



the Parent press

12th Annual Parent Summit

April 12, 2008
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The Newsletter for LAUSD Parents Vol. 12, No. 2 • Winter 2008

"Many Cultures, One Vision"

Annual Parent Summit Set for April 12th

LAUSD Parents: Save This Important Date!

12th Annual Parent Summit, Saturday, April 12, 2008, 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
Los Angeles Convention Center, 1201 South Flower Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Thousands of parents from every school across the Los Angeles Unified School District know how valuable the annual Parent Summit is. A full day of workshops, instruction, and conversations focus on the issues that are important to the academic and personal success of our children.

- Meet your School Board Member
- Attend seminars led by education experts and community leaders
- No cost to all parents and guardians of LAUSD students
- Continental breakfast, lunch, free parking
- Translation is provided
- Student performances throughout the day

InfoTech, the district's annual showcase of technology, will be held in partnership with the Summit so that parents can enjoy the computer mastery of students and teachers.

The 12th Annual Parent Summit is planned and produced by parents who invite you to join the theme by wearing your cultural attire, if you desire.

Please note the new date of April 12, 2008, a change from that announced in the previous issue.



Parent Summit Planning Committee

Transforming LAUSD's Failing Schools

They are labeled High Priority Schools. Thirty-four schools—17 middle and 17 high schools—identified as the lowest-performing secondary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District are the focus of a major Strategic Plan to improve instruction and student achievement.

They are classified as Program Improvement (PI) Year 5. Created by Superintendent David L. Brewer III, this Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools is a roadmap for academic improvement first for the 98,000 students in the 34 identified schools, and then for more secondary schools in preceding years.

How were these 34 High Priority Schools chosen?

For the past five years, these schools failed to make AYP (adequate yearly progress as defined by No Child Left Behind), API goals (California's progress measure), and have not surpassed 600 on the API. Between 42% and 75% of students in these schools scored "Far Below" and "Below Basic" on California Standards Tests in 2006-07.

What are the major components of the HPS Plan?

High quality, well-trained teachers will present rigorous standards-based curriculum to all students, with special understanding of the needs of our large population of English learners.

Please See **FAILING SCHOOLS**, page 4

Message from

David L. Brewer III
Superintendent of Schools



2008

is an action year for all of us committed to preparing our children to be college-prepared and

career-ready. At the thirty-four High Priority Schools, stakeholders—including parents—are completing their plans for improved student achievement that will translate into new strategies and academic directions when the 2008-2009 school year begins in July. Across the District, our Dropout Prevention and Recovery teams are reaching out in unique ways to young people who are no longer in school. Some specialists are making home visits to talk directly to students about returning to school so that they can earn their high school diplomas.

We've joined with the Los Angeles Community College District in an historic partnership to open more pathways to college for our students. Our collabor-

Please See **MESSAGE**, page 4

Invited For Lunch



LAUSD's Executive Chef Mark Baida chats with food critics at Bravo Medical Magnet HS.

The school cafeteria is as important to academic achievement as the library or English classroom, according to Dennis Barrett, LAUSD's Food Services Director.

Please See **INVITED FOR LUNCH**, page 6



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Message from:

Rita Caldera, Assistant Superintendent, Specially Funded Programs/Parent Community Services
Sharon Curry, Assistant Superintendent, Student Integration Services



As we begin 2008, we would like to take this opportunity to

wish you a happy and productive new year. This is a time for resolutions and

focusing on our priorities for the new year.

Superintendent Brewer has created a Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools for implementation this year.

Although the Strategic Plan will first be implemented in those schools identified to be in most need, the plan will serve the District as a framework to improve all schools.

The new directions of the Strategic Plan for High Priority Schools include very specific roles for parents. For example, an inclusive and welcoming environment will be expected on each campus as parents are encour-

aged to visit classrooms, attend parent conferences, learn about the instructional goals necessary for a quality education, and become true partners with the school in educating our children.

Academic success for our students cannot be accomplished without the committed effort of our parents. At home with your children and at school with all students, your hands-on participation and support can transform failing or below average achievement into soaring improvement.

Plans are only words on paper until administrators, teachers, and parents turn them into action. We are asking much of our students in their rigorous, standards-based classrooms because improving student achievement takes hard work. As parents, we must join this effort. We all play a vital role and must share the responsibility to educate our students. ●

Homework Helpers

The standing-room-only line is a sign of success for rock concerts, movies, and the Homework Club of Castle Heights Elementary School. Monday

through Thursday at 2:30, students hurry to secure a place in the library for homework and help. The academic support comes from parent volunteers who have been staffing the Club since September. Sharon Novey, a mother of two Castle Heights students, is the organizer. "Most days we have 35 kids, and that's capacity," she says. "And we have at least two parents plus our librarian Roz Gallet to be homework helpers."

