

UPDATE

Week of August 30, 2010

SUPERINTENDENT CORTINES' BUDGET PRIORITIES AND AALA's RESPONSE

In the *Update* for the week of August 16, 2010, we ran an open letter to Superintendent Cortines and LAUSD Board Members explaining AALA's priorities for the use of Federal jobs funds and potential additional revenue from the State. We wrote, "First and foremost, AALA strongly believes that these additional funds must be used to support LAUSD students and staff members this year." We requested that senior staff obtain educators' recommendations before distributing such funds. Our priorities focused on student learning, safety and well-being, and included restoration of the full school year, a return to 2008-2009 AP norms, augmentation of the number of APEISs, and reinstatement of summer school. Mr. Cortines' letter follows, along with our response:

August 18, 2010

Dr. Judith Perez
President, Associated Administrators of Los Angeles (AALA)

Dear Dr. Perez:

I appreciate your letter stating AALA's priorities. However, as discussed below, I respectfully disagree with your position that the District should make immediate restorations for this year.

First and foremost—we still don't have a State Budget, nor is there any certainty about what level of additional federal funding we may receive. The two are interrelated. Even today, Senate Pro-Tem leader Steinberg said that State leaders could use these new Federal funds to plug the State's deficit. While I vehemently disagree with this type of shell game at the State level, we have seen this happen before with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Federal Stimulus funds. Second, I do not want budget chaos disrupting classes and schools that are already in the process of opening. Right now my immediate focus is to get the schools open for this academic year. The District has over 30,000 students already attending classes and the doors are opening for over 600,000 more. The 2010-11 budget is balanced after months of painful planning with participation at all levels throughout the District—at schools and with parents, administrators, community partners and bargaining units. I am not recommending undoing this.

In June, I proposed only a one year balanced budget because I knew we needed to steady the District. However, I realize we must turn our attention to the problems in 2011-12 and the "funding cliffs" ahead. The Los Angeles County Office of Education rejected our budget because it does not have the two future years balanced. In 2011-12 there is already \$130 million in additional cuts needed to be made; these cuts were averted this year due to the furlough sacrifices of employees. In addition, the General Fund Budget has a \$156 million negative balance. Together, this accounts for over \$280 million that we have to address. We have 10 months to prepare for the next school year. I am asking for a measured approach to this problem.

Additional Federal dollars will be critical in helping stabilize the present level of school operations. Any anticipated Federal revenues could reduce additional program cuts still needed to be identified. With continued concessions from employees across the District and these dollars, we can help sustain programs, jobs and services for our students. The silver lining through it all was the evidence that students and teachers have continued to improve academic performance notwithstanding our difficult financial situation.

SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER Continued)

Highly effective teaching continued in our classrooms and effective instructional leadership practices were evident in our schools. The CST results showed increases in all subject areas and in nearly every grade level. Our proficiency rate in English language arts increased by 3 percentage points, higher than the state of California's 2 percentage point gain. Together, we are moving in the right direction. I welcome AALA's suggestions regarding the District's budget priorities. We have been given another opportunity to collaborate with bargaining units and other stakeholders to ensure that LAUSD protects the classroom as much as possible under these unprecedented circumstances.

Sincerely,

Ramon C. Cortines

cc: Members, Board of Education

AALA's RESPONSE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

August 23, 2010

Mr. Ramon C. Cortines, Superintendent
Los Angeles Unified School District

Dear Superintendent Cortines:

Thank you for your letter in response to AALA's recommended budget restoration priorities. I realize that the State budget has yet to be established, and some uncertainty exists relative to the level of Federal funding that may be allocated to the District. As you are aware, the additional Federal funding is designed to save jobs this year, 2010-2011. This goal could be accomplished while the District sets aside the majority of the funding to address fiscal needs for 2011-2012.

