

UPDATE

Week of November 1, 2010

THE GAP IN LAUSD'S REFORM AGENDA

According to recent Board Informatives (October 22, 2010), the District is soliciting outside contractors to develop two new systems for LAUSD, a *Teaching & Learning Framework* and measures for *Academic Growth Over Time*. Together these contracts will cost the District at least \$2.5 million. The *Framework* Informative states that its development will be funded by up to \$1 million in LAUSD's Title II (federal) allocation. The *Academic Growth Over Time* Informative indicates that the District is "exploring" the use of Foundation funds to finance the \$1.5 million cost of this contract. If Foundation monies are not made available, the District will be responsible entirely for its funding.

Given the financial crisis, AALA questions District priorities. While we agree that our current evaluation process has room for improvement, **we wonder whether spending \$2.5 million in District funds on these projects is the best use of very scarce resources.** We believe much of the work to develop a framework could be done internally, thus saving substantial amounts of money. Why do we have senior staff leadership if they cannot pull together a team to design the essential framework? **District funds should be spent on safety and security at schools—a higher priority.**

Second, we challenge the timing of these expensive contracts. AALA is currently engaged in negotiations with the District. Administrator evaluation is a negotiable item (Article VII of AALA's collective bargaining agreement) and cannot be changed unilaterally by the District. We wonder why the District intends to spend \$2.5 million for systems that have not been negotiated at the bargaining table and that AALA may not support. **Is the District planning to ignore AALA members' contractually agreed-upon rights?**

Third, the District has produced no evidence that an expanded evaluation system will improve student learning. *Academic Growth Over Time* refers to value-added measures (such as the *L.A. Times* used to rank teachers), which may be helpful data if used appropriately. However, there is no consensus among researchers that such measures are appropriate for evaluation. Nationally known professors of education and researchers including **Eva L. Baker** (UCLA) and **Richard Rothstein** (Research Associate for the Economic Policy Institute) oppose the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers and administrators. Furthermore, no matter how statistically sophisticated they are, value-added measures do not inform administrators or teachers about how to improve student learning.

Herein lies the gap in LAUSD's reform agenda: the assumptions that the evaluation of personnel will make students learn more and better. **A positive reform plan would address student engagement, enhanced curriculum, high-quality professional development, school-site collaboration, additional resources and needed support for administrators instead of politically inspired, trendy quick fixes.**

As **John Mockler**, former Executive Director of the California State Board of Education, said in a phone conference on September 26, 2010, "Education is not an elevator ride. You need to take the stairs." Improvement efforts require sustained effort over time and depend upon nurturing positive relationships, mutual support and focus, above all, on students. It is not simple, nor is it easy. This is no

THE GAP IN LAUSD's REFORM AGENDA (Continued)

surprise to the practitioners who do the work every day. **Unfortunately, some of the District staff members leading the charge have never served as school administrators.**

LAUSD students have demonstrated dramatic improvements in achievement over the past 10 years. The ELD reclassification rate is greater than ever before; CAHSEE pass rates have increased; the high school graduation rate has gone up. Has the District analyzed the reasons for these indicators of success? AALA suggests that such an analysis is the logical next step. Let's identify what works and share with all administrators and teachers current effective practices. Finally, AALA stands ready and able to share our insights and help the District identify what works and what does not. LAUSD administrators and teachers possess the brainpower; let's use it.

COPs AND ROBBERS

This week the LAUSD Board of Education decided to buy in excess of \$125 million in Certificates of Participation (COPs). These are bonds issued by a governing board rather than being voter approved, such as Bond Measure BB and others that AALA members strongly supported in the past. COPs are vehicles to obtain loans to fund capital goods such as buses, computers, facilities and other non-personnel costs. The problem is that the debt issued on COPs is paid back with general fund money over a period of 20 years. As you know, the general fund also pays for employees' salaries, books and the days of the school year. In essence, the Board has saddled the District with more debt and less hope of returning to a 180-day school year because they found other priorities more compelling.

