



Spotlight

November 2003 No.26

The newsletter for Los Angeles Unified School District employees

LAUSD Performance on API Continues Impressive Climb

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has earned high marks from the State Department of Education for continuing to make strong gains in the academic performance and progress of its schools for the fourth consecutive year.

Based on the 2002-2003 Academic Performance Index (API) report released October 24 by the State Department of Education, an impressive 85 percent of LAUSD schools met their academic growth targets this year while 90 percent of the District's elementary schools met their growth targets.

The API measures the academic performance and progress of schools. Public schools in California earn an API score between 200-1000. The state has set 800 as the API score that schools should strive to meet. Schools scoring under the state's goal of 800 are assigned a "growth target" to measure year-to-year improvement.

At the secondary level, 71 percent of the District's middle schools met their growth targets while senior high schools also increased their growth. From 1999 to 2001, API scores at LAUSD high schools improved only 13 points, whereas from 2001 to 2003, their API scores rose 40 points.

"These scores really excite me," Superintendent Roy Romer said at a news conference October 24 at Coliseum Elementary School in Local District G where that school's target growth rate skyrocketed 114 points over last year. "In four years we have moved our elementary schools up 173 basis points to a new total of 696. We are now beginning to move our middle schools up in a similar fashion, from 507 points to a new total of 596 API points, over four years. Even in our high schools, we're now raising our scores at a substantial rate of increase.

"To do this in an urban school district that is terribly overcrowded, and with some schools on shortened schedules, is remarkable," Romer continued. "I want to credit the hard work to our teachers, administrators, local District office staff, our parents, students and everyone else who contributes to the success of our

students and our schools."

Added School Board President José Huizar, "It is great that the State's results further demonstrate that the LAUSD is on the right track toward improving academic achievement. Our students are learning and progressing. Our teachers, administrators and all school staff are working hard to provide the best learning environment to support our kids.

"I am encouraged by today's results. The LAUSD still has a long way to go in its efforts to close the achievement gap and increase its graduation and college enrollment rates. Let's keep up the good work

Among the District's diverse ethnic and racial student populations, every subgroups' API score increased, ranging from 17 points for Pacific Islanders to 36 points for Hispanics. In addition, many schools in socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the LAUSD, such as Local Districts E, F, G, H, I and J met or exceeded their API growth targets.

Launching Extended Learning Academies

The LAUSD's Extended Learning Academies (ELA), which provides students at 41 year-round middle and high schools with an opportunity to get extra help in language, math and reading on Saturdays, begins November 15.

The District's ELA focuses on subjects required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) at the high school level and on reading and algebra at the middle school level. Students graduating from high school in 2006 must take and pass the CAHSEE in order to obtain their high school diploma.

"The goal of ELA is to meet the academic needs of our students," said Roy Romer, Los Angeles School Superintendent. "This program will directly affect the students who attend our most impacted and overcrowded, year-round secondary schools. We must work together to see improved academic achievements for our students, our success depends on it."

Approximately 15-20 credentialed language and math teachers will provide direct instruction to students in each ELA. Teachers who participate will receive appropriate training and are responsible for communicating with the students' regular day classroom teachers.

Students at selected three-track and four-track LAUSD schools are eligible to participate in Saturday Academy classes.



Governor Gray Davis congratulates students at Coliseum Street Elementary School, which increased its Academic Performance Index (API) score by 114 points. It was the largest gain of any school in the District. Photo by Josh Post.

and our continued focus on instruction, professional development and parent involvement to build on these positive results."

The 2003 API is based on students' performance on the California Achievement Tests, Sixth Edition (CAT/6) and the California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English language arts and mathematics in grades 2-11. In addition, at the high school level, the CSTs in history/social science (grades 10-11) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) results are included in the API calculation.

USA TODAY Honors LAUSD Teachers

Steven Hicks and Candace Baker, team-teachers at The Accelerated School, have been named to USA TODAY's 2003 All-USA Teacher Team.

The pair recently were honored by the newspaper giant as representatives of all outstanding teachers. In all, 16 individual teachers and four instructional teams were declared "Teacher All-Stars" for their ability to "unlock student minds in wide-ranging ways."

