



the Parent press



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"Yes, We Can – For Our Children" Was Rallying Cry to 2009 Summit



LAUSD parents filled the training workshops offered at the Parent Summit. At the Conversation with the School Board, parents lined up (inset) to ask questions of Board members.

"You can't drop off your child at kindergarten and expect that child to automatically graduate thirteen years later," declared Dr. Mary Bacon, the keynote speaker for LAUSD's 13th Annual Parent Summit.

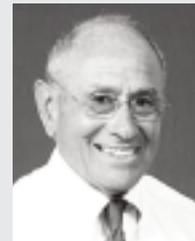
"Parents can and must become equal partners in the education of their children." That was the call to action for the 5000 people who attended the 2009 Parent Summit at the Los Angeles Convention Center on April 25th. The conference was held in conjunction with *InfoTech*, the annual technology showcase where student computer whizzes and wizardry are presented to the public.

The largest parent conference of its type in the US, the Summit drew education

experts, the district's highest officials, and thousands of parents to seminars, conversations, and messages designed to strengthen their role in supporting academic achievement and successful futures for all children. LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines called it "inspiring to see so many dedicated parents in these difficult times." Parent Collaborative Chair Mary Johnson promised, "Yes, we can make the changes our children deserve by empowering ourselves through learning."

For Jose Sandoval, this was his third Parent Summit. "They always help me with my kids and with leadership work at school," he explains. His children attend Gompers Middle School and Figueroa Elementary. "I learned how to help with math problems in this morning's work-

Message from
Ramon C. Cortines
Superintendent of Schools



We consider the parents and guardians of our students an

integral part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) family. We always need your support and help in good times, but especially during this very tough economic period.

What can you do? There are many ways that you can help students and the school district. Make sure your children attend

No matter how bad the budget crisis gets, there will be a teacher in every classroom.

school every day and arrive at school early or on time, ready to learn, and stay until dismissal. After school, make sure your children complete homework and all other assignments.



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Parent Summit 2009

"Yes We Can – For Our Children" from page 1

shop," he reported. Over 25 different topics were presented in the workshops ranging from Healthy Eating to Safe Use of the Internet. A noticeable change from previous years was the attention and attendance at the workshops. "Many evaluations asked us to make them longer," reported Herlinda Donis, Chair of the Summit. "And most were completely full."

"I've gotten such good information," said Century Park School parent Elaine Green, as she described the workshop on teaching your child to read. In the Conversation with Board Members seminar, a long line of parents asked Monica Garcia, Julie Korenstein, and Richard Vladovic to

protect teachers from layoffs and to save effective local school programs.

LAUSD parents received the annual Theodore Alexander Awards for outstanding volunteer service. They are Sylvia Sosa, Herlinda Donis, Diane Evans, Bertha Rios, and Irma Munoz.



Sylvia Sosa, Irma Munoz, Bertha Rios.

Parents Stepping Up to the Crisis

There's no question that the new school year will not look like any previous one in recent LAUSD memory. The budget crisis continues to get worse: an additional \$131 million must come out by July 1st, a minimum of \$142 million more must be slashed for next school year on top of the \$1.3 billion shortfall projected for the next two years. School officials call it "devastating."

Parents are joining the effort to deal with this fiscal crisis. "We must be watchdogs. We can't just drop off our kids at school and hope for the best anymore," says longtime parent leader Bill Ring. "Parents should be asking how money is being spent on their own campuses and take leadership positions around these issues." At various schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District, parents are stepping up to help protect the education of their children.

- LAUSD's School Site Councils – which are made up of parents, teachers, students, and staff – decided to buy back 2408 teachers' positions and 106 counselors who had been marked for possible layoffs.
- Parents raised money to pay to retain PE coaches at several schools in the San Fernando Valley.
- At Tarzana Elementary School, a schedule is filling up as parents sign on to help teachers cope with the extra work of larger classes.

- Burroughs Middle School held eight parent meetings within six weeks so parents could learn more about budget considerations so that they might protect their Single Plan from being sacrificed to the state's fiscal crisis.

"We have to pay attention. Our parents are most concerned about teachers being fired. Changes are going to be made over the summer," predicts Sheri Osborne, Parent Center Director at Chatsworth High School. "We could come back to school in September and say 'What the heck happened?'"

Mobilizing Parent Action

Nearly 200 parents and community leaders attended a Local District #3 forum to discuss how they can influence changes at their schools. Kate Anderson, a Mar Vista parent who helped organize the event, reports, "There was much frustration expressed, and everyone agreed that parents must get involved in more concrete ways, such as learning about the Education Codes, paying attention to and being heard at school board meetings and by state legislators." School Board member Marlene Canter urged parents to work to change some of the Codes, such as the strict requirements on the use of categorical funds. She provided an example. "When money comes for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs and all of it is not used, the funds must go back to the state," she explained. "In a crisis like this, schools should be able to access that funding for other needs." The audience consensus was that parent energy and input must not stop; the issues are too critical. Additional sessions called "Continuing Conversations" will resume in July. Those who want to join can email kate.anderson@marvista.org for more information.

