

Employees' Connection

Keeping You Informed About Investments In Our Schools



Chapter 8: *Our Unchanging Mission*

This week was marked by both turbulent changes and steady constants.

L.A. Unified's beloved superintendent, Dr. King, announced her retirement after 33 years of impeccable service to the students, families, employees, and communities of Los Angeles; the Board appointed me as interim superintendent, a role I am deeply humbled and honored to perform; and students and staff returned from break to embark upon exciting new topics of exploration. Right now, we are truly embraced by a moment of profound change. Yet, even in the midst of this transitional moment, I can hear, more clearly than ever before, the familiar, timeless heartbeat of our district—those unchanging truths that have called people to our profession since schoolhouses first formed.

The first truth I hear—a child's laughter sounds the same in every language.

Our school district is proudly among the most diverse in the nation, boasting a total of 95 languages. Still, in each one of our schools, students have a universal way of communicating that they feel safe, joyful, valued, and excited about what they are learning. It is revealed in the warm glow on their faces when they grasp a topic, the confident smiles they display, and their weightless laughter. Indeed, this is the language that guides us. Curricula evolve over time, CSTs fade into SBAC exams, and APIs turn into Dashboards, but the ultimate measure of our success forever remains the telltale laugh of a cheerful, conscientious youngster, knowledgeable about herself and the world, poised for any challenge she may encounter. It remains the sacred duty and privilege of our profession to illuminate this laughter in students so that they can soar to their fullest potential.

The second truth I hear—99 percent is identical to 0 percent, from the perspective of the student who doesn't graduate. At the point when our District's graduation rate eventually climbs up to 99.9 percent, it will be of little consolation to the one student who does not graduate that the District achieved something remarkable. For that one student, the sky will continue to be covered with glass ceilings, and the pathway to success will remain littered with roadblocks and dead-

ends. *This* is the reason we surge relentlessly toward 100 percent graduation. It's not about breaking records or making headlines. It's an acknowledgement of the simple, profound fact that every child is filled with dreams that are worth coming true and hidden talents that are worth being discovered and let loose.

The third truth I hear—every corner of our district is a classroom, ready to ignite learning. Every cafeteria, school bus, hallway, green space, office, and, of course, classroom is a place where knowledge can be imparted, self-esteem can be nurtured, and new doors can be opened for youth. Whether it's the Pythagorean Theorem or a lesson on perseverance, life-changing skills and information can be artfully woven into any connection with kids. At L.A. Unified, we cherish this challenge. Day in, day out, we search for new ways to elevate students to the heights of their dreams, collectively serving more youth than the public schools of Vermont, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota *combined*.

Take pride in these timeless truths and the unparalleled potency of our profession. Change is inevitable, but the mission that keeps driving us forward through the storm to reach a better tomorrow is unchanging and indestructible. **We are L.A. Unified.**

Vivian Ekchian
Interim Superintendent

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