

Los Angeles Unified School District

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It's a fun thing to have this kind of occasion, and I have had a lot of fun thinking about it. I've got to set the context because we're here for some really important conversation, and I want to begin on the farm. David Tokofsky reminded me, when I farmed in Eastern Colorado, we always went up and down the road to see how our crops compared to somebody else. Why? We wanted to know, is there a better seed? Is there a better way to cultivate? Are there other practices that we should learn? We even put -- now you've seen it pioneer corn on certain roads to tell how they grow.

It is very important for us to measure our progress. We're going to go through that with this district.

I'm going to take you through a lot of charts and data. Now, there's a reason for this, it's because there's something very, very important at stake here. We have certain people in this community that continue to describe, even last night, this is a failing district. Now, let me tell you, it doesn't matter to me about my own impression of what I've done for six years. I have other juries I'll go to to make that judgment. But it has tremendous consequence for this city, because if you indoctrinate, propagandize a population long enough into a mistruth, they believe it.

Now, let me illustrate that. I witnessed that. I lived next door to a Japanese American detention camp in Granada, Colorado ten miles away. In that period of time, we brainwashed the United States that those folks were unreliable and had to be contained. I remember effective mistruths being repeated and repeated. Propaganda is a term you apply to that, and it has serious consequences.

Now, let me tell you with children, what would happen if every morning that child got up, the last one, and I said, "You're a failure. You're a failure." Not a very good way to lead them into a higher performance. When we have 730,000 children in this district, and about 70 to 80,000 employees that get up every morning and read a paper. And when someone says, "You are a failing district," and it has been repeated enough that the legislature has chosen to introduce a bill, certain people in it, and say, "By legislative act, we define this district as unique, as a failure, and, therefore, we're going to legislate solely for it and not for all districts."

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Now that is the consequence here this morning. Do you understand the consequence? It is serious with this district because we have been working really hard over six years to change practice. Here's the thing I'm worried about. I'm going out the door, to quote Bob Seger, "I'm on the road again." I'm going out the door. There's somebody else that will come in, with the Board's decision, and it could happen in this community that people will begin to believe, well, if that's all a failure, we have to throw it out. So that's what's at stake here this morning. As we go through the detail, bear with me. It's very important that we understand what the truth is, what the facts are, and then act on them. I'm going to be quick about it.

You've seen these before, but we have more material, and I have been pushed to really dig deeper into the statistical facts because there are people who can't easily drive down the road and look at the height of the crop. Therefore, we're going to do it over a six-year period.

The beginning chart is the one of API. We measure corn by how many bushels you get per acre. You measure product in terms of our educational progress by API points in California. The simple fact is that we have, in six years, exceeded the State's average school. The degree that we've exceeded it is astounding. Elementary grades, we have 150 percent of the rate of progress of the average school in California in elementary grades. Now, that is amazing. We have gained, on our average schools, 196 points; the State, 125. It's unheard of because we have a demographic mix that is much different from the rest of the state. We have about twice the number of English language learners and twice the amount of poverty.

If you go to middle school, again, we have exceeded the average school in California. The last six years we gained 129 points; average, the State, 90 work. If you work that out, it's about 142 percent of the State average. In high school, we've exceeded the State average. Our API growth was 94; 74 at the State. That's about 129 percent over the State average. There's even more revealing information when you go to a breakdown of API. This is elementary school, and the break line is 600. Six years ago we had 27 percent of our schools above that line. We now have 96 percent of our schools above the line of 600. You know what we'll do next year? We raise the bar. It's going to be how many of your school above 700. That is an amazing kind of continuous for an urban district. I don't think it has happened very often in the United States.

I'm going to come back and tell you what we're doing about this 4 percent. Ronni Ephraim, who is in the audience who has a group of 18 schools -- that's how many are here -- we have a task force on these 18. We're really using this data to change. That's elementary.

Let me tell you what is happening in middle school and high school. This is very revealing. This is the six-year period for middle and high. Now, what is encouraging is, first, we've raised the number of schools above the line from 19 to 69, but look where the raise occurred. The first three years, pretty flat; last three years, very rapid change. What does that mean? It means the investment, the foundation that we laid in these elementary years, are now beginning to work through the system.

