



All Youth Achieving

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Superintendent Deasy's Update for September 26-30, 2011

On a weekly basis, I will be providing an update on our progress toward implementing our four core strategies that will help us ensure all students graduate college-prepared and career-ready.

Deasy's Download

I can't vouch for the rest of the country, but here in Southern California most of us have a good idea what to do in the event of an earthquake. After all, we've had lots of practice. Still, it's one thing to know to "duck, cover, and hold," when shaking starts, and another to take it on faith that a seismic event won't cause buildings to tumble or fall. Although with natural disasters there are no guarantees, we are confident, as is possible, that the new schools at LAUSD have the capability to withstand a moderate or even strong earthquake. The State of California agrees. At a press conference today at Valley Region High School #5 in Arleta, the California Emergency Management Agency saluted the District for our earthquake hazard prevention efforts and participation in the Great California ShakeOut, the annual earthquake drill, scheduled October 20. When we talk about our students being safe in school, we are not only referring to freedom from bullying or harassment, but also attending classes in structurally sound facilities. Parents must feel comfortable that we are vigilant on both counts. At the LAUSD, disaster preparedness means having a plan of action, especially a rapid, informed response when an earthquake or other natural catastrophe occurs, and it also means building, designing and reinforcing structures in such a way as to keep our students safe. We are committed to delivering on each of these promises.

1. Using Data to Drive Standards-Based Instruction

Use data to drive standards-based, effective instruction for all students, coupled with support and intervention, when students need extra assistance or accelerated learning.

Increasing proficiency rates in third-grade English language arts is a key LAUSD goal, as identified on the LAUSD Performance Meter. One tool to support the achievement of this goal is the use of **DIBELS Next (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)**. DIBELS Next is a set of measures designed to identify mastery of reading skills. It assesses the "Big Ideas" of early reading: phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Combined, the DIBELS Next measures provide educators with the tools to readily track student progress and determine when a student might need additional targeted reading support.

Beginning this school year, LAUSD elementary schools are using DIBELS Next in general education classes in grades K-3

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and special education classes in grades K-5/6 to assess and monitor students’ reading skills and progress. There are three benchmark assessments: Beginning of the Year (BOY), Middle of the Year (MOY), and End of Year (EOY). The window for BOY assessment opened Monday, September 26, and continues through October 14. The benchmarks will also be located on the MyData platform.

Data from DIBELS Next benchmark assessments provide support for grouping students for additional instruction. It connects to the newly-adopted Treasures reading program. It also includes a system for creating letters home in English and Spanish that give parents information about their child’s progress and offer ideas to support reading at home.

Reports generated in the DIBELS Next assessment platform provide data at multiple levels: individual student, classroom, grade level, school site, local district and district-wide. The data provided in the DIBELS Next reporting platform will allow LAUSD teachers and staff to understand students’ instructional needs in reading, and to align school resources so all LAUSD students read by age nine. Achieving this goal will set students on the path to literacy success.

2. Supporting All Employees

We are accountable for our students’ success. We will use data to personalize the supports that all of our employees need to serve our students, from professional development and training to creating measurable performance goals.

Last Thursday, I joined a group of enthusiastic teachers at a Teach Plus event here in Los Angeles where we discussed how the District is doing in supporting, developing, evaluating and retaining our teachers. The event allowed for an open discussion and provided participants an opportunity to voice their opinions and ideas.

Here is some interesting, instant feedback received from teachers in the audience:

- **A majority of teachers (85 percent) agreed the District has yet to do enough to identify, recognize and retain effective teachers. Follow-up comments revealed it’s not just the responsibility of the District, but also a responsibility of principals and colleagues, to provide the support necessary to achieve these goals.**
- **In addition, teachers (61 percent) believed either problem-solving sessions with colleagues or teacher-designed professional development are two of the most promising strategies for improving teacher effectiveness.**
- **Teachers (42 percent) also said, to improve the teaching profession, they seek “more opportunities for advancement without leaving the classroom.”**

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- Interestingly, only 10 percent selected “higher pay/prestige” and only two percent chose “more recognition for excellence with students.”

As we continue to work with teachers and school leaders to build a system that addresses their needs, we will seek input regularly on the processes and tools. There is an opportunity, currently, to provide [feedback](#) on the School Leadership Framework, which will guide the support and development work we are doing with school leaders.

3. Budgeting for Student Achievement

We will make the District budget more transparent, align resources for greater impact and equity, and give schools the ability to target resources to meet their specific needs, bringing funding and decision-making closer to schools and classrooms.