Castle Heights parents organized the Homework Club and piloted it in 2006. "It was successful from the beginning," Ms. Novey explains. "Parents circulate through the library to help anyone who asks. We have about twenty women and men who volunteer on a regular basis." Students also have access to the computers in the library as well as to supplies—like rulers, paper, and scissors—often needed to complete a proj-



Students lean in to get help from parent volunteer Sharon Novey on a complicated math problem during the after-school Homework Club at Castle Heights ES.

ect. If students finish their work before the hour is up, they get encouragement and suggestions from Ms. Gallet to find a book to read. An incentive system awards a star to a student who completes a Homework Club session. Ten stars result in a prize, not to mention the impact on learning.

Castle Heights parents are proud of their project. "Often kids don't have the opportunity or a quiet place to do schoolwork at home. Our goal was to provide a safe and supportive environment where kids could do homework with adults who wanted to help them. The Homework Club does that really well," says Ms. Novey. "Parents and their children often thank us for that." ●

Putting Parents Back in Middle School

Diana Chapman has always been an involved parent. When her son enrolled in elementary school, she became an active volunteer around the campus. However, as middle school approached, her interest became a passion. "I believe in putting parents back in middle school. Parents who participate in grade school disappear when the kids go to sixth grade. Our children need us more than ever during these middle years," she declares. "So I began asking other Dana parents to step up with me." The result is an after school program called LA Network for Kids.

The LA Network is an extensive menu of afternoon activities open to students at Dana Middle School. Many are led by parent and community volunteers teaching tennis, cooking, sports, art, Spanish. "Parent support is amazing; take Derrick Smith, our basketball coach," Diana says. "When he heard about the need, he answered the call. Now 30 Dana students are working with him every week."

Dana Middle School had no daily basketball program until Derrick Smith volunteered to create one for the LA Network. As a certified youth coach for 13 years, this father of three offers two hours of basketball skills training after school every week. But before they practice making baskets, students spend an hour on homework. "I want these kids to get ready for college and for basketball," he says with a smile.

More than 120 students are signed up for Dana Middle School's LA Network for Kids. Community organizations like the Boys and Girls Club have become active supporters; the swim group uses the Club pool. "I talk to parents. They talk to others, and we are growing," says Diana. "I believe that we get what we put in. The LA Network for Kids is a example of that." Diana offers to help parents who want to create their own programs. Call her at Dana MS, she says. The number is (310) 241-1100, and leave a message in the Main Office.

Parent volunteer Diana Chapman (second from left) is about to sample the lesson at the after-school Cooking Class in the LA Network for Kids taught by San Pedro teacher Sandy Wood.

Parents Making a Difference



Carnegie Middle School students stop by the Parent Center to visit with mentors Sheila Taylor (second from left) and Jason Holmes (far right).

Sheila Taylor's commitment to the students at Carnegie Middle School began at 5:30 a.m. at a lonely school bus stop miles from campus. "My daughter was bussed to Carnegie and I noticed that some kids were dropped off to wait alone on that dark corner," she recalls. "So I volunteered to stay there daily until the bus picked them up." That was seven years ago.

From that predawn corner to the Carnegie Parent Center, Sheila Taylor continues to watch out for students. She started a mentor program that reaches out to the students who seem to be most at-risk as referred by the principal, teachers, or by word-of-mouth. She matches teens with adults, mostly school faculty and

staff members. Currently, 93 kids are being mentored by the Carnegie team. "I have ten," Sheila explains. She meets them during lunch for conversations about staying focused, dealing with issues, or just listening. "A child often can relate better to someone who is not their parent," she says. Her mentee graduates are a proud lot. "One is now a cartoon artist for Disney. Most of my kids graduate from high school, and they come back to visit."

Sheila's efforts extend beyond the Carnegie campus. She recruits companies like Nike to donate tennis shoes and Ralph's Markets to donate gift certificates. "Kids need to be rewarded when they turn around their behavior," she says smiling. "The Mentor Program does that well." Carnegie Middle School Community agrees with the idea of rewards. This year it gave Sheila the Parent of the Year Award. ●



Parents on \$13 Billion Bond Oversight Committee



Elizabeth Bar-El
and
Charles Bergson

LAUSD parents have a voice on the School Construction Bond Citizens' Oversight Committee (BOC).