What does that tell you in terms of a forecast or a trend line? It says -- it will come out this fall - - we have real hope of moving this line up, up, up. If I were buying stock, that's a company I'd

buy into because the lines are going the right direction. Now, it's just proof that the factors that we placed into the system are working. Now let's go to high school. High school, again, you'll see all the six years. The first years are flat, then they begin to change. This is a 12-year program. We're only halfway there, and we are going to have this momentum grow as you begin -- it just makes sense, as we bring people through the system.

Let me then go to even more particular information, and that's English language learners, because 72 percent of our youngsters are Hispanic and about half our youngsters are English language learners. I want to show what you we've done in that specific category. We're the red. We're below the State average, which is the black. In terms of the percent of students scoring early advanced or advanced, now you'll see here in 2003, we begin to crossover and to exceed the State.

We're doing better than the average school in the state of California in terms of the ELD tests testing English language learners scoring early advanced or advanced. That's really good news because we have a very interesting demographic mix.

Here's another chart that gives the same information in another way. Here, over a period of four years, is Los Angeles. Again, it's the California English Language Development tests, those who met English proficiency criteria. We're ahead of the State of California. We're ahead of San Diego. We're ahead of Long Beach. Folks, that's not a failing district. It's just not. It's succeeding quite well.

Now, I want to give you some information nobody had seen. I'll tell you where I got this. This is not prepared for us. I was in a meeting called the Aspen Group. It's a group of urban superintendents, about 10 or 15 throughout the nation. There's a very well-known researcher there, Jennifer O'Day. She is with American Institute for Research, and she was working on a portfolio. And I looked over her shoulder, and I said, "What do you do?"

She said, "I'm doing this study of San Diego." I said, "What are you doing with the study?" She says, "I'm taking seven metropolitan areas in California, and I'm comparing them as if they all have the same students." In other words, as you well know, we have more of one kind, more poverty, more ELL. But if you took the average student and had everybody have the same student, then how would the ratings change?

So what I'm going to show you is -- these tests are now discontinued, but we used them from '99 to 2004. This is elementary grades 2 to 5. Here is the raw scores from those tests, and it is Los Angeles second from the bottom, and then San Diego, which is up at the top, and Long Beach is second from the top. Now, those are before you adjust for the demography. Here is the same data run by Jennifer O'Day through her research, American Institute for Research, and it is controlling for school demographics. What they did, they took the same estimate of the number of ELL, English language learners, the same estimate of ethnicity, and took the average and said, how would LAUSD do if we had the same students? What happens, we're right at the top. Right at the top.

Now, that's something that -- if you show me the first yellow chart, I want to connect this back.

I used this chart for about three or four years. Every time I used it, I knew that it was a burden on our back that we have greater than others, because we have a greater number of English

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language learners and a greater amount of poverty than the average in California. This adjusts for that. They take the same kind of student, what do you see? You see -- and this is not a matter of whether we're growing, this is absolute comparison. Now, let me translate that into a parent. If you were a parent and you had an average child, an English language learner or whatever, and you wanted to choose one of those seven districts to put your child in based upon the historic record of performance, it would be LAUSD or the others that are equal to it there, San Diego and Long Beach. Now, let me do that, then, for -- this was the older test. Let me do it now for the current test, CST, because we changed tests. This is using the same data from 2002 to 2005. You'll see again Grades 2 to 5, we're second from the bottom. You adjust that for the demographics, where do we come out? Right at the top. That's on the current CSD tests.

For those of you in this district who are really asking how tall is our corn, your corn is equally as tall as everybody else's corn or a little higher, if you compare the same kind of students.

Now, that's data I've never made public. I called Jennifer O'Day this morning and said, "Is it okay if I use this?" There are a hundred copies of that report over here on the table. Each of you can take a copy. It is a very well researched report.

I'll give you one last cut at it. This is the, again, control for demographics. The first two were on language arts, this is on math. You can see, we were ahead of everybody, but now Long Beach beats us a bit, but we're right at the top.

Why do I show you this? It is that I think you just need to know what some of the best research is out there, and that is, how are we doing. Now, I want to get to a couple of pieces of evidence that are being used against the district. One of them is dropout rates because the mayor and others have used it as a hard hammer. I want to put it in context. Again, this is information that I only came across in the last week, but our dropout rate by the official measurement is 24 percent in the current year. It was 33 percent in the prior year. That's too high. We all know that. I saw this chart. I want to go through it, and it's in your packet. This is, again, by the Manhattan Institute. It's a study, and it's the estimated graduation rates among the five largest districts by ethnicity. So when you compare us with these districts on estimated graduation, you find some very interesting information.

