Give Kids a Chance

Stop Starving Our Public Schools

UTLA United Teachers Los Angeles

www.WeArePublicSchools.org

Reclaim Our Schools LA

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WHO WE ARE

Reclaim Our Schools Los Angeles is a coalition of parents, educators, students, and community members calling for an investment in our neighborhood district schools through adequate and equitable funding to ensure that all our children have access to a truly high-quality public education. ROSLA stands with UTLA in its fight for a fair contract and to reclaim the promise of public education in Los Angeles. We ask you to join us in pushing for these educator and community demands. ROSLA is a broad-based coalition of many organizations, anchored by Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) and Students Deserve. Many members of Reclaim Our Schools LA contributed to this report. A special thanks to Rudy Gonzalves and Edgar Ortiz from LAANE and the Communications Department of UTLA.

Cover Photo: Proud students from Monroe High School

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RECLAIM OUR SCHOOLS LA

WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

We ask LA leaders and our communities to join us in pushing for these educator and community demands,* both in the current UTLA contract negotiations and through state-level action:

- **Reduce Class Size:** LAUSD's class sizes are among the biggest in California. Students have a better chance to succeed with smaller classes.
- **Improve School Safety:** LAUSD is denying our students the supports they need to succeed. LAUSD must provide them with more access to nurses, counselors, school psychologists, and more.
- **Less Testing and More Teaching:** Unnecessary standardized testing reduces critical instructional time, and low-income students of color are the most affected. LAUSD must allow educator discretion in testing.
- **Invest in Community Schools:** LAUSD must invest in successful strategies that uplift neighborhood schools. The Community Schools model, with increased parent engagement, broadened curriculum, and wraparound services, is proven to improve student outcomes.
- **Fair Wages Now:** LA's high cost of living is causing a teacher shortage. LAUSD must offer teachers a fair wage increase.
- **Support Students and Families:** LAUSD ignores real-life conditions that impact students. LAUSD must cultivate a learning environment for all students by establishing immigrant supports, ending racially biased "random" searches, and increasing green space and early education opportunities on campuses.
- **Charter School Oversight:** Unchecked expansion of the charter industry drains millions of dollars away from neighborhood schools and creates equity and transparency problems. LAUSD must protect neighborhood schools by regulating charter industry growth and charter school co-locations onto neighborhood schools.
- **Fund Our Schools:** California is the richest state in the nation, yet ranks 43rd out of 50 states in per-pupil funding. LAUSD must fight at the local, state, and national level to increase funding to $20,000 per student by 2020.

*UTLA bargaining proposals also include:

a) Reasonable work spaces for health and human services itinerants who serve special education students and students who need social-emotional support.
b) Incorporation of ethnic studies into the curriculum.
c) Support for bilingual educators to bring language instruction into the curriculum.
d) Support for adult educators to teach amid the growing demand for English instruction, career-technical courses, and other classes.
e) Parent and educator power in making decisions about how school-site funds are spent.

BACKGROUND

We need to invest in educating the children of Los Angeles—all of them, not some of them. Los Angeles leaders, starting with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) superintendent and School Board, must do more to invest in our LAUSD neighborhood public schools. The pathway forward is to reach an agreement now with educators, parents, students, and the community through the UTLA contract, and to simultaneously push for immediate action at the state level.

Marlene Sanchez
Proud Teacher

California used to be known for our high-quality public education, including one of the best arts education programs in the entire country.[1] But now, even though California is the richest state in the nation, it ranks 43rd out of 50 states in per-pupil funding.[2] In a shocking demonstration of institutional racism, as California's public school population has increased in its percentage of students of color, the state's per-pupil spending ranking among the states has fallen dramatically.

Our schools are underfunded at the state level because wealthy individuals and corporations avoid paying their fair share of taxes, starving our kids of needed resources. Rather than invest in our schools appropriately, the response has been to privatize them. After losing on school vouchers in the 1990s, billionaires turned a well-intended charter school law into their instrument of privatization and built a massive charter school industry—creating the highest number of privately run, mostly non-union corporate charter schools in the United States.

Meanwhile in LA, district leaders have done little to address class size, school safety, social-emotional staffing, electives, and other issues—leading to more parents and students leaving district schools, and the resulting decline in enrollment and deepening disinvestment from the nearly 900 neighborhood public district schools attended by over 500,000 children.[3] Making matters worse, many district leaders promote "school choice" for some instead of making every school succeed, resulting in even greater disinvestment. Children who attend high-need schools, the majority of whom are Latino and African American, are suffering the most, as the working hours and numbers of counselors and nurses have gone down, class sizes have gone up, and visionary proposals that would help, such as investment in a Community Schools model, go unanswered by the district.