Hicks and Baker team-teach kindergarten at The Accelerated School, a K-9 charter school, located in Local District H with a population of 602 students. Both will receive a trophy, \$500 and they will share \$2,500 cash awards with their school.

"It's wonderful to be recognized as a team," said Hicks. "Candace Baker and I worked together all last year in a team teaching situation and it's been the most incredible experience I ever had. This year and last year has been amazing. It's not just beneficial to us, but it's beneficial to our students. To be able to love what you're doing, it's just a great place to be."

A photograph of Hicks interacting with his students was prominently featured in

the October 15th issue of USA TODAY under the headline "20 of America's Top Teachers Who Stick Out." In 2001, Hicks was named one of 12 Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year by the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

"To me it's a symbol of the wonderful way teachers, families and students are allowed to collaborate with one another and to have the freedom to create a creative curriculum," added Baker. "Collaborative team teaching allows each person to work to their strengths. This has been great. I highly recommend it."

Winners of the USA TODAY All-USA Teacher Team were chosen from teachers nominated across the country. Judges considered how well teachers define and address students' needs and the impact they have on student learning.

"It's a great testament to the hard work, dedication and talent of the teachers at our school," said Kevin Sved, a co-director of The Accelerated School.

To learn more about The Accelerated School, visit www.accelerated.org

African American Learners' Initiative Implemented In The District

It has been almost 50 years since the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Thanks to the renewed energy and determination of Los Angeles African American parents and community leaders, the LAUSD has refocused attention on the educational plight of African American students.

The LAUSD "Action Plan for a Culturally Relevant Education that Benefits African American Students and All Other Students" is a blueprint for access, equity and excellence. It is the outgrowth of an effort spearheaded by the Summit of African American Leaders on the Crisis in the Education of African American Students. The Action Plan was a mandate of a June 2001 Board resolution introduced by then board president Genethia Hudley Hayes, calling for the elimination of disparities in educational outcomes for African American students. On June 24, 2003, in a unanimous motion, the Board reaffirmed the District's resolve to implement the Action Plan.

Current Board Member Marguerite LaMotte addressed the community and educators during a town hall meeting August 23 at Dorsey High School where she presented test data showing how wide the gap is between the performance of African American students and students achieving at the highest levels.

In discussions with summit leaders (organizers of the town hall meeting), LaMotte has expressed her support for the Action Plan. Central office, local district and school staff are now beginning to carry out systemic strategies to implement five tenets of the plan.

Rather than a "quick fix," the first phase of this initiative involved laying a solid foundation through conferences and workshops presenting research on the most effective approaches for educating African American students. These findings were used in designing the Action Plan and blueprint for implementation. A copy of this document is available in all Local District offices.

The African American Students Resolution Steering Committee has undertaken the work of guiding and monitoring the Action Plan. Steering Committee meetings are held the first Thursday of each month from 4 p.m.-6 p.m. in the PCSB Auditorium, 701 W. Cesar Chavez Ave. (in the Conference Room,) in downtown Los Angeles. For more information about the initiative, contact your Local District Superintendent or Dr. Theodore Alexander, Associate Superintendent, Specially Funded & Parent/Community Programs, at (213) 241-6532.

2004 Annual Benefit Enrollment is Now Underway in District

The 2004 enrollment period for LAUSD employee benefit plans has begun. The enrollment period runs through midnight, November 23, and the effective date of any enrollment elections or changes made during this period takes effect January 1, 2004.

You need to enroll only if you wish to make a change to your current benefit elections. If you are satisfied with your current benefits enrollment elections and want them to continue throughout 2004, you do not need to do anything during the enrollment period.

Exception: Continued participation in a Flexible Spending Account Plan (FSA) requires a new election each year.