Actually they have two voices. Elizabeth Bar-El and Charles Bergson were appointed by the LA School Board in 2005 and reappointed for a second two-year term to serve as parent representatives on the committee that oversees the expenditure of the district's multi-billion construction, repair, and modernization program. The 13-member committee, which also includes two representatives from PTSA groups, meets monthly and is responsible for ensuring that bond funds are spent wisely and efficiently. Both parent members applied after receiving a BOC newsletter to parents.

Elizabeth Bar-El lives in Mar Vista with her husband and two sons who attend Palms Middle School

Gifted Magnet and North Hollywood High School Zoo Magnet. "It's important to have a parent perspective on the Committee," she says. "Parents understand that kids must be at the center of the decisions." She is a senior planner for the City of Santa Monica. A graduate of LAUSD schools, she holds a B.Sc. from UC Berkeley and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.

Charles Bergson is the parent of a student at Hamilton High School and of two recent graduates of Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies in the Mid Wilshire District. Additionally, through years of coaching youth sports, Mr. Bergson frequently uses LAUSD facilities. "Our recreational facilities, like our school construction, were way behind," he says. "That reflects how

a community feels about its kids. I am advocating for more joint-use areas." He has been a registered civil engineer for over twenty-five years and is the Director of Public Works for the City of Compton. He holds a B.Sc. from the University of California Berkeley and a master's degree in public administration from California State Northridge.

"The new schools are exciting," says Ms. Bar-El. "But the largest percentage of students attend existing schools that need maintenance and repairs. We don't forget that." Mr. Bergson adds, "We don't forget fairness either. Why should a Westside school gets a second set of outdoor lights when many mid-city high schools have yet to obtain lights?"

Failing Schools, *From page 1*

Who supervises implementation of the HPS Plan at my school?

Each school site has local control, with support from the Local District leadership team.

Who designs the specifics of the Plan for my school?

Each school community will create and drive its own action plan for improvement, using the Strategic Plan framework. All stakeholders at each school should be represented in the process to create its Plan. The Plans should be written, then approved by the Local District Superintendent in March, 2008.

How can parents participate in HPS?

Parents are able to participate in various ways. From volunteering at the school, to participating on committees, or attending parenting classes, the schools need your assistance and support. Each school will have a parent center where your voice will be heard.

When does the HPS Strategic Plan go into effect?

The Plan will be completed in March 2008. Preparation for implementation will occur from March to June 2008. Implementation will be for the 2008 – 2009 school year.

What about other district schools that would benefit from such academic reform?

The High Priority Schools will serve as models from which other schools can observe and learn. Findings from the schools will be reported to the Board of Education quarterly.

LAUSD's HIGH PRIORITY SCHOOLS

Middle Schools

Audubon
Bethune
Carver
Clay
Cochran (formerly Mt. Vernon)
Drew
Edison
Gage
Gompers
Bret Harte
Hollenbeck
Los Angeles Academy
Mann
Markham
Muir
Stevenson
Virgil

Senior High Schools

Bell
Belmont
Crenshaw
Dorsey
Fremont
Garfield
Huntington Park
Jefferson
Jordan
Lincoln
Los Angeles
Manual Arts
Roosevelt
South Gate
Sylmar
Washington Preparatory
Wilson

Message, *continued from page 1*

oration encourages more high school students to take college classes concurrently and more middle school students to aspire to and become familiar with college as a goal. Parents, too, will benefit as targeted information and outreach come to them about college opportunities for their children and themselves. This partnership can be the Triple Crown for our young people: offering a high school diploma, career certification, and an associate degree.

As you can see, these first 2008 reforms need the support and energy of parents. Please join us – for your children's future. ●

Attention All Parents

12th Annual Parent Summit

Saturday April 12, 2008

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Los Angeles Convention Center
1201 South Flower Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

DOOR PRIZES

FOOD & REFRESHMENTS

ENTERTAINMENT

- This conference is open to all parents and guardians of LAUSD students.
- There is no cost to attend this conference.
- Translation will be provided.

For further information please
contact Parent Community
Services Branch
213-217-5272
Fax: 213-626-4644

- **InfoTech**—LAUSD's annual showcase of technology open to all Parent Summit attendees
- Seminars
- Meet your LAUSD Board Member

How To Register

Complete the tear-off below and mail in an envelope to:

Parent Community Services Branch
Parent Summit Registration
701 W. Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, Suite 101
Los Angeles, CA 90012

OR

Complete the tear-off below and take it to the main office at your child's school

Fax this complete page to PCSB: 213-626-4644

Completed registrations must be received by April 4, 2008

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

12th Annual Parent Summit

Los Angeles Convention Center April 12 2008

Please check

I am a parent or guardian of an LAUSD student.

