PLANS OUTLINED TO ADDRESS CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL’S ACCREDITATION STATUS

Los Angeles Board of Education member Marguerite LaMotte, School Superintendent Roy Romer, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) officials and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) union representatives have been working together to develop specific plans for Crenshaw High School to address the school’s accreditation status.

In August, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) denied accreditation to Crenshaw High School citing several concerns, thus putting the academic status of students at the high school in question. Since that ruling, the LAUSD has appealed the decision and the Accrediting Commission has agreed to revisit Crenshaw High School in January 2006. Until then, the WASC has returned Crenshaw High School’s accreditation.

Board member LaMotte suffered a family tragedy today when she learned that the body of her nephew, who had been missing in New Orleans, was found in a morgue. She immediately left to join her relatives in that city. Prior to her departure, she commented that, “a number of people here at the Los Angeles Unified School District have been working tirelessly to help put a plan in place that will insure the continuation of Crenshaw High School’s accreditation status.” Board member LaMotte represents District 1 that includes Crenshaw High School.

“We want to assure everyone that the talents and skills of the teachers, students and the staff at Crenshaw High School will be supported and that they know what we are doing to make this work. By working collectively, we can return Crenshaw High School to the academic state of excellence that it deserves.”

Specific corrective actions being taken by the LAUSD seek to:

- Restore the school accreditation status
  - This involves the creation of a clear, concrete single plan for school improvements and addresses the findings and recommendations of the WASC committee.

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• Provide a High Quality Instructional Program
  - Provide a sufficient number of textbooks and instructional materials are being provided for students, additional technology and technological support for classrooms and the school’s library is being bolstered with the purchase of more than 200 new computers. This is over and above the more than 700 computers currently in use at Crenshaw High School. Plans are in place to develop a 9th grade academy for incoming freshmen and the school’s staff will be allocated more free time to participate in professional development.
  - Implement the District’s Action Plan for Closing the Achievement Gap with participation from the Metropolitan churches. Feeder schools to benefit from the action plan are: Crenshaw High School, Audubon Middle School and Tom Bradley Elementary School.
• Provide a Strong College Going Culture
  - A new college counselor has been added to the staff at Crenshaw High School this school year and strong college counseling and support will be provided to students and parents/guardians.
• Ensure a Safe and Positive School Environment
  - A number of steps are being taken to ensure students learn in a safe and secure environment. The school’s safety plan will the reviewed, clear expectations for student conduct will be provided, surveillance cameras will be installed to reduce theft and vandalism, and there will be ongoing student human relations programs with trained adult facilitators.

School Superintendent Roy Romer reiterated his commitment to improve the situation at Crenshaw. “We have made the status of Crenshaw High School’s accreditation a priority and we are going to move heaven and earth to do whatever needs to be done not only to restore its accreditation but to return the school to its past days of academic excellence and glory,” he said.

The LAUSD had put in place several systems to correct procedural, instructional issues that came to light long before the WASC report came out. For the 2005-2006 school year, the following improvements have already been made at Crenshaw High School: They include:
• Appointing a new principal, Charles Didinger
• Hiring an additional assistant principal and two instructional specialists dedicated to overseeing the accreditation issues.
• Adding a testing coordinator to the administrative team to assist Crenshaw High School administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents/guardians and members of the community with preparing for the WASC accreditation process and revisit.

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• Adding a Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselor to address students’ excessive absences.
• Hiring a new math coach
• Hiring a science coach
• Hiring a literacy coach
• Hiring a coach to work with new teachers

District officials add that the plan addresses the WASC concerns and sets a new vision for student achievement, instructional excellence, accountability measures and a quality school environment that will enrich the school setting for students, teachers, administrators, families and the community-at-large.

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