Your second point, that, "I do not want chaos disrupting classes and schools that are already in the process of opening," necessitates further discussion. There are in excess of 400 elementary schools in which student and staff safety and well-being would benefit by the District's restoration of the Plant Manager position. Additionally, by restoring some assistant principals to selected K-12 sites, the District would support a greater level of safety for students, and would endorse higher-quality staff evaluations and school leadership accountability.

By restoring a limited number of APEISs, the District would better serve students with special needs. None of the aforementioned recommendations would cause additional chaos. In fact, they would provide a greater level of stability for students, staff and parents.

Once the 2010-2011 Federal and State budgets are in place and the allocations to the District are known, AALA is hopeful that you will strongly consider our recommendations.

AALA looks forward to real transparent budget discussions with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Dr. Judith Perez, President

cc: Members, Board of Education
Dr. John Deasy, Deputy Superintendent

NEWS ON FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDS

Updated information about the federal Jobs Bill has been regularly published in *Update*. Although the naysayers have insisted that our President and Congress would not deliver any more stimulus monies, the federal funds are now in California, and the State Legislature is preparing to appropriate the \$1.2 billion this week. In fact, State Senate leader Darrell Steinberg announced the introduction of an urgency bill, SB 847, cosponsored by Assembly Speaker John Perez, which is designed to provide \$1,201,534,485 to save jobs during 2010-2011 for administrators, teachers, nurses and classified employees. **U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer wrote a letter of intent to Governor Schwarzenegger indicating that these funds are meant to be used this school year to save education jobs.**

Granted, real concerns exist about the use of one-time monies from the feds, as well as how the actions of the next governor will affect 2011-2012's budget deficit. For now, the budget cloud appears to have a potential silver lining. The urgency bill, SB 847, may become law within a week if a two-thirds vote is successful and the Governor signs off.

While the State budget for 2010-2011 has not yet been passed, all indicators are that it will provide even more money for this school year, reflecting an increase over the Governor's May Budget Revision.

IS ANYBODY THERE? DOES ANYBODY CARE?

Managing a school today is no easy task, and a school administrator encounters many challenges on a daily basis. Sometimes support from the Local District office is needed, which should be readily available. In a recent incident brought to the attention of AALA, this was not the case. The following is a summary of one administrator's story:

- Met with Local District leadership to discuss expectations and plans for the upcoming school year. Support was offered by the Local District to the administrator, who followed up with a summary memo outlining the support to be received.
- Expected support was never there, however. Instead, there were unreturned calls (several), lack of campus visits (even for a Stull Evaluation), and reversal of a previously approved professional assignment.
- Unconfirmed rumors about the administrator's tenure at the school began to circulate after parents heard the Local District Superintendent mention at a public meeting that the administrator would not be at the school the following year. At the time, the Local District Superintendent said nothing to the administrator to either confirm or deny the rumors.
- Reassigned, with only two-days notice, at the end of the school year. There was no time allowed to thank the students, school staff and community for their support.

Where was the professional support for the administrator if the Local District felt there were issues at the school? Local District staff should communicate frequently with administrators, visit their sites to observe, and follow up with constructive conferences. Professional growth comes from professional support and mentoring, which seems to have been lacking in this situation. Perhaps Deputy Superintendent **Dr. John Deasy** will work with the Local District Superintendents to ensure that a similar situation does not occur in the future. By the way, something positive must have happened at this administrator's school in spite of a lack of support. The CST scores made a dramatic jump!

THE *L. A. TIMES*: PRACTICING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH WITHOUT A LICENSE

by **Stephen Krashen**, Professor Emeritus at the University of Southern California, *Education Week*, August 23, 2010

A recent *LA Times* article, "[Who's teaching L.A.'s kids?](#)" (August 15), presented readers with the results of an *LA Times*-sponsored "value-added" analysis of teaching in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The statistical analysis was done by an economist, and was supplemented by classroom observations made by *LA Times* reporters. "Value-added" appears to be a common-sense idea: Teachers are rated by the gains their students make on standardized tests of reading and math. The assumption is that good teachers produce large gains and poor teachers produce small gains or may cause back-sliding. The *Times* assumes that the value-added method is a valid measure of teacher quality. It isn't.