I will attend the 12th Annual Parent Summit.

How many adults will attend? _____

REGISTRATION

NAME LAST		FIRST	
ADDRESS			
CITY		ZIP	
TELEPHONE			
E-MAIL			
FAX			

RETURN THIS FORM BY APRIL 4, 2008

Invited for Lunch

from page 1

That's why he is leading a major campaign to improve all aspects of the program that feeds more than 400,000 district students every day. "Nutritious and appealing food is the necessary fuel that our students need to strengthen their ability to learn," he says. "But too many bypass the school cafeterias."

The priority list is extensive. The major focus is on secondary schools. "We want to attract at least 70% of middle and high school students. Nutritional values, presentation, and taste are already changing in LAUSD kitchens, in part because a team of chefs has joined Food Services. Executive Chef Mark Baida supervised the food services at USC and the LA Music Center before coming to LAUSD.

Changes are already in place. No trans fat is used in cafeteria food anymore. Sodium is at low levels, and whole grains are used in all applicable foods. "Great start," says Mr. Barrett, who is also a certified chef. "But not enough. Too much of our food looks unappealing. And presentation is dreary. Flat pans full of items—no matter how good they are for us—will never win over a teen audience." In



The annual **Stop the Violence Conference** held in the fall drew more than 400 people to a daylong conversation and educational opportunity focused on the prevention of child abuse. Panelists from the LA District Attorney's Office, LA Police Department, mental health agencies, and educators discussed the breadth of the problem and what parents can do to protect all children.

coming months, parents will be hearing a lot about school cafeterias and student nutrition. "We are going to the community and parents to talk about what we can do for our kids," he says. If you would like to schedule parent training regarding the importance of good food for your child, call Mr. Barrett at 213-241-2998. Enlisting parent support is near the top of his menu.

Spotlight on Parent Involvement



The **Parent Center at Gage Middle School** has become a model of what local parenting education can be; relevant classes and workshops are held daily. "The topics are all about the complicated task of parenting. Adolescence is a difficult state for teens and parents as well," explains Parent Resource Liaison Carmen Morgana. "Improving communication with your adolescent, achieving consistent discipline, dealing with the challenges of sex, drugs, and gang activity are some of the most common concerns."

For more than four years, the Mental Health Association of Greater Los Angeles and the *Un Paso Mas* program have been providing free classes for parents, led by Martin Consuegra, a Marriage and Family Therapist-Intern. "The goal of the classes is to empower parents by providing information on how to detect and prevent the development of serious mental illness among adolescents," says Mr. Consuegra. "More than 1000 people have attended since this program began at Gage."

Parents in Local District 8 Win National Award

Local District 8 was the winner of the 2007 Partnership Award from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University.

The judges were "impressed with the quality of the program's teamwork, action plan, activities and progress over time," said the award announcement from Joyce Epstein, highly regarded Director of NNPS.

The centerpiece of District 8's Program is parent education, and the hub of that activity is its Parent Center Institute, a training center for building parent partnerships. Located on the campus of Carnegie Middle School, the site provides continuous parent education on a wide range of topics led by well-known presenters. For example, a recent training focused on

how to engage "new" parents, those who don't usually attend regular meetings. "We learned how to recruit parents at events like our Cinco de Mayo festival. They come for the celebration and are encouraged to participate in other ways," explained one presenter.

Parent Ombudsperson, Dr. Juanita Coleman-Merritt coordinates involvement activities for the entire local district. She points to the statistics that show when parent involvement increases, so do the scores that measure student achievement. That's why one of the major aspects of the award-winning program focuses on establishing more parent centers. Dr. Coleman-Merritt recalls the efforts of parent Tammy Wood, who—on her own—asked for a parent center at San Pedro High School. The principal answered, "No, not yet." So she set up a card table and two chairs on campus, talked to



(L-R) Alberta Roacho, Dr. Juanita Coleman-Merritt, Oelia Archerd, Dorothy Ratliff, Norma Lomento, Denise Edwards.

as many parents as she saw, and built a constituency of active volunteers. Now they have a small office to use as a parent center where Tammy has learned how to write grants to grow the program. As Dr. Coleman-Merritt describes efforts like this, "When you help the parent, you help the child."



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