The **NEW On-Line Benefits Information and Enrollment** feature going into effect for the 2004 Annual Benefits Enrollment is accessible at: www.lausdbenefits.net

Two Plan Changes for 2004

- For the 2004 plan year, employees need to be aware of two changes. For those employees who participate in the Blue Cross medical plan, there will be a new, \$10 copay when an ongoing maintenance drug is filled for the fourth time at a retail outlet. This change is designed to encourage users to utilize the mail-order prescription option available under the Blue Cross plan for the filling of ongoing maintenance medications.
- Under the mail-order program, employees may receive a 90-day supply of such medication for a \$10 copay. If you now have these prescriptions filled at a retail pharmacy, you can save money by changing to your plan's mail-order program.
- The second change impacts the Flexible Spending Account Plan (FSA). Federal regulations have been changed that now allow the medical spending account portion of this plan to reimburse you for your costs in purchasing over the counter medications such as Claritin, Sudafed, Advil and other such medications. Please refer to the FSA brochure for additional details on this expansion of plan benefits.

Methods of Enrollment

- You may enroll through the NEW Smart Choice benefits on-line enrollment and information website at www.lausdbenefits.net. It's quick and easy and gives you your personal benefits information. It also features viewable and downloadable information materials and forms; displays your plan elections and your dependent information. It also links to all of the District's benefit providers, provides an FSA cost modeling tool, plus current benefit news and updates.
- If you do not have web access, you may enroll via the telephone by dialing 1-800-527-1482. Enter your Social Security number and password (date of birth) and follow the prompts. **If you seek a hard copy of the benefits enrollment materials, call the above number and request from the Benefits Counselor that a package be mailed to you immediately. Hard copy benefits materials will not be mailed automatically. You must call and request a mailing.** This number, 1-800-527-1482, will be available to answer your questions throughout the enrollment period.
- Benefits counselors are now able to take your request for hard copy materials and will be available November 3-23 to take your enrollment elections and answer your benefit questions. Counselors are available Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. (PST).

Leis-Castillo to Lead Small Learning Communities Program, Office of Staff Relations

Liam Leis-Castillo is the new Executive Officer to School Superintendent Roy Romer and will lead the development of Small Learning Communities and the Office of Staff Relations.

Leis-Castillo oversees the development of Small Learning Communities within the District, both as they will be designed as part of the new schools that are coming on line and in integrating them into some of the existing larger schools that will benefit from being configured into smaller components to improve academic achievement.

The idea of creating Small Learning Communities is a concept that is becoming widely accepted as a means to provide better personalization for students, especially in the secondary grades, so they maintain a connection with their teachers and to the standards and curriculum they need to learn. Relationships between students and teachers, teachers and parents and teachers and administrators are key to success.

Leis-Castillo will work with Local District Superintendents to further develop programs at schools in the District that already lend themselves to becoming small learning communities. An inventory of such programs is already underway. Additionally,

she will research successful programs in other cities to see which ones might be adapted to conditions in the Los Angeles schools. This is not a concept where "one size fits all," so it will take time and ingenuity to imbed this concept into as many secondary schools as possible.

"I intend to be very inclusive in my approach to this work, involving all groups, schools and the district offices," said Leis-Castillo. "We will need buy-in from every group – including teachers, parents, students and community stakeholders – to make this succeed and I have a deep understanding of how that process must take place."

In her role in Staff Relations, Leis-Castillo will be working with the existing staff as this year's labor negotiations get underway. The District is already engaged in the early stages of discussions with the 10 bargaining units that represent a cross-section of the 85,000 employees in the District. The work also encompasses managing employee proposals, contracts and grievances, developing partnerships with the unions and working on training programs to upgrade employee staff relations skills.

Board Approves Cell Phone Use, Other Actions

The Los Angeles Board of Education adopted a motion that lifts the District's previous ban on students possessing cellular telephones, pagers and other electronic signaling devices at LAUSD schools. The one-year pilot policy, brought forth by School Superintendent Roy Romer, outlines specific regulations and guidelines on their use. The policy restricts their use during normal school hours (except during students' lunch and nutrition breaks) to prevent disruption of classroom instruction, the interference of emergency communications and other violations.