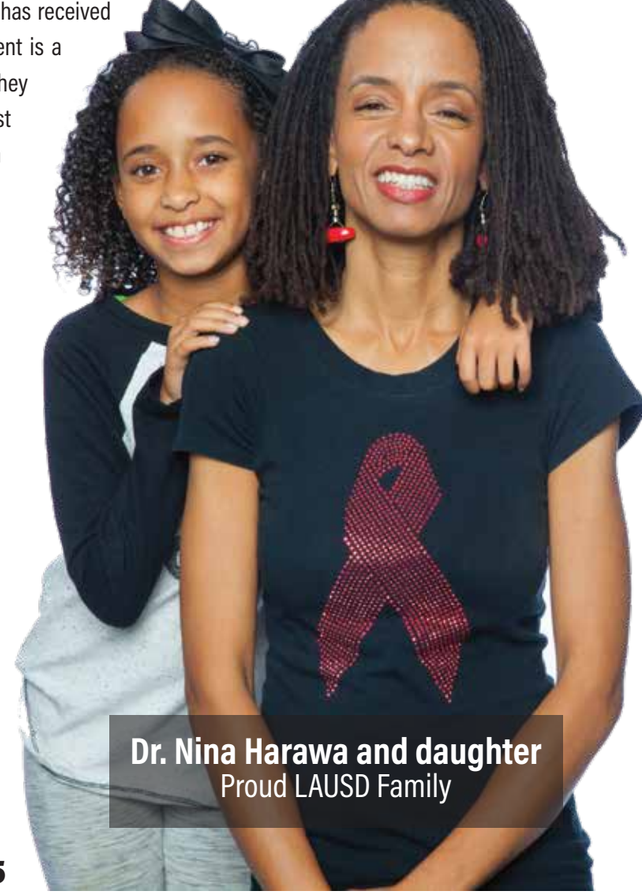
It doesn't have to be this way. LAUSD must put all of our children first. To do this, we demand that LAUSD does the following:

Reprioritize funding back into the classroom. Spend the record-breaking $1.86 billion[4] in LAUSD unrestricted reserves on students now. Stop hoarding hundreds of millions of additional dollars per year in an unaccountable and untracked books and supplies slush fund.[5] This money could go directly to improvements, yet the district is holding onto it and hiding it to create conditions of austerity as justification for public school cuts and more privatization. In a district that serves over 80% low-income students and 90% students of color, LAUSD should be immediately spending this money to meet student needs and to create the foundations for a thriving public school district. There is no far-off "rainy day" — the rainy day is now, the conditions in schools are shameful, and our kids deserve the investment.

Address unregulated charter growth. Establish a common-sense approach to regulating the growth of corporate charter schools, which have grown by 287% over the last 10 years and remove nearly $600 million per year from public district schools.[6]

Fight tooth-and-nail for additional state revenue. Increased funding is a real possibility in 2018, 2019, and 2020. The current School Board majority has received support from many wealthy backers, and the superintendent is a well-connected multi-millionaire investment banker. They should (a) support legislation to close the carried interest loophole; (b) support legislation that would require the rich to pay their fair share, including closing the inheritance tax loophole on high-end vacation and rental homes, enacting taxes on high-end business services, and appropriately taxing luxury items, such as yachts; and (c) organize wealthy elites who own valuable commercial property to form a committee in support of the Schools and Communities First initiative, which would close the corporate loophole in Proposition 13, and will be on the ballot in 2020.

Accept non-monetary proposals from UTLA. In addition to directing money to fund our students' critical needs, LAUSD should agree to proposals in the current UTLA negotiations that would improve conditions but wouldn't cost the district any money or, in fact, would save money. Examples include the proposals on testing, charter co-location, and more input for parents and educators in school-site spending.



Dr. Nina Harawa and daughter
Proud LAUSD Family

REDUCE CLASS SIZE

LAUSD's class sizes are among the biggest in California. Students have a better chance to succeed with smaller classes.

