galatzan.

The plan uses seven strategies designed to raise student achievement: curriculum, instruction, leadership, parent and community engagement, physical and emotional safety, organizational and support structures, and performance reporting, accountability and incentives.

Over the next few months, each school community, in collaboration with its Local District, is expected to use the strategic plan framework to create and drive its own approach to improvement. Each school’s plan will be built on an assessment of its needs, progress to date, existing programs, utilization of resources, and potential for improvement.

“Paramount to the High Priority Schools Plan is the emphasis on a belief system among all stakeholders that our diverse students are extremely capable and can excel,” said Board Member Marguerite LaMotte. “We must have high expectations and without those expectations, we shall remain status quo. We must also enhance the plan by continuing to enforce a high priority staffing plan for these underserved schools – without effective teachers, the plan is just a group of words on paper and meaningless.”

The Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools is scheduled to be implemented for the 2008-2009 school year.

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