Los Angeles Unified School District

We Are LAUSD: Weekly Update for April 12 – April 16, 2010

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:

Cortines' Corner

This week I would like to highlight Nimitz Middle School, located in Huntington Park. At Nimitz I saw two different examples of outstanding practices happening beyond the regular school hours.

On Saturday, I was invited to see their student led conferences and intervention classes. Ms. Pearson, their gifted coordinator, has worked closely with their 800 gifted students to develop an outstanding student led conference model that occurs each semester. Boys dressed smartly in ties and girls outfitted to the nines in their dresses, presented their portfolios of project based work to their parents and teachers. The material I saw presented was on or above grade level, and I was proud to see students using higher order thinking skills throughout. Parents, teachers and students were deeply engaged in this highly authentic process.

I next visited the Saturday intervention classes which are supported by our Beyond the Bell division. Over 450 students at Nimitz are involved in these classes designed to support their skills and development in their core classes. I saw rigorous instruction in these classes taught by excellent professionals. My own concerns about the efficacy of Saturday intervention were addressed.

At Nimitz I again saw a group of dedicated professionals doing "whatever it takes" to make the learning experience for students meaningful and to engage families in rich conversations about learning.

Ramon C. Cortines

1. Data-based Instruction

Use data to drive all decision-making and ensure good first teaching for all students, coupled with support and intervention, when students need extra assistance.

In past updates, we have highlighted these District applications that assist a school faculty and staff to make data-based decisions: MyData, the School Report Card, and the School Experience Survey. However, the school's ability to make a "home connection" is an equally critical avenue to improving a child's education. Read on about the Integrated Student Information System (ISIS) Family Module.

Parents and guardians have long craved for an up-to-the minute informational vehicle to monitor their children's progress at school. The ISIS Family Module is one such tool. It is an easy way for parents to check up-to-date student information online. What information is available? Currently, real-time attendance, progress report, and report card grades are available to all secondary schools. Parents can also view student assignments, quiz and test scores, if the teacher uses the ISIS Gradebook. Planned future functionality includes access to a student schedule, graduation requirements, and discipline information. Parents of secondary students who want access to the Family Module can contact their school for an application. Elementary School administrators will be notified when the module is available to their parents, Spring 2011.

Parents are our partners. LAUSD – where student data matters!

2. Supporting All of Our Employees

Strong leadership among all school stakeholders – administrators, teachers, students, classified staff and parents – is essential for effectively managing schools.

As a reminder, the presentation and discussion of the Teacher Effectiveness Task Force recommendations will be presented at 1pm during the April 27 Board Meeting.

The California Department of Education has released application guidelines (click here to view the RFA) for districts eligible to apply for School Improvement Grants. Several of the key components of this funding opportunity line up with the recommendations of the Teacher Effectiveness Task Force, so I will be asking staff to review ways that we can build upon the work of the Task Force to assist schools in the development of their proposals.

Although we have not yet developed a detailed implementation plan for the work of the Task Force, this is an opportunity that could result in necessary resources to pilot some of the approaches suggested in the report -- and could total as much as $2 million per eligible school per year for the next three years. There are aspects of this grant application that will require new ways to look at evaluation and compensation (in addition to extended learning time and professional development opportunities). We will be collaborating with our collective bargaining partners to create strong applications for interested schools.

To learn more about the Teacher Effectiveness Task Force please visit (see http://etf.lausd.net).

3. Transparent Budgeting

We will bring funding and decision-making closer to schools and classrooms.

This week, we want to highlight a new report available to schools in the Business Tools for Schools (BTS) School Front End system. The new *School Budget Summary Report* provides schools with an overview of all the resources budgeted at their school sites. The report includes an overview of the school's enrollment, attendance, and demographic information. It provides a summary of the total school budget across different funding sources and indicates how much of the budget is budgeted for positions and other salary items and how much is budgeted for non labor. It also includes a position detail that displays the number of full-time equivalent positions budgeted at the school site by position type.

The report is part of our effort to bring more transparency to our budget. We hope this will be a useful tool to schools that can be shared with their stakeholders in order to provide a snapshot of all the resources budgeted at the school site. If you have questions about accessing the school budget summary for your school, please contact your school fiscal specialist.

Also, tune in to the Board of Education Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, April 20 at 10 a.m. for an upate on the Transparent Budgeting initiative featuring a review from the American Institutes for Research (AIR) on the effect of the District's current resource allocation practices on school site, per pupil spending. In addition, we will hear from several principals who are currently participating in the Transparent Budgeting pilot about the benefits and challenges of budgeting under a per pupil funding model.

The next Transparent Budgeting Advisory Group meeting is also scheduled for Tuesday, April 20, 2010 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., in Room 2-202 at LAUSD Headquarters, 333 S. Beaudry Ave., in downtown L.A. The meeting is open to the public and will be videotaped so that interested parties can view it as a podcast at a later date.

To view podcasts, learn more about our budget, and the Transparent Budgeting Initiative go to http://budgetrealities.lausd.net.

4. Quality Schools

Creating standards and criteria that apply to all schools for setting targets, evaluating school quality and monitoring achievement – including charter schools. Embrace innovative program offerings for students and families.

Approved Public School Choice (PSC) Plans

We have completed our service menu discussions with our charter school teams. All of the charter school teams will be utilizing the District for the following services: Maintenance & Operations, Food Services, School Police, Nursing, and as applicable, Library Services. We also have completed the draft Facilities Use Agreement and are in the process of finalizing the agreement.

We continue to develop and provide direct support for our District teams as they engage in the implementation process of their instructional plans. We are facilitating meetings with District teams next week to share on-going information on budgeting and staff selection.

I have received a revised Accountability Matrix from each approved team. We will be providing feedback over the coming weeks and I will be meeting soon with each team individually. I am committed to holding teams accountable for their goals to ensure all of our students are provided a high-quality education tailored to their instructional needs.

Public School Choice Process for VRES #12 & SRES #7

This week I reviewed the plans for Valley Region Elementary School #12 and South Region Elementary School #7. In addition to reading the plans, I also looked at the recommendations of the Review Teams as well as the Advisory Vote results. I will take all of these data points into consideration as I make my recommendations to the Board of Education. These same data points will be available on our website at www.lausd.net/publicschoolchoice.

Timeline

- April 27: Board Vote

For additional information on the Public School Choice process, please visit: www.lausd.net/publicschoolchoice