I am a senior at UCLA Community School. After graduation, I plan to be the first person in my family to go to college. In order to prepare myself, I enrolled in pre-calculus. It's supposed to be a small class because the subject is so challenging. Instead, the class is packed. More than 40 of us are stuffed into the classroom—we even have to share desks. Though my peers sometimes need extra help from our teacher, she has so many other students that it can be hard to keep her attention. Being in such an overcrowded space can make it really difficult to focus on learning.

Sumaiya Sabnam
Student, UCLA Community School

I teach special education at a San Fernando Valley public school, close to where I grew up. I started this school year with 26 third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students—and no assistant assigned to my class! My students require smaller group instruction and all have Individualized Education Plans that address their needs. With so many students, it's difficult to cover my lesson plan for the day. Students lose focus as I try to answer their questions and assess their comprehension.

Ten of my third graders were recently reassigned to the primary special education classroom, which now has 18 students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grade. I share classroom space with the primary special education teacher; we have to constantly move desks around and rearrange the classroom to make sure all of our students will fit. It is almost impossible to teach in small groups because of the lack of space and support.

Cindy Monzon
Special Education Teacher, Morningside Elementary School

> "More than 40 of us are stuffed into the classroom — we even have to share desks... Being in such an overcrowded space can make it really difficult to focus on learning."
>
> *— Sumaiya Sabnam*

Students like Sumaiya and teachers like Cindy deserve smaller classes. California ranks 48th out of the 50 states in student-to-teacher ratio. Some of the highest class sizes in the state, from general education to special education, are in LAUSD.

In LAUSD, there are class-size averages and caps in district policy memos and in contracts. However, Section 1.5 of the class-size article in the UTLA/LAUSD contract allows the district to unilaterally ignore those caps and averages if it chooses. Every year the district has done so, rendering caps and averages meaningless, and leading to outrageous class sizes.

Smaller class sizes help our students learn and thrive. Research supports the common-sense idea that smaller classes allow teachers to be more effective and enable students to learn more.[7] Small class sizes in early grades are linked to higher graduation rates, higher rates for graduating with honors, and lower dropout rates. They have also been shown to improve students' cognitive skills, such as engagement and attentiveness, and increase their likelihood of attending and graduating college.[8] Teachers are better able to provide one-on-one instruction and communicate effectively with families. Students from low-income families, and students in the primary grades (K-3), particularly benefit from smaller class sizes.[9]

Section 1.5 must be removed from the UTLA/LAUSD contract, and LAUSD must stop unilaterally increasing class sizes.

IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY

LAUSD is denying our students the supports they need to succeed. LAUSD must provide them with more access to nurses, counselors, school psychologists, and more.

I am a mother of three, and grandmother of three adopted grandsons. We live in South LA where one of my grandsons attends Carver Middle School, and two attend Harmony Elementary School. I have been fighting for years to get my children the resources they need at school. One child was diagnosed with ADHD and hyperactivity in third grade; another was diagnosed in kindergarten. I rely on the school's nurse, social worker, and special education teachers to navigate the school system. Although it took over two years, they have helped to develop an Individualized Education Plan for my second-oldest grandson, and have supported both my boys through emotional and traumatic issues.

I worry about my children's safety if they lose access to nurses and counselors at school. Last year, the school removed our social worker during a time when my children were dealing with traumatic events at school. I don't know if she will be replaced. Now I am afraid the same will happen with the school nurse.

Maria Osorio
Grandmother, Harmony Elementary School & Carver Middle School

Maria's fear is well-founded. LAUSD does not provide students with enough nurses and counselors. There is currently one nurse for every 1,224 LAUSD students, and nearly 40% of LAUSD schools have a nurse only one day per week. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends one nurse for every 750 students, and full-time nurses at all schools.[10]

All students must have access to a wide spectrum of support staff, such as nurses, counselors, school psychologists, and social workers. When schools lack adequate health and social services, vulnerable students, such as those with mental health challenges and learning disabilities, deal with an increased risk of declining academic performance and substance abuse.[11]

Every school should have a full-time nurse. Every secondary school should have a teacher-librarian. The district should guarantee a secondary student–counselor ratio of 500 to 1 at every school site. Schools should be able to hire full-time school psychologists, attendance counselors, and psychiatric social workers.

Moreover, in serving our most vulnerable students, LAUSD must agree to UTLA's proposals to reduce special education caseloads for educators in order for students to get the attention they deserve. Special education classes should include no more than two consecutive grades, and special education students should have opportunities to engage with general education students, rather than the segregation that often characterizes their experience.