Problems with value-added analyses

Value-added evaluations of teachers make several assumptions.

First, they assume that higher test scores are always the result of teaching. Not so. Test scores are influenced by other factors:

- We can generate higher scores by teaching "test preparation" techniques, that is, strategies of getting higher scores without students learning anything, e.g., telling students when and how to guess, and familiarizing students with the test format.
- We can generate higher scores by testing selectively, e.g., making sure the lower scorers are not in school the day of the test.
- And of course we can generate higher scores by direct cheating, getting inside information about specific test questions and sharing this with students.

Second, value-added analyses assume that teachers are randomly assigned to classes. They aren't. Some teachers are given high-achieving students who will make rapid gains on standardized tests, and some teachers are consistently assigned to teach lower achieving students who will not make clear gains.

Third, value-added analyses assume that the value-added score for a teacher is stable, that a teacher producing high gains one year will always produce high gains. But studies show that value-added estimates for individual teachers can be unstable over time (Schochet and Chang, NCEE 2010-4004). There is also evidence that a teacher's value-added score can be substantially different for different reading tests (Papay, 2010, *American Educational Research Journal* 47,2).

Fourth, there is always some fluctuation in scores. Even if all teachers were equally effective in raising test scores, a value-added analysis would still find students of some teachers making higher gains than others, due to random factors.

Finally, some standardized tests focus on knowledge of specific facts and procedures. Teachers who prepare students for higher scores on such tests are not teaching, they are simply drilling students with information that will soon be forgotten.

Neglected factors

The heavy focus on measuring teacher quality can give the false impression that teacher quality is everything.

PRACTICING EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH WITHOUT A LICENSE (Continued)

Study after study, however, has shown that poverty is a stronger factor than teacher quality in predicting achievement. The best teachers in the world will have limited impact when children are undernourished, have high levels of lead in their bodies, live in noisy and dangerous environments, get too little sleep, and have no access to reading material.

Beyond Cold Fusion

The scientific world was outraged when cold fusion researchers presented their work to the public at a press conference before submitting their results for professional review. The *Times* has gone beyond this: They clearly have no intention of allowing professional review, and feel that it is their right to present their conclusions on the front page of the Sunday newspaper. The *Times* also supplemented their findings with comments from reporters who observed teachers in their classes. This procedure sends the message that the *Times* considers educational practice to be so straightforward that it requires no special background.

The *Times* is a newspaper, not a scientific journal. It has, however, been practicing educational research without a license. Would we accept this in other areas? Would we trust the *Times* to do a value-added analysis of brain surgery, with reporters critiquing surgical procedures?

COMMENTS FROM AALA MEMBERS ABOUT THE *L. A. TIMES*

As far as the *L. A. Times* article, I'm horrified! The invasion of privacy alone is unacceptable! I have spent the large part of my career in special education, working hard to facilitate students' access to curriculum as well as supporting student integration into general education classes and activities. Publishing the "effectiveness" of teachers based solely on "test scores" sets us back about 20+ years! It's no secret that many general education teachers are hesitant to include special education students in their classrooms. Now that teacher "effectiveness" is being evaluated, I'm guessing things will be even worse. Many of our hardest working, most dedicated teachers are also those who see value in teaching and including all students regardless of ability. Are they now to be considered ineffective? Students are not all alike. I believe for anyone to have a clear picture of a classroom the *L. A. Times* should also publish the number of homeless students, special needs and at risk students, students who are English Language Learners, who are chronically late or absent, etc., etc., etc.! All the variables must be presented in a complete and comprehensive manner. Thank you again for your support.

