

# LAUSD Parent Advisory Committee

## Chairperson's Report

*April 13, 2023*

Hello, colleagues:

This month I have four related items to discuss, involving the practice of parent and family engagement in LAUSD: A significant decrease in outreach from Community of Schools Administrators; the mysterious disappearance of “hybrid” informational meetings; the infamous Zoom *webinar*; and no communication with our PAC from Supt. Alberto Carvalho in over a year.

With the reorganization (or “alignment”) this year of LA Unified from six “local districts” to four “regions,” I and other parents have noted far fewer “town hall” or “Coffee with ...” Zoom meetings held by COSAs for families in their respective territories. Word on the street has it that most COSAs are no longer hosting ‘town hall’ sessions, and that instead all updates are to be given through regional “town hall with the superintendent” meetings. The major problem here, in my view, is that eliminating the middle-level COSA sessions forces a regional superintendent to offer only a general, region-wide agenda, with no possibility of COS-specific information. This seems to have resulted in regional events which consist less of true information sharing and more of presentations with questionable value to parents, highlighting topics such as “kindness.”

While I have nothing against kindness, to be sure, and it’s certainly something we need to see more of in our daily lives, when an activity focused on this concept takes up fully half of a two-hour monthly regional “town hall” meeting, *with only four questions taken from the audience*, then yes, I do have a problem with it. Instead of reviewing trends in student achievement data, parents were led through an exercise centered around reading a passage from a *Peppa Pig* book, then asked to share out from their small groups as to how this children’s storybook and PBS TV-show character demonstrates kindness in a given situation. Parents have to wonder what the point is of their having potentially traveled long distances to attend a “town hall” event which, incidentally, was held only in person, with no Zoom option. This leads us into the next topic.

When a concerned parent asked the Region Superintendent why Zoom wasn’t offered, the answer given was to the effect of, “We are in the process of figuring out what works best for parents, so next month we will be only on Zoom.” This reply I found puzzling, since we’ve now been on Zoom for over three years, and by now it should be obvious what works best for parents, namely, in-person events which include a Zoom option for those unable to physically attend. This is clearly a ‘best practice’ for engaging parents and families, not something that needs to be “figured out.” With all due respect to the District leader paraphrased here, such an explanation is hard to accept, and could easily be interpreted as a proverbial “slap in the face” to parents and families who, for various reasons, cannot be present for live meetings and related events, but who *can* attend virtually via Zoom. Parents are right to object, and LAUSD *must* listen to us.

Moving on to the Zoom ‘webinar’ format, I’ve heard countless parents, including a few of our PAC colleagues, complain loudly and often about the webinar. This meeting type severely limits the ability of participants to interact with presenters and with each other, since no one can see or hear others on the call who are not co-hosts or “spotlighted” on screen and, depending on the

meeting settings used, are not able to see each other's questions being posted. We don't even know how many people are on the call with us. Yet staff never seem to recognize our concerns.

Earlier this month I attended a Zoom event put on by the Institute for Educational Leadership to lift up the voices of youth with disabilities. This session had at least 257 participants on a standard, non-webinar call — the same as our PAC meetings use — with full audio and video capability for all. If IEL can host this many people on Zoom, I believe LAUSD should show parents and families the same respect, instead of treating us like untrusted outsiders in our own District.

Finally, as some of you may recall, Supt. Carvalho last met with all three central committees (CAC, DELAC, and PAC) in February 2022, at a joint meeting held at Roybal Learning Center. Since then, we've been awaiting another opportunity to meet with our Superintendent of Schools, and have heard nothing. I understand that he's very busy but then, so are we. I will be reaching out to our Superintendent and requesting that he meet again with us. After all, aren't we "equal partners"?

At your service,

Paul Robak

*Chairperson, 2022-2023*

*LAUSD Parent Advisory Committee*

*PAC website: [achieve.lausd.net/PAC](https://achieve.lausd.net/PAC)*

*E-mail: [paulPACrobak@gmail.com](mailto:paulPACrobak@gmail.com)*

*Cell: 310-997-5588*