> "I rely on the school's nurse, social worker, and special education teachers to navigate the school system."

LESS TESTING AND MORE TEACHING

Unnecessary standardized testing reduces critical instructional time, and low-income students of color are the most affected. LAUSD must allow educator discretion in testing.

As a special education teacher going into my 14th year of teaching, I know that standardized tests do not help students learn. Students with disabilities and English language learners have the most difficulty with standardized assessments, but even students who are performing at grade level may also struggle with them. Scores do not necessarily reflect the students' strengths, needs, and abilities. Last year, my students took between 43 and 50 assessments. I've seen firsthand that when students are tested too often, they shut down, get stressed out, and demonstrate symptoms of anxiety, nervousness, and negative self-image. The district must allow teachers to choose the types of assessments they will use to support their instruction, the students' learning goals, and provide authentic information about the supports students need. We dedicate numerous hours to planning curriculum and should be given the professional discretion to decide which assessments to use and how often we need to conduct them. This will allow more time for students to engage in hands-on learning, project-based learning, and collaborative and creative work.

Karla Griego
Special Education and Social Studies Teacher,
Sotomayor Center for Arts and Sciences

> "...when students are tested too often, they shut down, get stressed out, and demonstrate symptoms of anxiety, nervousness, and negative self-image."

Karla's story is not unique. Last year, LAUSD students in grades TK-6 took more than 100 standardized tests. With all of that time spent taking tests, when do students have a chance to learn? A national survey found that a majority of teachers believe that they spend too much time planning for and administering standardized tests.[12] An overwhelming majority also believe that students spend too much time taking tests.[13]

Unnecessary standardized testing reduces critical instructional time. That means less time for classroom instruction or enriching subjects like music, art, and ethnic studies. Low-income students of color are the most impacted by standardized tests, and English language learners take a much higher percentage of tests.

LAUSD must provide teachers with discretion to determine when and/or what standardized assessments are used in their classrooms beyond those required by the state or federal government. Teachers must be able to shape their instructional time so that students are not overwhelmed by unnecessary standardized tests.

INVEST IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

LAUSD must invest in successful strategies that uplift neighborhood schools. The Community Schools model, with increased parent engagement, broadened curriculum, and wraparound services, is proven to improve student outcomes.

Commmunity Schools Can Change Lives

San Fernando High School (SFHS) is in the heart of the San Fernando Valley. Its deep relationships with Valley organizations make it a critical hub for community services. SFHS boasts a full-service school-based health center operated by the Northeast Valley Health Corporation that provides behavioral health counseling, dental services, immunizations, and reproductive health screening for all students. Project GRAD Los Angeles and Cal State Northridge offer wraparound services for college academic preparedness, college affordability, and the college application process.

SFHS provides a clear example of how strong bonds between school and community benefit students. Its graduation rate surpassed 90.8% in the 2016-17 school year and graduation rates have outpaced districtwide rates since the 2010-2011 school year. The school also outpaces the district, county, and state in terms of the number of students taking the ACT. Students at San Fernando High have also been getting healthier: the rate of 9th graders at Health Risk has declined by nearly 42 percent since the 2010-11 school year.

San Fernando High School is an example of community schooling in action. Increased investments in public education should go toward funding models of education that help students succeed. One model that has proven to work in Los Angeles and across the nation is Community Schools. In June 2017, the LAUSD School Board passed a resolution by unanimous vote in support of Community Schools.[14]

A Community School is a public school that leverages resources inside and outside the school to create conditions that ensure equitable opportunities for all children. Designated schools are given support to involve their entire school communities in a bottom-up assessment of assets and needs, and the development of a Community Schools transformation and implementation plan. Although there are variations within districts and regions, high-quality Community Schools incorporate a common approach that includes:[15]

- A broad, engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging academic curriculum
- Emphasis on high-quality instruction over excessive testing
- Wraparound services (e.g., counseling and clinical care)
- Restorative justice and other positive behavioral discipline practices
- Family and community engagement
- Inclusive school leadership where parents, students, and stakeholders are represented and have decision-making power

LAUSD should follow through on its commitment to Community Schools. It should immediately allocate $5 million to support 20 designated schools in high-need areas as they transform into Community Schools. LAUSD should allocate $10 million in each subsequent year to help other schools transform, and should continually analyze the Community Schools transformation process to scale up the number of Community Schools throughout the district.