Your Opinion Counts!



Members of the Parent Community Advisory Council for Local District #2 were schooled in the parent survey before it went home to most LAUSD parents.



Los Angeles Unified School District wants to know what parents think about their children's schools. ... The answers will be compiled into the 2008-09 School Report Card to be released in January 2010.

Not only do parent opinions count, the new school report card will not be as useful without them.

Los Angeles Unified School District wants to know what parents think about their children's schools. A district-wide survey asks their opinions about a variety of local school issues ranging from the quality of instruction to campus safety to parent engagement. The answers will be compiled into the 2008-09 School Report Card to be released in January 2010.

This first annual survey has been distributed for parents, students, and teachers to complete. "It will provide a picture of each school's performance," explains Sam Gilstrap of LAUSD's School Report Card Team. "That picture will show what needs to be improved, encouraged, or changed." Parents can weigh in on questions such as how welcoming your school is, how parents interact with teachers, staff, and other parents on campus, and how good communication is between home and school.

At Lankershim Elementary School, parent Jenny Zelada says, "All parents must partici-

pate." The surveys for parents of elementary students were sent home in May with the children. A sample of about 50% parents of middle and high school students received their surveys by mail. An online link is available for parents who want to file their input by computer. All responses are confidential.

"Our goal is for parents to have a voice in how we look at school performance," said LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines. Research shows that children do much better when their parents are an active part of their education. Maclay Middle School parent Gus Aranda calls the report card "a good idea, if parents are truthful, and the district pays attention to the results."

A series of meetings with parents and other stakeholders will be held in July and August to talk about the survey responses and how they can be useful to schools and families. ●

For additional information and to complete the survey online follow the link:
<http://www.reportcard.lausd.net>

You will be asked to enter the code that appears on the paper survey you received. If you do not have a code, please contact us at:
reportcard@lausd.net

Let us know where your child attends, and we'll provide you with a code within 48 hours.



Before they could take computers home, parents and students were required to attend Saturday workshops that provided instruction in operations ranging from hooking up the computer to use of the state-of-the-art learning software.

El Sereno Parents Receive Free Computers

More than 250 El Sereno Middle School families now have computers at home as part of a national program that aims to build learning resources that will improve academic achievement for underserved students.

These parents of El Sereno's sixth graders received free computers from Computers for Youth (CFY), a non-profit organization that provides the equipment, software, and training so parents and students can have their own "home learning center."

El Sereno Middle School was chosen after an intense evaluation process. "The school and its parents must share the vision

that sixth grade is an important time for children and parents to work together and be willing to attend workshops to learn how to best use the technology for student learning," explains CFY's California

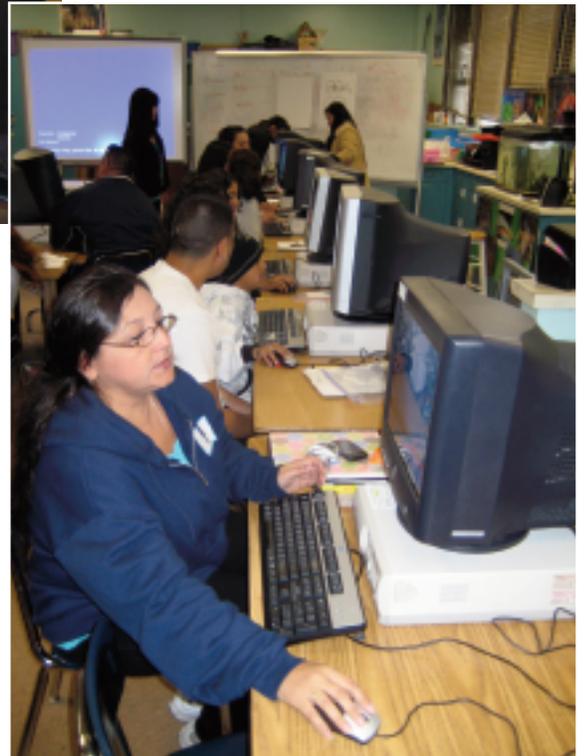
Director Emily Simas, "That was El Sereno."

The recipients—student and parents—learned how the computers and the 14 different programs loaded into them worked during weekend workshops. "The software ranges from English lan-

guage arts to physics," says Doug Franklin, El Sereno's Assistant Principal who wrote the application to CFY. "The kids forget they are learning because it's so much fun. And it's quality time because parent and child are working together."

