

Los Angeles Unified School District

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

333 S. Beaudry Ave., 24th Floor

Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: (213) 241-6766

Fax: (213) 241-8952

www.lausd.net



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Monica Carazo, 213-241-6766
Isidro Armenta, Dir. of Communications
Board Member Mónica García
213-241-6180

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Los Angeles Unified School District Commemorates 1968 Walkouts with Community Events

LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles Board of Education and Interim Superintendent Vivian Ekchian will commemorate the 1968 East Los Angeles Walkouts with community events, highlighting activities that led to reforms in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

From March 1 to March 8, 1968, approximately 15,000 students walked out of classes from Belmont, Garfield, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Wilson and other Los Angeles area high schools. They demanded equity, and cultural relevancy from the District. Fifty years later, L.A. Unified has made significant progress by increasing our graduation rate to nearly 80 percent, investing more than \$18 billion in school repair, modernization and new construction, and integrating a student-centered, Kids First approach.

"We call on the community to join us in raising their voices in support of student dreams and demands," said Board President Mónica García. "This commemoration recognizes that the student-centered Kids First actions of today are responding to the children of 1968. We are grateful for every civil rights champion for student success along the path toward justice and equality for all. We have made progress, but there is more to do to reach our goal of 100 percent graduation."

"Today, L.A. Unified welcomes all students, and celebrates our District's rich diversity," said Interim Superintendent Vivian Ekchian. "Every student is respected and provided a high quality education. We remember and honor those who demonstrated."

"I am excited to celebrate the courage and organization of student activism," said Board Vice President Nick Melvoin. "The student demonstrators of East Los Angeles stood up for their right to educational equity in 1968, undoubtedly paving the way for the students today who are standing up and speaking out for immigration reform, gun control, women's rights, and more."

"Now, more than ever, we need to celebrate the voices of young people who have spoken up and advocated for long overdue change in public education and civic life," said Board Member Scott M. Schmerelson. "I am proud to commemorate the brave actions of our L.A. Unified students in 1968 and to applaud students everywhere who are standing up for peace and justice."

“As Mario Savio famously stated, sometimes the operation is so odious that you have to put your bodies upon the gears to make it stop,” said Board Member Dr. Ref Rodriguez. “In March of 1968, a critical mass of students lived that idea when they walked out of their schools en masse to demand equity and dignity. The 50th anniversary of that walkout serves as a reminder of those students’ courage, how far we have come since then, and how far we need to go. I am glad we are commemorating their actions, and even happier that we are celebrating their spirit and cause.”

“Fifty years ago, our students organized and demanded a more equitable education,” said Board Member Kelly Gonez. “While we’ve made progress, we continue to fight to ensure that a high-quality public education is available to all students, regardless of their background. Toward this end, every day the board is working to better meet the needs of our most underserved students throughout Los Angeles.”

"The East Los Angeles Walkouts were a pivotal moment in the history of education in our state – and perhaps our nation,” said Board Member Dr. Richard Vladovic. “Students made it clear that they would no longer tolerate conditions predicated by poverty or ethnicity. We've come a long way since then, and still have further to go."

In preparing for the 50th anniversary, a Vision 2068 Committee was formed to plan the following events and activities.

- In remembrance of Sal Castro, the Lincoln High School social studies teacher who helped lead the walkouts, awards in community service and leadership will be given to L.A. Unified teachers and counselors on Saturday, Feb. 24 at East Los Angeles College.
- On Thursday, March 1 Garfield High School will host an assembly featuring guest speakers including Bobby Verdugo, a leader of the historic walkouts, as well as Yoli Verdugo and John Ortiz.
- On Thursday, March 1 El Sereno Middle School will host the Unveiling our Roots: Mural Ceremony.
- On Friday, March 2 there will be a “walk-in” demonstration with nearly 700 students at Cal State Los Angeles.
- On Saturday, March 3 the Esteban Torres High School complex will host an arts festival with works depicting the 1968 demonstrations.
- On Monday, March 5 there will be a reenactment of the historic meeting between Labor Leader Cesar Chavez and Senator Robert F. Kennedy at the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools.
- On Tuesday, March 6 there will be a re-enactment of the 1968 School Board Meeting when students stormed L.A. Unified headquarters demanding educational justice.
- On Saturday, March 10 an arts festival featuring music and dance will take place at Maya Angelou Community High School.

For updates and information, visit <https://achieve.lausd.net/vision2068>.

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