Christabel Ukomadu
Proud graduate of Dorsey High School

FAIR WAGES NOW

LA's high cost of living is causing a teacher shortage. LAUSD must offer teachers a fair wage increase.

I'm an elementary school teacher, which means I have a multiple-subject credential that allows me to teach multiple grades. I live in East Hollywood, and have a second grader and a 10th grader at LAUSD public schools. For the past four years, I've had to work a second job as a Lyft driver because my salary alone doesn't cover all of my expenses—including the expense of being a teacher! Every August, I spend $500-$800 to prepare for the start of the school year. This year, for the first time, I have had to ask for help with paying for school supplies. So far I have raised $150 to pay for a carpet for my classroom. To live in this city and have a family, teachers need a livable and professional wage. I want the district to attract talented and passionate young people who are committed to teaching in Los Angeles for the long haul. But it doesn't feel like LAUSD is making our jobs—or our students' education—a priority.

Holly Laurine Jackson
Teacher, Mack Elementary School

According to a recent national poll, Americans overwhelmingly agree that teachers like Holly don't make enough money.[16] This year, an unprecedented wave of teacher activism has swept the nation. Mass protests were staged in several states over issues like low pay and the lack of funding for public schools.

Public school teacher salaries and benefits have been eroding relative to other professions for over a decade.[17] In 1994, public school teachers were earning only 1.8% less than college graduates in other fields; by 2015, the gap was 17%.[18] In Los Angeles, public school teachers are grappling with the skyrocketing cost of living in Southern California, which has increased 27% since 2006.[19] Declining wages have pushed LAUSD's public school teachers into longer commutes or into neighboring districts where pay is higher. Some are leaving the profession altogether.[20]

Low salaries lead to high teacher turnover and critical shortages: 80% of California districts reported teacher shortages in 2017.[21] Last year, LAUSD was unable to fill all of its vacant teaching positions with fully credentialed instructors.[22] Teacher shortages disproportionately affect students from low-income families and students of color, "exacerbating persistent achievement gaps between these students and their more affluent peers." [23]

No teacher should be forced to take on a second job—or stop teaching altogether—because LAUSD does not pay fair wages. Teachers deserve a salary that shows respect for their profession and their value to our children's lives.

> "For the past four years, I've had to work a second job as a Lyft driver because my salary alone doesn't cover all of my expenses."

SUPPORT STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

LAUSD ignores real-life conditions that impact students. LAUSD must cultivate a learning environment for all students by establishing immigrant supports, ending racially biased "random" searches, and increasing green space and early education opportunities on campuses.

My name is Marshe' Doss, and I'm a 12th grader at Dorsey High School in South LA. Every day, students at my high school are targeted for so-called "random" weapons searches, but everyone knows these searches are not random. Black students get picked more often. My Muslim friends get searched all the time. Students who are in non-honors and non-magnet classes get searched more often. Schools with more black students do searches more often. LAUSD's search policy makes us feel like criminals. It makes us think our education is not the district's priority. When I'm taken out of class and searched, I feel like I've done something wrong even though some school officials go through my personal belongings and only take away my highlighters or hand sanitizer. My peers look at me and assume I must have done something wrong. I don't feel ready to go back to class and learn.

Marshe' Doss
Senior, Dorsey High School

LAUSD is the second-largest school district in the nation and one of the most diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, and socio-economic status. To ensure that all students at LAUSD succeed, the district must leverage its resources to meet our students where they are, which includes providing supports beyond instruction in the classroom and respecting our students' basic rights.

Student Rights

Only four percent of school districts in the nation conduct random searches, as Marshe' describes, and LAUSD is one of them.[24] Over the course of two years, the district conducted 34,000 "random" searches and only discovered 76 weapons—none of which was a firearm.[25] It is a policy that disrupts teachers' lessons and denies students classroom instruction, but does little to improve school safety. Instead, these searches are tainted by implicit racial bias that disproportionately affects students of color.[26]

The Los Angeles City Attorney's Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety recently recommended that LAUSD suspend the school searches, suggesting an audit to determine the future of the policy.[27] LAUSD must cease the use of "random" metal detector searches and must instead invest in real methods to improve school safety, such as increasing health and human services staffing, addressing student social and emotional needs, reducing class sizes, and investing in a Community Schools model that builds community support inside and outside the school.