The policy states:

- the use of cellular phones, pagers or electronic signaling devices is prohibited on campus during normal school hours excluding students' lunch and nutrition breaks;
 - such devices must remain "off" and stored in a locker, backpack, purse, pocket or other place where it is not visible during school hours excluding students' lunch and nutrition breaks. If observed by staff, it will be confiscated until redeemed by a parent or guardian;
 - exceptions to the policy are allowed by school site administrators for purposes related to the health needs of a student. In addition, students and parents must be advised annually of the policy's prohibition exceptions; and
 - site administrator/school site council can enforce a stricter policy.
- The Los Angeles Board of Education also voted unanimously 6-0 to ban junk food sales on school campuses effective July 1, 2004. The comprehensive motion targets vending machines by establishing new nutrition standards for all foods sold on campuses that are not part of the National School Meal Program. The resolution creates a policy to improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables in cafeterias such as mandating salad bars at all schools. In addition, the motion seeks to improve nutrition education by including it in elementary, middle and adult school health curricula, in addition to the current offering in 9th grade health classes. Finally, it provides funding for a physical education advisor position and for the revision of physical education instruction guides which were last revised in 1987. The motion was authorized by Board Vice President Marlene Canter and co-sponsored by Board Member Julie Korenstein.

The Los Angeles Board of Education has adopted a resolution that calls for greater collaboration between multiple government agencies regarding school and community safety. The resolution also establishes a "School Safety Inter-Agency Task Force" comprised of multi-agency governmental officials, volunteer citizens, community members, parents, teachers, representatives from bargaining units and District administrators. The task force will review existing efforts regarding safe schools and communities and make recommendations to enhance safety. The resolution was brought forth by Los Angeles Board of Education President José Huizar.

Professionals Teach in LAUSD Schools

Screenwriter Antwone Fisher, the inspiration behind the motion picture "Antwone Fisher" starring Academy Award® winner Denzel Washington, spoke to a sixth grade class at Gompers Middle School in Local District I. He was one of six professionals who volunteered to be a guest teacher at a LAUSD school as part of "Teach For America Week 2003," October 20-24.

Other guest teachers who visited campuses in the District that week were **David Gold**, CEO of the 99 Cents Only Stores, who visited Nimitz Middle School in Local District J; **John Connolly**, President, America Federation of Radio and Television Artists, who visited the Los Angeles Academy School in Local District H; and **Ron Meyer**, President and COO, Vivendi Universal Entertainment; **Sandy Banks**, a member of the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board; and **Andrew Haas**, Managing Director of Bear Stearns, who all visited Locke High School in Local District I on different days.

"Teach For America" Week is an annual, nationwide event where guest teacher spend an hour in a classroom sharing their extensive professional and personal experiences to teach students a compelling lesson that will engage and inspire them to pursue academic success and perhaps enhance their life prospects.

Antwone Fisher



District Awarded \$150,000

Wells Fargo recently presented a \$150,000 check to the District courtesy of an innovative program called "Team Up for Our Schools," which provides financial support to public schools in Los Angeles. Through the program, for every new Wells Fargo consumer checking account



opened between June 2 and August 31, 2003, up to \$20 was donated by Wells Fargo to school districts in L.A. School Superintendent Roy Romer accepted the check on October 21 at Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, which kicked-off the Third Annual "Banking On Our Future Across

America" celebration, which teaches economic literacy to inner city youth. Romer was joined by John Bryant, CEO, Operation HOPE, Inc.; FDIC Chairman Donald Powell and a host of other banking, finance and corporate CEOs, celebrities and elected

officials. The group joined students in 3-5th grade who are learning the basics of banking including how to open and maintain a checking and saving account, the importance of credit and the power of investment in their young lives.

People

Marianne Piemonte, a teacher at Marlton School, which serves Pre-K through high school youngsters who are deaf/hard of hearing, as well as K-5 general education students, has been honored with a Disney Hand Teacher Award. With her administrator, Piemonte received extensive training on how to motivate and mobilize a community of learners at the Disney Worldwide Outreach and the Center for Collaborative Education, a six-day professional development institute, Oct. 20-25, at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, FL. In April 2004, her group will meet again to exchange ideas and continue their dialogue at Disneyland in Anaheim, CA. "It has been an honor and a privilege to work with such a collaborative group of people," said Piemonte. "The knowledge and information that we have received can now be imparted to our colleagues in each of our school communities. While we work at our local schools, we are still linked to each other in order to affect school reform nationwide."