Efforts to save dollars and raise revenue happen at all levels throughout the District. This week, LAUSD joined, along with San Francisco, in a lawsuit to protect Proposition 98 funding for schools. The District is also supporting Governor Jerry Brown’s bid to give more revenues above the Proposition 98 “minimum level of funding” to schools from redevelopment agencies. LAUSD, this week, also refinanced bonds (similar to refinancing a mortgage to get lower interest rates) at historically lower interest rates, saving taxpayers \$37 million off the building program. Inside the District, our Special Education program staff used their federal stimulus dollars to create internal LAUSD services with District staff that support students who, in the past, had to be referred to outside service partners, saving over \$31 million in last year’s budget. Some examples were:

- Trained behavior interventionists and special education teachers to serve students with autism;
- Built Behavior Support Teams comprised of teachers, paraprofessionals and behavior specialists to assist schools and families in working with students needing social and behavioral supports;
- Funded Seven Kids in Therapy Centers (KIT Centers) for primary students that allowed us to eliminate home-based behavioral services for many students;
- Created eight Intensive Diagnostic Evaluation Centers (IDEC) to reduce contract requests as well as provide intensive educational therapy typically provided through a nonpublic agency (NPA).
- The Phoenix Academy at Wilson High School was also developed to provide services to nonviolent at-risk students who would typically have been served at a nonpublic school or a residential facility.

We are also working on a program to increase revenue at schools. For example, the State’s mandated cost program

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reimburses Districts for State-mandated spending if you file a claim. The District will soon be moving to identify and document activities at school sites that are reimbursable and will be providing those reimbursements back to schools as we receive them from the State. Going paperless is not only good for the environment, but it saves money. The District is rolling out the LAUSD MyPay initiative, which, in addition to supporting paperless payroll, also increases our efficiency and reduces work around our payroll process. We estimate the savings between \$20 million-\$24 million annually when fully implemented.

Schools themselves will be able to see and understand more about the spending at their site. In an effort to increase that transparency, part of the work of the Budgeting for Student Achievement initiative is to show schools this spending while making them aware of areas where actions on the campus can result in reduced expenses. It will also result in the creation of savings schools can direct to the classroom beyond the focus on attendance. Some examples of this include:

- Currently, our labor contracts require schools to allocate 10 substitute days per teacher. By ensuring high staff attendance rates, and lowering the use of these days, unused dollars allocated to substitute days can be allocated to needs in the classroom.
- By showing schools their utility usage, and how much the District pays for that usage, schools can take action to lower their costs by adjusting thermostats, turning off lights, and ensuring leaking fixtures are repaired. By reducing use, schools can save money to direct to meeting other student needs. The District even operates a program to help schools save on energy: <http://www.laschools.org/new-site/sustainability/scp>
- By showing schools the budget in their Temporary Personnel Account, schools can manage this budget within the allocation they receive. In 2010-11, overspending in this budget across the District cost \$4.6 million that could have been directed to every LAUSD classroom.

By working together to increase efficiency and accountability for spending, we can make incremental changes that can increase funding to the classroom and support student achievement.

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4. Creating and Supporting Quality Schools

We will analyze multiple data points to differentiate the service and support we deliver to schools. In addition, we will capture and share best practices across all of our schools regardless of school models.



Last week I announced the revised timeline for the Public School Choice 3.0 process. You'll note the timeline is also found in this week's update because we continue to receive questions from writing teams, school administrators and parents regarding the two different timelines. The timeline we follow depends on whether or not we are able to reach an agreement with United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) on or before November 1, which will grant all in-district applicant teams (current or retired LAUSD employee applicant teams) participating in the PSC Process the flexibility to make key decisions—selection of staff, use of financial resources, etc.—at the school level. If an agreement is reached by the November 1 deadline, the application process for new schools will allow in-district applicants to be considered first for new schools, with external applicants (charter operators and other nonprofits) considered if none of the in-district applications submitted for a new school are excellent.

In our effort to inform parents, school staff and parents from the PSC 3.0 focus schools, as well as schools that will receive relief due to the opening of our new schools, the Local District offices have been informed about the Board of Education's approved changes. Two applicant team workshops were recently hosted at LAUSD headquarters for all applicants where the timeline and the improved PSC Parent, High School Student & Community Engagement Process were reviewed. Should parents, school staff and community members have questions about the PSC 3.0 timeline, the PSC team may be reached at psc@lausd.net or by phone at (213) 241-2487. Additional information is also available on our website, www.publicschoolchoice.lausd.net, under the PSC 3.0 tab.

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