Immigrant Family Support

The federal administration's immigration policies hurt our immigrant students and families. Traumatic events such as family separation can have lasting consequences on a child's educational success.[28] LAUSD must stand with immigrant students and families by creating a $1 million Immigrant Family Defense Fund to serve students and families facing adjudication under the federal administration's immigration policy. The district should also provide training to all employees on district protocols for interaction with ICE and develop community partnerships to place immigrant support clinics at school sites.

Green Space

In 2015, the LAUSD Office of the Inspector General released a report encouraging the district to strengthen its "greening" efforts.[29] Green spaces have tangible effects on students' academic performance and are linked to improved attention and superior working memory.[30] Among cities in the US, Los Angeles ranks as one of the worst in regards to park availability, and how accessible parks are for a large segment of the population.[31] The many unused bungalows on district campuses are an untapped source of green space. LAUSD should develop a plan to remove all unused bungalows and provide adequate green space at all schools by the end of next year.

Early Education

Research shows that access to quality early education is critical to future success. LAUSD should develop a comprehensive plan on expanding early education. The district should recruit and retain high-quality early education teachers by addressing salary and working conditions issues that have long been ignored.

The Wong Family
Proud parents and student
Castelar Elementary

CHARTER SCHOOL OVERSIGHT

Unchecked expansion of the charter industry drains millions of dollars away from neighborhood schools and creates equity and transparency problems. LAUSD must protect neighborhood schools by regulating charter industry growth and charter school co-locations onto neighborhood schools.

My son is in transitional kindergarten at Trinity Elementary School. Last year, the Gabriella Charter School co-located onto our school campus. Now two schools share the same campus, and they compete for the same students, classrooms, and resources.

Gabriella Charter School tried to take over a second-grade classroom at our public school and we had to fight to keep it. They use the janitorial staff employed by Trinity, but the custodians do not receive additional pay—or even the additional supplies they need to serve the extra students and classrooms. Gabriella also treats our special needs students with blatant disrespect; they refused to soundproof their dance studio which is right next to a special education classroom full of students who are sensitive to loud noise. Co-locations have divided our community and caused a lot of tension for our kids and parents.

Alejandra Delgadillo
Parent, Trinity Elementary School

The original intent of charter schools was to incubate innovative strategies to improve student learning. We support charter schools that are committed to that work. But in Los Angeles, the corporate-dominated charter industry has been more focused on starving our public schools and advancing a privatization and union-busting agenda.

Los Angeles is home to the largest concentration of corporate charter schools in the country. Since 2008, the charter industry has grown a whopping 287% and now totals 224 independent charter schools in LAUSD.[32] The charter industry costs the district nearly $600 million every year.[33]

Unlike our neighborhood schools, charters don't serve all students. The industry has been scrutinized for discriminatory access affecting students of color, low-income students, English language learners, and special education students. Some charters "counsel out" students whom they don't want to accommodate, such as students with poor academic records or special needs.[34] Corporate-run charter schools operate with privately appointed boards that often do not represent the public, yet make decisions about how public funds are spent. They often do not report on finances transparently and have been hit by constant conflict-of-interest controversies.[35]

The charter industry also continues to expand through "co-locations," where a charter school and a neighborhood school are run separately but coexist on the same public school campus. Co-located charter schools take over public school computer labs, parent centers, nurse and counselor offices. Co-locations create tension and competition among school administrators, teachers, and parents.

LAUSD must protect neighborhood schools by regulating the growing charter industry and charter school co-locations on neighborhood campuses. The district must require community impact studies of charter schools, as well as requiring charters to provide annual data on student demographics, enrollment, dismissals, and expulsions. Safeguards need to be established to ensure that co-locations do not diminish the learning and working conditions at our neighborhood schools. At all co-located sites, parents and educators must have seats at the table to ensure that the co-location does not adversely impact the district neighborhood school, its programs, or its ability to expand those programs.