Beyond the Bell/Employee Recreation

Employee Discount Tickets

California Adventure, Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, Legoland, Long Beach Aquarium, Six Flags Magic Mountain, Sea World and Universal Studios Hollywood.

AMC/Edwards/Mann/Pacific/Regal Cinemas/United Artists Theatre Tickets
Limit 10 per person. Tickets available at three locations:

600 E. Pico Blvd., L.A.
(213) 743-3679
Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m.

5607 Capistrano Ave., Room 26, Woodland Hills
(818) 904-2084
Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.- 5 p.m.

Beaudry Building, 14th Floor, Reception Area
333 S. Beaudry Ave., downtown L.A.
Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
No parking validation

Cash, cashiers checks or postal money orders are accepted, payable to: Auxiliary Services Trust Fund. **NO PERSONAL CHECKS OR CREDIT CARDS.** All sales are final. **NO refunds or exchanges. MAIL ORDERS ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTED.**

November

5
Facilities Committee
Groundbreaking for Manual Arts New Elementary School #3
10 a.m.

7
Track D Ends at Four-Track Schools

11
Veteran's Day
Holiday. All LAUSD schools and offices closed

12
Track B Begins at Four-Track Schools

16
Facilities Committee
LAUSD
333 S. Beaudry Ave. (Board Room)
Downtown Los Angeles
9 a.m.

Audit, Business and Technology Committee
LAUSD
333 S. Beaudry Ave. (Board Room)
Downtown Los Angeles
1 p.m.

23
Curriculum & Instruction Committee
LAUSD
333 S. Beaudry Ave. (Board Room)
Downtown Los Angeles
10 a.m.

Calendar Of Events

Committee of the Whole
LAUSD
333 S. Beaudry Ave. (Board Room)
Downtown Los Angeles
1 p.m.

25
Los Angeles Board of Education Meeting
333 S. Beaudry Ave. (Board Room)
Downtown Los Angeles
1 p.m.

26
Unassigned Day at Single-Track Schools
(All single-track schools and offices closed)

27-28
Thanksgiving (11/27)
Holiday. All LAUSD schools and offices closed

Dates, times are subject to change

News from our Local Districts

District A

Superintendent: Debbie Leidner

8550 Balboa Blvd., Suite 150

Northridge, CA. 91325

(818) 256-2800 • Fax: (818) 894-6506

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/district_a/

The students at Sunny Brae Avenue Elementary School in Winnetka recently met with NASA Astronaut Lt. Commander Dominic Antonelli.

Antonelli spoke to the fourth and fifth grade students about the space shuttle, the International Space Station and the extensive training he endures. Students

had the opportunity to ask him thoughtful, rigorous questions, which they prepared as part of their weekly standards-based science instruction.

This special assembly was made possible through Sunny Brae's partners at Boeing. Now in its fifth year, "Boeing Buddies" come to Sunny Brae each week during their lunch hour and work with selected students in the areas of literacy, math and science. The "Buddies" act as mentors for these students, staying with them as they progress through the grade levels.

A special thank you to the Boeing Employees Hispanic Network (BEHN) for making this event possible.



Sunny Brae Elementary School fourth and fifth graders, Principal Randy Haegge and Assistant Principal Caren Guthman meet with NASA Astronaut Lt. Commander Dominic Antonelli. The event was part of the school's "Boeing Buddies" academic mentor program.

District B

Superintendent: Sue Shannon

5200 Lankershim Blvd.

North Hollywood, CA. 91601

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www.lausd.k12.ca.us/district_b/

Recently, Local District B and three of its schools, Arminta and Fernangeles elementary schools and Sun Valley Middle School were recipients of nationally recognized awards in the areas of parent partnership and protecting the school environment.

For the fourth year in a row, District B

received the NNPS (National Network of Partnership Schools) Partnership District Award from Johns Hopkins University led by Charlotte Castagnola, Parents as Learning Partners Facilitator. Local District B has continually improved its program by writing annual leadership plans, keeping a portfolio on program progress and using NNPS research-based tools and evaluations.