"The school and its parents must share the vision that sixth grade is an important time for children and parents to work together and be willing to attend workshops to learn how to best use the technology for student learning..."

Emily Simas CFY's California Director



Marisol Enriquez is one of those parents who is benefiting from the Computers for Youth program. She says the new learning center is busy in her home. "I was really glad to participate in such a thorough workshop. I use a computer at work," she says, "but the instructional software on our new computer is different. The training was very good."

This is only the beginning for El Sereno Middle School. CFY provides a three-year program, each year providing free computers to families of sixth graders. "By 2011, our entire student population will have home learning centers," says Mr. Franklin.

First Break: Jobs for Teenagers



For some LAUSD students, their first employment experience comes in the First Break office, where they learn how to canvass LA employers for job openings for other teens.

In tough economic times, getting a job can be difficult for anyone. Finding work for teenagers is worse. Which is why First Break is so valuable to LAUSD students. First Break is the employment center that links district students aged fourteen to eighteen and above to the world of work. The office provides access to jobs across greater Los Angeles at a rate of 20,000 job listings a year.

Started in 1973, LAUSD's First Break partners with many companies to locate positions for students. "It's not only burger jobs. We focus on jobs that can lead and prepare students for careers as well as work with employers who offer tuition reimbursement programs for college," says Victor Gonzalez, one of First Break's Job Developers. "That includes jobs within law enforcement, the culinary arts,

office/clerical, education, health, service and retail sales. For example, there are opportunities with the LA Sheriff's Department on our list for paid jobs and non-paid positions, such as Explorers."

Students are hired by First Break itself. They work in the office, calling local employers to harvest work positions to add to the postings. Fourteen-to-seventeen-year-old workers must have a work permit. With the assistance of First Break, last year more than 12,000 permits were issued for students who got a job through the LAUSD office.

Jennifer Robledo, a graduate of Belmont High School, credits First Break with building work skills and personal confidence enabling her to obtain her current position in the admissions department of a local hospital. "I used to be so shy and nervous. Then I started to work in the First Break office and learned how to communicate well and be responsible," Jennifer recalls. "Now the hospital praises my ability to communicate with patients." For more information about First Break, call 213-241-0878.

We Have Moved!

Parent Community Services Branch is relocating. Our new address is:

1360 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90026

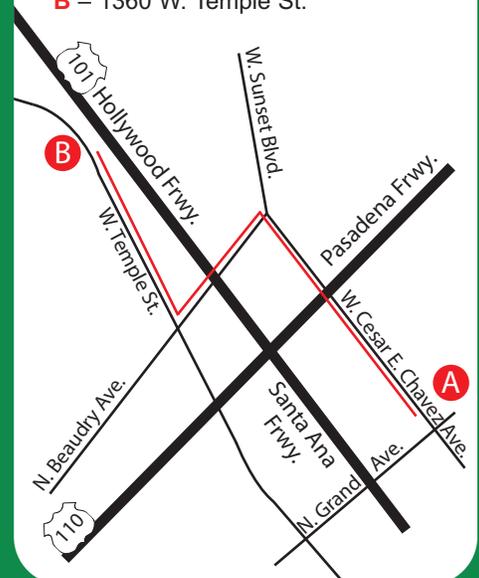
(phone remains the same)
213-481-3350

(fax remains the same)
213-481-3392

The move from our former home at 701 W. Cesar Chavez Avenue is part of the district's efforts to cut costs. Those offices were in leased space. The new location is owned by LAUSD. We have an auditorium, conference room, and child care space in addition to our offices.

We expect to be fully functioning on West Temple Street by August 1st and look forward to greeting you in our new facilities. This map shows how close the old and new locations are. Come visit us!

- A** – 701 W. Cesar E. Chavez Ave.
- B** – 1360 W. Temple St.



Please enter through Room 104

Spotlight on Parent Involvement

At first glance, it looked like the parents and children from Berendo Middle School were having a good time at the LA Zoo.

And they were. But the outing was also the culmination of a unique intersession program to increase English language fluency for middle school students who have been in the U.S. less than three years and are just learning the

language. ZooSchool, a four-week class held throughout the year during off-track time, is part of the Emergency Immigrant Education Program (EIEP). “The curriculum is a fusion of science and English language learning,”

explains Walter Castro, EIEP Coordinator. “The kids meet daily for four weeks at the zoo. They learn about animals; they interview zookeepers and do hands-on science and zoology projects—all with the goal of learning English.”