- *Anonymous*

I just have some questions (probably rhetorical ones). I hold a master's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. As part of my academic training, I had course work in how to evaluate teachers, and five years of experience doing that. What courses and experience do the reporters for the *L. A. Times* have in teacher evaluation? My evaluations are confidential. Why aren't their evaluations confidential?

- *Just wondering*

**12.3 PERCENT RETURN A POSITIVE NOTE,
BUT 2008 DECLINES STILL IMPACT PORTFOLIO**

The California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) investment portfolio posted a solid 12.3 percent return at the end of the 2009-10 fiscal year.

The CalSTRS investment portfolio's market value at fiscal year's end was \$129.77 billion. The 12.3 percent return rate beat the actuarial rate of 8 percent and brought in more than \$10 billion as the 2009-10 fiscal year ended on June 30.

However, because CalSTRS bases its investment portfolio performance on a three-year rolling average, the last two years' losses of 25 percent and 3 percent, still have an effect.

"We've taken steps to position the portfolio for long-term growth, but we're not out of the woods yet," said CalSTRS Chief Investment Officer **Christopher J. Ailman**. "The American economy suffered a near-death experience in 2008, and it's going to take some time to fully recuperate from that. This year's performance is a solid start along that road to recovery."

The CalSTRS Board and its investments staff have positioned the fund for ongoing recovery by:

- Expanding its target asset ranges to avoid having to sell at a loss.
- Temporarily shifting 5 percent of the portfolio from global equities to fixed income, real estate and private equity to take advantage of the distressed market.
- Permanently shifting 5 percent of the portfolio from global equities to create a new absolute return asset class for inflation-protection.
- Adopting a new asset allocation mix to further diversify the portfolio and reduce its stake in the global stock market.
- Launching the Innovations and Risk unit to explore new investments such as a macro global hedge fund strategy, commodities and microfinance.

Returns by asset class were: 14.5 percent for global equities (U. S. equities posted 15.7 percent, non-U. S. 12.1 percent), fixed income at 12.3 percent, private equity with 21.7 percent, and real estate with 12.4 percent.

As of June 30, 2010, the portfolio holdings were: 51.7 percent in U. S. and non-U. S. stocks, 22 percent in fixed income, 14.5 percent in private equity, 10.1 percent in real estate, 0.9 percent in absolute return assets and 0.8 percent in cash.

The California State Teachers' Retirement System is the second largest public pension fund in the United States. It administers retirement, disability and survivor benefits for California's 848,000 public school educators and their families from the state's 1,400 school districts, county offices of education and community college districts.

NOTE: Next week's *UPDATE* (September 6, 2010) will be abbreviated because of the short workweek. *UPDATE* will return to its 8-page format the following week (September 13).

CONNECTING PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

Following is a summary of findings from **Kent Peterson's** 2010 dissertation, *Connecting Parents and Schools: Examining Perceptions and Building Bridges to a More Unified Education Community*. Kent completed the Ed.D. program last spring at USC's Rossier School of Education and teaches at Hancock Park School.

Extensive research spanning decades has shown that parent involvement in a child's education improves overall student success and contributes to fostering positive attitudes towards school and learning. However, parent involvement is severely lacking in urban schools, resulting in diminished learning opportunities for thousands of students. This case study revealed that in one LAUSD school, parents, teachers and administrators viewed *parent involvement* differently, which contributed to the disconnect between home and school.

Case study findings indicate that home school disconnects result from inconsistent communication, negative dispositions, and cultural/linguistic differences. For example, parents often mentioned in the data that they wished to have a more consistent and collaborative relationship with teachers. Teachers, however, stated that they wanted connections with homes, but in a more "top-down" manner, where parents would follow through with teacher-directed instructions. These definitions for what defines the parent-teacher relationship are fundamentally different, contributing to alienation.