The Kelly Family
Proud parent and students in LAUSD

FUND OUR SCHOOLS

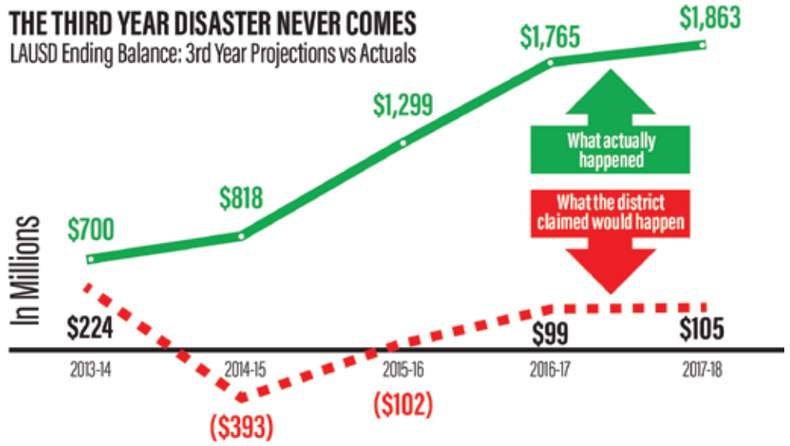
California is the richest state in the nation, yet ranks 43rd out of 50 states in per-pupil funding. LAUSD must fight at the local, state, and national level to increase funding to $20,000 per student by 2020.

My son Myles is a special needs student, and I have fought to find the right fit for him since he was in kindergarten. Not all schools have been able to properly support his education. I had to move him from five different schools to get the support that he needed. Now he's safe, happy, and doing well in a day class for special education students at a school that is close to our home in South LA. Myles has great teachers, especially his special education teachers, who keep in touch with me about his individual support plan. Parents shouldn't have to send their children to five different schools to find one that meets their needs. Every school should be supporting all children. The more support they have now, the better they will be in the long run, and I want my son to have a good life.

Simone Newman-Sturdivant
Parent, Daniel Webster Middle School

The money to fund the education of students like Myles is there. We just need to get it to students.

At the local level, instead of hiding hundreds of millions of dollars per year in an unaccounted-for books and supplies slush fund, LAUSD should get that money to classrooms. Moreover, LAUSD currently has a $1.86 billion unrestricted reserve. The state requires districts to have a 1% reserve, yet LAUSD is holding onto 26.5% of its money in reserve. As the chart below shows, every year for the last five years, LAUSD has projected a financial disaster three years into the future. Yet, the disaster never comes, and the district ends up with hundreds of millions, even billions, in reserve. With these monies available at the local level, there is no "rainy day" to wait for—conditions in classrooms show that the need is here now, and our students deserve the support now.



At the state level, California is the fifth-largest economy in the world and boasts a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $2.7 trillion, the highest of any US state.[36] Yet, by almost every significant measure, California ranks near the bottom in the nation in funding for public education. While states like New York spend nearly $19,000 per pupil annually, California lags far behind, significantly below the national average of $12,526.[37]

To address this state-level crisis, LAUSD must work with parents, communities, and unions to create more revenue at the state level for public education. We need to increase per-pupil funding to at least $20,000 by the year 2020. Last year, the LAUSD School Board voted unanimously in support of a resolution calling for a dramatic increase in per-pupil funding to meet this goal.[38] The superintendent and School Board must make this more than rhetoric, and use their connections to billionaires and elected officials across the state to fight tooth-and-nail for increased revenue.

To this end, the superintendent and School Board should immediately and vigorously take leadership in the following:

Ebony Batiste
Proud teacher

Fund Our Schools Cont'd

End the Carried Interest Loophole

Under current tax law, income gained by private equity firms and hedge fund managers, known as carried interest, is treated as capital gains, which are taxed at a lower rate than regular taxpayer income.[39] Legislation to close this tax loophole would generate close to $1 billion annually in revenue for public schools and other critical social services for California. Right now, LAUSD should find a sponsor and build a campaign for state legislation to close this loophole in the upcoming legislative session. This loophole has unfairly benefited many businesspeople in the same industry as the superintendent, and he should use his connections to correct that and fund our schools.

End the Inheritance Tax Loophole and Enact Taxes on High-End Business Services and Luxury Items

Under current tax law, there is a loophole allowing an avoidance of inheritance tax on high-end vacation and rental homes. Further, the purchase of high-end business services (such as management consulting) is not taxed, and many luxury items, such as yachts, are undertaxed. Right now, for the upcoming legislative session, LAUSD should find sponsors and build campaigns for state legislation that would close the inheritance tax loophole, enact taxes on high-end business services, and fairly tax luxury items, such as yachts.