Some of the district's noteworthy efforts include developing a short and concise brochure outlining goals for developing community partnerships and ensuring that every school has a welcoming environment for collaboration. Among the many activities district leaders conducted a "Keys to Effective Partnerships" conference in which 50-plus school teams developed comprehensive partnership programs using the NNPS Handbook.

Following in the Local District's

footsteps, Arminta Elementary School also was recognized by Johns Hopkins University with the 2003 Partnership School Award for its excellent family involvement program. An "Action Team" made up of school personnel introduced activities to address reading and math goals and attendance. The Action Team members hosted a Welcome Back to School Night with a Parent Information Booth to introduce families to opportunities for involvement. To ensure the effectiveness of their activities, the Action Team staff evaluates all activities and reviews the programs at the end of the year in a retreat-like atmosphere.

The LAUSD and the National Green Flag Program honored Sun Valley Middle School and Fernangeles Elementary School for their "outstanding work in protecting students from environmental health hazards."

The Green Flag Program helps schools become healthier places for kids and nature, and teaches students about a school's environment. In the program, parents, teachers and students work together to investigate environmental issues in their school, identify problems, create solutions and improve their school environment. The Green Flag Program also teaches students how to take positive actions in school.



Fernangeles Elementary School is a winner of the National Green Flag Award for helping to become a healthier place and improve its school environment. Photographed in the center (left to right) is Eve Samet, assistant principal; Karen Jaye, principal, and far right, State Senator Richard Alarcon.

News from our Local Districts

District C

Superintendent: Robert Collins

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www.lausd.k12.ca.us/district_c/

District C is providing a new resource for parents to assist them with their child's academic success and help them prepare their child for college. All parents of students in grades 7 through 11 are receiving a CD in the mail this month.

The CD, entitled "Everything Parents & Students Need to Know About the Road to

College," addresses many issues that concern parents. These topics include Your School Counselor, Your School Transcript, A Comparison Between High School and College, The College Admission Process, College Testing Information, The World of Work & Career, Saving for College, How to Apply for Financial Aid, Time Management, Study Skills, Note Taking, Test Taking Strategies, LAUSD Graduation Requirements and much more.

Bob Collins, Superintendent of Local District C, said, "High schools do their best to provide parents and students with college information on an ongoing basis. However, there is still a need for a reference guide for this material, a place where they can immediately access information regarding college admissions, applications, financial aid, testing and preparation."

This CD provides such access. Information is clearly indexed, easily available and comes in English and Spanish. There is a wealth of information for parents to help guide their children to make the most of their middle and senior high school years. It is a supplement to the efforts of the school's guidance or college counselor, providing both

information and guidance through the high school curriculum and college application process.

This information levels the playing field for all parents and enhances the post-secondary opportunities for each Local District C student.



Staff at Birmingham High School review a new CD aimed at assisting parents with their child's academic success. Bottom row, left to right: Jane Blitz, college counselor; Carrie Frankenstein, counselor; Dianne Deomampo, counselor; Marsha Rybin, assistant principal and Mark Rosenthal, counselor.

District D

Superintendent: Ronni Ephraim

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www.lausd.k12.ca.us/district_d/

In the context of education, we define differentiation as a teacher reacting responsively to a learner's needs. A teacher who is differentiating understands a student's need to work with a group, have additional teaching on a particular skill, delve more deeply into a topic or have help on a specific reading passage. The teacher responds

actively and positively to the student's needs. Differentiation is attending to the learning needs of a particular student or small group of students to help them meet or exceed standards.

Principals and elementary literacy coaches in Local District D met together with

Jerry Lebo to explore ways to optimize the use of Independent Work Time (IWT) in *Open Court* for high quality differentiation of instruction. The primary focus of the professional development was to examine ways to close the achievement gap by learning to implement IWT in a proactive and planned manner. Principals and coaches discussed strategies for analyzing and using periodic assessment data to plan based on student needs.

Open Court Reading Independent Work Time provides teachers with opportunities to personalize instruction for the students in their classroom. Teachers provide additional challenging assignments for high achieving students and target assistance for students who need additional support to meet standards. This is an essential component of furthering our Local District D goal to close the achievement gap and ensure that every child meets or exceeds state standards.