Research supports the idea that in order to support urban parents, administrators and other school leaders must nurture school cultures that encourage parent/teacher communication and collaboration through the formation of a *common language*. One school that has put these ideas into practice is the Boston Arts Academy (BAA), an urban school in the Boston Public Schools System. This school serves 400 students, many of them African American, Latino, and Anglo-American. BAA performs very well in student engagement factors, namely attendance, lack of suspensions, high standardized test scores, high degrees of college bound students (97%), and a very low number of teacher transfers over the school's 15-year life span. Many teachers, parents, and community advocates attribute BAA's success to its parent-teacher involvement system that has been in existence since the school's inception.

The staff at BAA has a common language and philosophy centered on the importance of including parents and community members in school culture. Their hiring practices reflect this mission: only those who agree are hired. At the heart of their common language is the view that teachers and parents are part of a team focused on student success, and this language is incorporated in a staff handbook. The handbook provides guidelines to support students and parents alike. For example, if parents cannot attend certain functions, teachers and/or parental involvement liaisons contact them to provide information, act as advocates, coordinate schedules to accommodate work lives, and/or act as mediators if the need arises.

Improving parent-teacher relations requires a paradigm shift among educators, and these shifts are difficult to implement and maintain. Therefore, another area of need is teacher, administrator, and staff professional development concerning parent involvement practices. Many educators lack the knowledge and skills necessary to make parent involvement a consistent and meaningful part of school life. Developing the bilingual competence of teachers and staff, establishing communication norms that embrace cultural sensitivity and welcoming dispositions, and requiring curricula that include culturally relevant pedagogy are but a few areas where improvements could produce big dividends. Such improvements are vital to the overall health of the school and the surrounding community, as well. Schools are communities' natural epicenters. Therefore, schools must provide the necessary structures and philosophies to engage the entire community in the educational and social growth of children.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Minimum Qualifications: Candidates are responsible for making sure all the District requirements have been met. Do not contact AALA for information regarding positions. Use the listed contact phone number.

INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST

Florence Griffith-Joyner School (PLAS) MST 37, 1963 E. 103rd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90002
 Griffith-Joyner is a B Basis school. For information and application procedures contact The Partnership for Los Angeles Schools at employment@partnershipla.org. **Filing deadline is Wednesday, September 8, 2010, or until filled.**

The following positions are available to view in their entirety by going to the AALA Website, <http://www.aalasd.com>. By clicking on “positions available” to the left of the screen, you can select School-Based and Nonschool-Based positions and click on any position to view the specific flyer.

Position	Location	Deadline	Contact
Principal, Elementary	Mount Washington School	09/02/10	213.241.0132
Principal, Elementary	Hobart Boulevard School	09/02/10	310.914.2100
Principal, Secondary	Markham MS	Until filled	employment@partnershipla.org
Instructional Specialist	99 th Street School	Until filled	employment@partnershipla.org
Instructional Specialist	Santee Education Complex	Until filled	employment@partnershipla.org

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SPECIALIST, PARENT/SCHOOL RESOLUTION LIAISON (2 Positions), MST 37 (Temp. Adv.), B Basis, Division of Special Education/Due Process Department For information and application procedures contact Lisa Kendrick, Administrative Coordinator, at 213.241.6718. 	<p>5:00 p.m. Tues., Sept. 7, 2010</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ADMINISTRATOR, INSTRUCTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL OVERSIGHT, MST 45, B Basis, Charter Schools Division For information and application procedures contact Aaron Eairleywine, Central Business Advisor, at 213.241.5516. 	<p>UNTIL FILLED</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SPECIALIST, PSYCHIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER, MST 37 (Temp. Adv.), B Basis, School Mental Health Services For information and application procedures contact Pia Escudero, Director, at 213.241.3841. 	<p>4:30 p.m. Tues., Sept. 7, 2010</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SPECIALIST, LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT, MST 38 (Temp. Adv.), B Basis, Division of Special Education, Support Unit Central-West For information and application procedures contact Bette Medina, Administrative Coordinator, at 323.421.2950. 	<p>4:30 p.m. Thur., Sept. 9, 2010</p>