Build the Schools and Communities First Initiative

Since 1978, with the passage of Proposition 13, the wealthiest commercial property owners have been given a loophole to avoid paying taxes. This has devastated schools and social services. A statewide coalition has now qualified the Schools and Communities First initiative for the 2020 ballot, which would close this corporate loophole. If passed, Schools and Communities First will generate $11 billion in tax revenue for schools and social services, with $5 billion going toward public education.[40] Right now, LAUSD should immediately organize contacts who own valuable commercial property to form a committee in support of, and funding in support of, Schools and Communities First.

Tayah Hubbard
Proud graduate of Dorsey High School

LAUSD MUST GIVE OUR KIDS A CHANCE, AND RECLAIM THE PROMISE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Eloisa Galindo and her daughters
Proud LAUSD family

LAUSD claims that there is no money to improve public schools. Yet we know that California is the fifth-largest economy in the world and LAUSD sits on $1.86 billion in unrestricted reserves. The money is there to invest in our schools and students. Teachers across the nation have sparked a bold grassroots activism that inspires us to protect our public schools and our students. And now parents, educators, and students in coalitions such as Reclaim Our Schools LA are raising our voices to make real changes for public schools. We must continue the fight for LAUSD to invest its reserve in student needs instead of holding onto it to create conditions of austerity and justify cuts. We must continue the fight to increase state per-pupil funding to $20,000 per student by 2020. We must continue to fight for non-economic proposals that improve our schools and that would actually save the district money. For students and families now, for students and families in the future, LAUSD must Give Our Kids a Chance, and build the civic institution of public education.🍎

LAUSD IS NOT A PRIZE FOR THE SUPER RICH

Over the last decade, a battle has been waged against public education in LA. The Los Angeles Unified School District is among several urban school districts across the nation being targeted by the mega-wealthy who fund so-called "reform" or pro-privatization agendas, which fail our students every time. Yet they keep trying.

They know that if public education breaks in LA, it can break anywhere.

Millionaire superintendent Austin Beutner – appointed by a pro-privatization majority on the LAUSD School Board – is pushing this failed experiment on the people of Los Angeles.

He has found a partner in multibillionaire Eli Broad, who has fought against increasing school funding and with whom Beutner worked previously on local civic institution takeovers like that of the LA Times. Beutner was forced to resign as publisher of the newspaper for this attempt.

Wealthy "reformers" say they want more money for public education, yet never contribute their fortunes to bring more money to our public schools. Instead they secretly funnel money to oppose state funding measures and support pro-privatization candidates. Both Broad and Jim Walton, an heir to the Walmart fortune, spent vast sums to oppose Prop. 30, a revenue-boosting measure for our schools. Why? Because reinvestment into public schools doesn't fit their corporate agenda.

LA millionaire Richard Riordan spent an unprecedented $2 million in the 2017 election – the most expensive school board race in the nation's history – to install pro-charter lobby candidates.

Having no background in education, Beutner now plans to turn LAUSD into a "portfolio" district. Disingenously called "Re:Imagine LAUSD," Beutner's plan would break up the school district into 32 networks. He claims, like all other privatizers, that this would decentralize and cut bureaucracy. In reality, schools and tax dollars would be taken over by unaccountable, privately run entities. Portfolio districts incentivize lowering standards for learning conditions, deepening segregation and inequality.

John Arnold, former Enron executive and hedge-fund manager, funds this portfolio model in order to dismantle public school districts throughout the country.

This is not innovative. This is not about choice. This is what the super rich used in places like Newark, Detroit, and New Orleans – all cities that have crumbled under the "reform" experiment. In these cities, a patchwork of unaccountable corporate charter schools has replaced a "quality public schools for all" model.

Out of the view of the public and the elected school board, Beutner is now working with the same consultants and privatizers who foisted failed portfolio models onto those cities.

Enough is enough. Dismantling our school district cannot happen without a fight. The wealthy elite and the 1%, so used to getting what they want, do not deserve this prize.

LAUSD BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE OF LOS ANGELES, NOT THE SUPER RICH.

WHO ARE THE SUPER RICH BEHIND THE MOVEMENT TO DISMANTLE PUBLIC EDUCATION?

$44 MILLION*

AUSTIN BEUTNER
JOHN ARNOLD
JIM WALTON
RICHARD RIORDAN
ELI BROAD

. . . AND OTHERS

**SPENT BY BILLIONAIRES TO PRIVATIZE PUBLIC EDUCATION, 2016-2018. BASED ON A REPORT BY THE NETWORK FOR PUBLC EDUCATION ACTION - WWW.WEAREPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG/BILLIONAIRE-BLOCK*

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