In the African-American community, we have a higher graduation rate per student than New York, Chicago, Dade County, or Broward. It caught me by surprise.

Let me go to the next one. White, we have a higher graduation rate for white students than New York, Chicago, Dade County, or Broward. Caught me by surprise.

Let me go to the next one, Asian. We have a higher one than New York or Chicago, lower than Dade County by a bit. Here in terms of Hispanic, we have a lower graduation rate than Chicago, higher than New York, lower than Dade County. Let me give you the importance of this chart. I have to put another one up. Look at the percent of English language learners in the 28 largest schools in the United States. 44 percent in LAUSD. New York, 14 percent. You see the rest.

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Now, combine -- this is simple math. Combine these two charts. When you, then, are looking at the composite of graduation rates, there is something nationally in which the problem with English language learners have caused Hispanic students to have a lower graduation rate everywhere. When you then combine that and have three times the number of Hispanic students in this district that New York has, bang, you can see where national statistics bring you down.

Why am I going through this? We just need to be very specific and particular about our evidence, and the evidence is, this is not a failing district because of dropouts or graduation. It's a district that needs to do a whole lot more work in that area, but for those who would use that evidence to try to dismiss six years of really good work is a mistake.

Now, let me go to one other piece of evidence, and I'm trying to get it all on the table today. The other piece that I've heard the mayor use is 81 percent of the middle schools of your district are failing; therefore, you are a failing district.

I want to show you -- and that's under the Leave No Child Behind. As you know, there's 26 ways you can fall out of being successful in Leave No Child Behind. San Juan United has a hundred percent failure. San Bernardino 98, 94. We're right in the middle. We have a whole bunch of schools in California that are, quote, not successful on the measure of Leave No Child Behind law.

Not happy with it? We want to be much more successful, but to single us out in legislation and say, "We're uniquely a failing district and, therefore, we need to legislate," is really an excuse to hide political motive.

That's why I want to be very clear here this morning. What's at stake in this community is the following: You have 730,000 students out there. I don't want them to be victimized by a political campaign that's using unfair and false information, describing it as a failing district, because you may stop doing what you're doing. Do you get that sentence? That's the reason I'm here with passion this morning, and that's the reason I'm laboriously taking you through this data.

Again, I'm old enough, I lived in World War II, and I remember the propaganda that was fed various people of the world, and if you hear it long enough, you believe it. This is not a failing district. This is a district that has more success than any other metropolitan district in California in the last six years. This is a district that has been driving up some of the scores of the whole state. How can we allow elected officials to get together at midnight in a hotel room in Sacramento on the back of an envelope and begin to dictate the future of your children based upon false information? You deserve better than that.

The mayor made a fundamental mistake. He came in and he said, "I want to be a great city mayor," and he looked around and said, "I have to run the schools to do that." I wouldn't even argue with him on that point, but he should have said the following: "You've made some real progress. I can help you make that progress faster. Let's build on what you've done. I'll join you and here we go." If he had said that, we would all be here applauding, but to come in and

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continually damn this system and say, "It is a failure" -- I just keep thinking of my child when they got up every in the morning and I said, "You are a failure, but you go out and run the race and see how well you do." That's no way to raise a child. It's no way to help the district become a higher performer. That's what's at stake in this conversation today.

Now, enough of that. I want to go to the next thing, which is equally more important, that is how did we do this. What was it that caused this to happen? There on your seat is a pamphlet, a really good pamphlet, on elementary only. It gave the theory of action that we've been operating under for six years, and it's a very sound theory of action. I'm not going to go through it in great detail, but it has four basic points, and that is, we reach for rigorous standards based upon the State's leadership and we aligned our curriculum and made it really rigorous. Secondly, professional development, we moved it right down on site with on-site coaching and with grade level collaborative action. Third, we used periodic assessments and the ongoing data to reform our work.