District E

Superintendent: Vacant

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Los Angeles, CA. 90010

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www.lausd.k12.ca.us/district_e/

Recognizing the importance of science in the education of our elementary school students, Local District E has established an Elementary Science Cadre. One fourth and one fifth grade teacher from each of our 48

elementary schools serve as members of this cadre.

The cadre, which meets on a regular basis, has been busy delving into the

elementary science standards. They have spent time aligning the standards to the Harcourt Science text, and identifying what additional resources might be necessary to help students reach mastery of the standards. Future tasks for cadre members include developing assessments and model lessons.

Local District E Elementary Science Cadre members serve as a resource at their school sites. They are integral members of the school professional development teams, ready to help teachers at all grade levels to understand the science standards and plan appropriate lessons.

News from our Local Districts

District F

Superintendent: Richard Alonzo

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features of a culturally responsive classroom. The objectives were to increase knowledge about the work of small learning communities throughout the country; to listen and learn from one another as well as our students; and to outline the steps that will move the staffs forward in the transformation of their high schools.

Keynote speakers Tony Alvarado and Jeannie Oakes set the stage for valuable conversations.

A youth panel featuring students from Belmont, Bravo, Downtown Magnets, Lincoln and Wilson high schools proved to be one of the most powerful elements of the symposium. Students provided testimony to the importance of education with meaning.

A look at types of data, access to data, and use of data provided the group with a baseline of information that will allow them to collect meaningful information about their schools. Information about our students' performance has made a strong case for transforming our high schools.

How much longer can we justify the current state of affairs when 1,000 ninth grade students begin high school and four years later the graduating class comprises approximately 500 seniors? Workshops on "Personalization," facilitated by Cris Gutierrez, Dr. John Hyland, Dr. Nancy Parachini and Edmundo Rodriguez led the groups through exercises that identified the features of personalization and high performance at the school site.

For additional information on the Small Learning Communities Initiative, contact Dr. Rosa Maria Hernández at (323) 224-3127.



Participants at the Small Learning Communities Symposium share ideas and learnings on the benefits of more culturally responsive classrooms, high performance school communities and more.

District G

Superintendent: Sharon Robinson

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materials to students and their families who were interested in pursuing higher education and careers in the military service.

Councilman Nate Holden and former Crenshaw High School principal and LAUSD School Superintendent Sydney Thompson were guest speakers.

• In its continuing efforts to involve families in the Secondary Literacy Plan, the Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) held its annual Family Reading Night on

On October 14, Audubon Middle School hosted an "Academy Night" sponsored by Congresswoman Diane Watson. Representatives from the Air Force, West Point, Naval, Merchant Marine academies presented information and application

October 28. Literacy games, readings, activities and rewards for reading activities for all ages and interests were emphasized.

• Back to School Night at Mid-City Magnet School was "mathematical." Following an informative professional development session, presented by math coach Doreen Klein-Fleder, Mid-City experienced a fabulous turnout for Back to School Night.

Our teachers were well prepared as parents filed into classrooms anxious to share information about course curriculums, class work policy, homework policy and grading scales. Then the fun came. It was simply "mathematical." Teachers conducted fun learning activities that involved both students and parents.

The elementary classroom teachers engaged parents and students in activities that ranged from basic math to geometry. While in the middle school classroom, parents and students were engrossed in algebraic equations to geometric figures. Teachers, parents and students are looking forward to another night filled with math fun.

District H

Superintendent: Rowena Lagrosa

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www.lausd.k12.ca.us/district_h/

learning community," explains Kirsten Hibert, director of Instructional Support Services for Local District H. "From our students to our most experienced administrators, smaller learning communities are proving to be effective. So we've restructured our principals' meeting into smaller learning communities."

Six small groups—or cohorts—of principals replace the previous single meeting. Each cohort begins the day with a Learning Walk at a different school. (By the end of the year, every District school will have been visited by at least one principals' cohort.) In the afternoon, the principals are joined by their schools' leadership teams including assistant principals, math and literacy coaches, and others for guided professional reading, instructional training and discussions—all in the context of the small cohesive cohort.