The highlight of each intersession program is at the EIEP ZooSchool Family Day. With parents and siblings as their audience, the students lead tours of the zoo and make presentations about what they’ve learned—in English. “These students were the shy, quiet kids in the back of the room at their school.

ZooSchool gives them confidence, new language skills, and a sense of community,”

adds Mr. Castro, as nearby an EIEP student explains the biology, behaviors, and adaptations of a komodo dragon to the families. The ZooSchool is

open to LAUSD middle schoolers at multi-track schools who are at the beginning ELD levels and is operated by Beyond the Bell.



The theme of the recent Local District #6 Family and Community Resource Fair was right on target for the times.

LD 6 co-hosted the event that provided resources and information on *Surviving The Economic Downturn*. Held at Southeast High School, the Fair included nearly thirty different workshops on topics such as foreclosure prevention, stress management, and credit repair. Hundreds of parents and children attended the seminars, talked to representatives from healthcare and employment agencies, and also enjoyed lunch and prizes. “The Resource and Wellness Fair was sponsored by Local District 6 and the six cities within the district boundaries.



Parents Say Farewell to District Leaders



Parent volunteers thanked Rita Caldera (second from left) for her service to all LAUSD parents.

parents the recognition they deserve," says Rita Caldera, who retires this summer after serving five years as Assistant Superintendent of PCSB.

"Our parents have learned to be strong advocates for their children. The next task is to train school staffs to recognize, respect, and utilize parents as the resource they are."

Mrs. Caldera is among a group of LAUSD administrators who traditionally have been supporters of the importance of parent involvement in the education of all

children. These long-time district leaders include Richard Alonzo, Superintendent of Local District 4, Carmen Schroeder, Superintendent of Local District 5, Carol Truscott, Superintendent of Local District 3, and Donnalyn Anton, Associate Superintendent, Special Education.

Mrs. Caldera was appointed to head PCSB in 2004 succeeding the late Dr. Theodore Alexander. Her career in education has spanned 36 years – all of them with Los Angeles Unified School District. "As a teacher, school principal, and a district administrator, I've always recognized the importance of parents and what they contribute," she reflects. "Look at this year's Parent Summit. It's a good example of the quality work that results when parents work together." ●

"The biggest challenge of my work with Parent/Community Services Branch has been to get

Parent Outreach 21st Century-Style

"This is the first time I've attended the Parent Summit. I got a call about it and it sounded worthwhile," said Chase Street School parent Lupe Jara as she headed for one of the conference workshops.

That call and 480,000 others carried an invitation for the Summit to parents and teachers from Christopher Downing, Parent/Community Services Branch Administrator. "It's the first time we used the system, and it worked," he reported.

That system is Connect-Ed, a recent addition to the district's ability to reach out to constituents: parents, teachers, classified employees, even high school students who need a wake-up call to get to class on time.

Downing's call was his recorded message transmitted at startling speed into phone calls across the district. "Parents got the message," reports Paul Ishimaru, Chief Technology Director. "The system reports back the number of calls answered live or by machine, hang ups or busy signals. It reached 77% of calls, and that's effective outreach."

Since April 2008, every LAUSD school has had a Connect-Ed link. It can be used for general announcements, calls home about student absence, emergency calls, and preprogrammed teacher calls about student performance – praise or concern. "Look at attendance results. The technology can call parents of secondary students morning and afternoon when teens miss two or three periods," says Mr. Ishimaru. "It calls elemen-



The extensive Connect-Ed technology is operated by just two people, Cheryl Ruiz and Paul Ishimaru.

tary parents of absent kids, asking them to "push one" if the child is sick, "push two" for a doctor appointment, etc. Right away the school has a report. We've seen attendance improve in this first full year of Connect-Ed."

Cheryl Ruiz and Paul Ishimaru administer the technology. Last year, 35,000 messages were sent in 20 million calls. This year, the number could top 50 million. The system has never gone down. ●

Message, *continued from page 1*

What can you do specifically during these times of deep budget cuts? When children come home from school and are concerned about teachers getting laid off, parents and guardians, please, reassure them. No matter how bad the budget crisis gets, there will be a teacher in every classroom. All students can also count on having textbooks and the supplies they need.

Yes, there may be some changes. For example, students may have to share a teacher with more pupils in the classroom. When parents and guardians accept change, students have an easier time

Make sure your children attend school every day and arrive at school early or on time, ready to learn, and stay until dismissal. After school, make sure your children complete homework and all other assignments.

adjusting. Change is not always easy, but the current budget requires all of us to join together and focus on our children.

In the past, I have encouraged parents, guardians and friends of LAUSD to write to the elected officials who make the laws in Sacramento and Washington D.C. that decide how much funding this District will receive. Such advocacy remains helpful, but in this era of uncertainty, reassuring our students must come first. ●