Do you see the English language learner? We tested and tested. We saw we were weak and, therefore, we beefed up that program in our elementary grades and are still doing it. And fourth, the collaborative leadership is what we're depending upon here. This is a district in which we, the teachers, the administrators, the parents are all working together as a team, and we're going to reinforce our learning programs. Now, we went through -- the rest of it is in the pamphlet. We have a reading plan that has been tremendously successful, but we're still improving it. We have a math plan that has brought our grades up really rapidly, but we are improving it. We're installing and inserting in that math plan this year some lessons -- I'm skipping over it -- concept lessons that take a particular concept in math and drive it deeper.

Now, why is this important? As a district we've set a very ambitious goal, A to G requirements and opportunities for all children. That's right. You have to begin in kindergarten if you're going to get them through algebra. We know that. We're going back through each one of the pieces of curriculum and we're revising it, upgrading it, learning from our past experience. This is a theory of action that's really working. Middle school, let me tell you, we are just now beginning to change other things in middle school. Beginning July 1, we have a new course in algebra and a new course in algebra readiness. We've again asserted concept lessons into the algebra material. We have reduced class size. We have begun a bridge program where 5th graders will come in the summer and will get acquainted with 6th grade before they come over to the middle school to ease that fear and the possibility of dropout. We have begun to rewrite the curriculum in language arts and in science and in social studies. We have a full core press on improvement in middle school.

We have a remedial or intervention program called RLA, which is beginning to come on July 1 full steam. There are many, many things that are happening. Why do I mention this? The other charge besides we're failing is, you're status quo. There's less status quo in this district than anyplace I've ever worked.

High school, we have, again, in high school some very exciting work unfolding. First and most important part of it is our core curriculum. We're redefining our core curriculum together with teachers in high school. We know that if we're going to be A to G, we've got to begin to be sure our students are preparing for it and are on track with it beginning with the 9th grade. That work is in process.

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In terms of the form which high schools come, we're developing a very broad array of options for high school. Here on this campus is one of those options. We have five to six small learning communities on Santee, and we are developing four new tech high schools as a new way of experimenting of how we can do smaller schools in a new way.

Talent Development is doing two, maybe three. First Things First have two other high schools in which they are experimenting in a different way.

The Big Picture Model on this campus is one of the most unique forms of a new way of doing high school education. The Ages society has a middle school going very successfully out in the southeast area.

The Boston Pilot project, I have signed an order in which we and the Union and others will be investigating how we can create five to ten Boston Pilot model schools in the Belmont area. It's again another new exciting way. That is the new form of change in high school on top of charter schools, which we all have been supporting for a longer period of time.

Our option schools, I have on here LMU, Loyola Marymount University, in collaboration, they've come to us and said, "We want to partner with you in the Westchester area. We really want to do that."

And then let me mention 17 high priority schools. We've taken the ones that are most challenged in terms of performance, and we are putting a special program on the table. Beginning July 1, 20 million dollars we're going to invest in those schools in the next year to upgrade their library capacity, upgrade their laboratory capacity, and to replace their old furniture, something that's not ever been done in this district. And we intend to have that one done in the next 12 months.

Also, we are putting 60 million dollars on the table to increase the operational capacity of those lowest performing school, and we intend to partner -- partner -- I can just begin to name organizations in the community. One of them is the Urban League. We very much want to work with organizations like that to help us take each of these small learning communities and to make it not just a small school, but make it one in which it is integrated with the parents and with the community.

And let me underscore parents. We have to involve parents more in all of these programs. We need the parents. We need them for their advice and counsel, we need them for their encouragement of students, and we just need them on campus. Well, that's the record. That is some of the program, and what we have in front of us is a very, very interesting challenge of where we go from here.

One thing I want to speak about before we close and turn to questions and that is the building program. Instruction now construction. As Jack said in his introduction, this will probably be what everybody will remember this period of time most, about the buildings. It is absolutely amazing. When I came here six years ago, we were 160, 170,000 seats short. You had already started with BB bond, and we picked it up and we passed together three more bonds. It is one of the most audacious moves by local government in the United States.

You have a program now that over a period of 11 years will be 19.2 billion dollars, and Connie Rice and the oversight committee is a part of this, and I want to just say how strong the board

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has been in all of the things that I've said this morning, instruction and the construction. They have been solid as a rock and have been leading in these areas. What is the result of that? We have something that is unbelievable. We're going to build the equivalent of all the schools in San Diego right on top of the existing schools, and that will begin to meet the needs of this district.