The principals' groups meet again the following afternoon for more private meetings. "It is valuable time because we can talk freely about concerns and get suggestions and feedback within the smaller learning environment of the cohort," says Lee White, principal at Mariana Elementary School. She praises the new grouping because it brings elementary leadership teams into level-alike cohorts

The monthly principals' meeting with jammed agendas, baskets of paper handouts and a room full of restless participants are gone from Local District H. In its place is an instructional model designed to bring to life the District's goals for learning. "We are building a true professional

separate from those of middle or high schools.

The new model "brings coherence to what we do," says Rowena Lagrosa, superintendent for Local District H. "The power of small learning communities for student success is well-documented. To implement the concept with our school leadership meetings, as well, is a principled strategy."



Principals from schools in Local District H, above, have benefited from a new instructional model that focuses on the District's goals for learning.

News from our Local Districts

District I

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banking and finance professionals) to bring economic self-sufficiency and a sustained spirit of revitalization to students in the third, fourth and fifth grades through a four, one-hour "Banking On Our Future" curriculum.

The program is aligned with California math standards and focuses on financial basics including the history of money, saving, budgeting, banking, credit, investments, needs vs. wants, earning vs. receiving.

Tyrese believes in giving back to the community that he calls home. He recalled playing on the very same monkey bars, his favorite playground area, some 15-20 years earlier. When Barbara Francois, the principal, told him that the playground equipment was off limits to the students due to safety reasons, his face sagged with disbelief. She told him of her dream to provide a state-of-the-art playground for the students. In a generous offer of support, Tyrese pledged to help Grape

Excitement permeated the hallways and classrooms at Grape Street School on October 21 when singer, actor and model Tyrese visited the South Los Angeles campus, which he attended as a child.

Tyrese was joined in partnership with Operation Hope, Inc. (which includes



Singing sensation Tyrese recently visited Grape Street Elementary School where he participated with students in a financial literacy program organized by Operation Hope, Inc. Students learned financial basics using a "Banking on Our Future" curriculum.

Street Elementary School find the funds it will take to realize that dream.

"We are highly elated and appreciative to have Tyrese, John Bryant, the founder of Operation Hope, Inc., and all the finance professionals to join in partnership with us to teach our students economic literacy," said Francois. "The students will be better equipped and empowered to make sound financial choices now and in the future."

District J

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campfires as 40 guest readers paired with teachers to mesmerize students and their parents with tales from children's literature.

Guest readers came from various parts of the school community including the police and fire departments, city leaders, radio and television personalities, along with District J staff. Sandy Moore, director of School Services, and a guest reader, said that the event "was a wonderful way of extending literacy from the school to the home."

Jose Hernandez, principal at Bryson Avenue Elementary School, was thrilled with the number of families that participated in the event. He's already thinking about next year. The school's vision is to create a community of readers where children are not only taught to read, but learn to love to read.

More than 450 families gathered at South Gate Park for Bryson Avenue Elementary School's Family Reading Night "Stories Around A Campfire" on October 16. Families brought blankets, sleeping bags and pillows to sit around simulated



Bryson Avenue Elementary School Principal Jose Hernandez was interviewed by Channel 52 reporter Toni Romero at the school's family reading night, "Stories Around a Campfire." Ms. Romero also served as a guest reader.

District K

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professional development for teachers' of the nine Elementary Schools for Advanced Studies and Avalon Gardens. Selected teachers will attend a series of demonstration lessons and consultations on differentiated instruction and curriculum.

The series will focus on differentiated instruction utilizing *Open Court* and social studies.

Topics will include depth and complexity, learning centers, instructional strategies, discussion techniques, independent study and using technology. The selected teachers will be able to effectively transfer the same curriculum and pedagogy to all their students thus helping to close the achievement gap.

This is Dr. Kaplan's third year collaborating with Local District K to strengthen

Local District K, in conjunction with Dr. Sandra Kaplan, Associate Clinical Professor of Education at the University of Southern California, has designated Avalon Gardens Elementary School as a demonstration site.

Dr. Kaplan will provide

teachers' competencies to educate gifted and high ability students. The demonstration site at Avalon Gardens Elementary School provides an innovative training center for both student and teacher participants.