Now, there are a number of ways that we can describe this program, but I'd like to go to another piece of it, and that is, where do we go from here? We stand on the threshold in Los Angeles of really a great city -- that's why I brought this prop along. The earth is flat. It drives me a lot these days because I keep thinking, how can this city compete with Singapore, with India, with China in the next 30, 40, 50 years? That's the competition. We know that.

If you look in the way in which they are incorporating skills and knowledge as a basis of their economic growth, they are the ones we need to compete with. We have to start. We talked about the academic start. We talked about the buildings. We didn't talk about the greater community of Los Angeles and what we can do together.

I often think if the city government would think more about what it is they can do with their existing responsibility, we'd have a whole lot better partnership. And I just want to lay out some areas that we ought to partner with them, and I would challenge them to come and work together.

First is in safety. We have a great challenge in this community to get our children safe going and coming from school, and we ought to join with the City and with the County and really work on what is their jurisdictional responsibility and that is make our children safe. That's a big agenda. Do that one, then come tell us how to run the schools.

I would invite the City government and the mayor to come join with us in looking at the welfare of families. We have about 60,000 foster children in this system. We have families that are desperately in need of support. That is a jurisdiction in which they primarily have, we do not. We ought to be their partner, but I'd welcome to have a joint agenda and conversation and with the City government and the County government upon the welfare of families in addition to safety. That's an agenda that is primarily theirs. Bring it to the table. We'd like to be your partner.

Next, housing. I would like to find a way in which we can have housing that people can afford in the area where they serve. We need to have housing. We need to have housing where teachers, nurses, firemen, policemen can live near where they serve. Now, here is an area that I think we can do some things together, and I want to lay out an idea. The Board has had some discussion about this, but we ought to look at and we are going to look at and we're beginning to set up a planning mechanism with our facilities department to look at all of the land asset we have in this city.

We are the largest public land owner in Los Angeles. We have about 7,000 acres. Now let's just hypothetically say that we were able to find 5 percent of those acres, and we were to be able to use them for other purposes of the City. They're extra land that we have on a campus that's 35 acres, but we don't need 35 acres. Just assume we had 5 percent. 5 percent of 7,000 acres is 350 acres.

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Now, if you value that land at about 2 and a half million, that's a value of 875 million dollars. Do you follow me? If you had that 875 million out on long-term lease, the average income, modest income, would be 6 percent. That would be 52.5 million a year. Add the 14th and San Pedro property, which would bring in 15 million a year, you get 67 million a year income stream just from using that land.

How would we use it? We can sit down and work out -- we would not do it, we'd contract with the private sector to take a corner of a campus that is not needed and create affordable housing that was compatible with the neighborhood, that would have a health clinic on the bottom floor, a preschool over on another portion of the bottom floor, and then the other stories, whatever they are, would be affordable housing with tax generated support, tax deductible support where you could create a way in which we, at the district, not only can be a part of the community, but can facilitate the community in terms of its choice of housing, affordable housing, so that people who serve and live in the area where they serve. Now that is an idea that I think has to be put on the table because it is such an inevitable asset, and what we need to have is, we need to have conversation. We just established the joint health clinic with the County, and we just need to have those kinds of conversations as to how we can get a plan for the greater Los Angeles using all of the assets of this district. That's the kind of relationship we want here, not a minor war on who is in control on some bill in Sacramento.

There are some sights that we can reach for. It's unfortunate that we have gotten caught into this debate. Let me conclude. We obviously are not going to be served well by the Bill 1381. We ought to not have that bill. We ought to get it behind us. We ought to get on to a more creative and workable partnership with the City administration, particularly with the mayor, and I welcome that partnership.

I think that it is time that everybody recognize that we have made very strong gains. We have a very strong program moving forward, but we need everybody's hand. We need everybody pushing that wagon up the hill, not throwing rocks in the road.

And I just want to say to you, there is a very, very bright future here. I can't believe -- in all the things that I have been associated with, I have not seen the progress in the shortest period of time as I have in the six years that I've been here in L.A. It was a steep hill and we're only halfway up it, but we are on our way.

I think even this particular political campaign we're into right now is not going to stop it. It's going to finally have a resolution, and it will get out of our way. There is a momentum here that's not going to stop. Do you know why? It's because too many people believe in it and are committed to it and are going to fight for it. Thank you very much.

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