What did they buy this week? The first item is \$50 million in COPs for the BTS payroll system. Remember that fiasco? The Board was persuaded that BTS needs more money. The Board also decided to stop leasing a police station at just \$800,000 and build a new one under the Roybal Learning Center for \$25 million. Apparently, no one in the District found construction bond funds, developer fees or other capital construction money to use, so they will take it from the general fund—kids and educators. Good priorities?

In addition, the Board issued additional COPs to pay for construction projects they felt were so urgent that they could not wait for the billions of school bond monies that may be issued through Measure Q in a few years. These COPs are to bridge fund the Garfield High School Auditorium for \$50 million because four years after the fire at Garfield, the insurance company the District used refuses to pay. Isn't this worth a lawsuit, or was faulty insurance purchased by the District? In addition, the District felt an urgent need to start building an adult school in the Southeast on a 12-acre parcel of land leased by the feds for \$1. LAUSD was told if they did not build soon, they would lose the land.

Finally, the Board felt it essential to purchase solar panels immediately to the tune of another \$50 million. After spirited discussion, the Board decided to use extra bond funds for this purpose. What extra bond funds? We have been told there are no bond funds left. Furthermore, while AALA believes that all of us need to be good stewards of our environment, we wonder how long will it take for this expenditure to be recouped in the form of cost savings? Couldn't this project wait until our current fiscal crisis passes? Aren't there a number of deferred maintenance and modernization projects that are more urgent?

COPs AND ROBBERS (Continued)

Our Superintendent has emphasized the critical need for the District to operate in a fiscally sound manner and, consequently, has cut all budgets to the bone. He has warned against a credit card mentality. However, this week he supported the Board's issuance of \$125 million in COPs. With priorities like these, one might question the vision and competence of LAUSD leadership.

ADMINISTRATIVE ALERT REMINDERS

AALA has received a number of complaints from school-site administrators regarding two line-staff protocol items.

- Central staff directly sending memos and requests to principals and assistant principals without the approval of the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent or the Chief of Staff need not be acted upon.
- AALA has a long-standing agreement with the District that the Deputy Superintendent must approve any request for information such as a survey or questionnaire. Additionally, principals must be provided a minimum of 20 working days to provide a response.

School administrators are asked to bring violations of either of the above to the attention of AALA staff via phone at 213.484.2226 or e-mail cvacca@aala.us.

REMEMBER TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 2, 2010.

**Your vote counts, especially now. People gave
their lives for the
right to vote. Honor their legacy
by exercising your rights.**

FREEDOM.....!

*"Freedom unrestrained is bondage. It is a form of
captivity. When I do whatever I please and say whatever
I want to say, I form a barrier between others and myself. I
become captive to my own selfish and arrogant behavior.
And, that is captivity of the worst kind."*

— Anonymous

WE GET LETTERS

From: Barbara Gutierrez
Sent: Friday, October 22, 2010 10:15 AM
To: AALA Office
Subject: ELIMINATION OF PLANT MANAGERS (Re: Update Week of October 25, 2010)

Thank you for raising the issue of the elimination of the plant managers. After serving at two elementary schools (Mount Washington ES with 337 students and Canoga Park ES with 1550 students), my experiences related to the critical and essential safety and security issues besides what AALA has identified are as follows:

1. Northridge Earthquake on Monday, January 17, 1994, a national holiday: Community, including Canoga Park ES's families, camped out on the playground until Red Cross established a rescue center at the high school later that week. Due to the damages, the school did not completely reopen for several weeks. The Plant Manager was indispensable in serving as the on-site manager and contractor for the agencies, organizations, Facilities and other LAUSD Divisions during the restoration of the school.
2. District administrators requesting the use of both campuses for National, State, County, City, LAUSD, Region, District and/or Cluster Administrator Meetings for funders, professional development, visiting dignitaries, etc.
3. Sites were used as emergency centers by LAPD and other law enforcement agencies due to emergencies in the community.

Also, know that Plant Managers, because of their responsibilities and living in the neighboring communities, are often the first people on site for emergencies. Neighbors, business owners and employees and law enforcement officers often called on Mr. **Joseph Guerrero**, Canoga Park ES's plant manager, first since he lived in the community. Because of where I live, he was the initial contact, point person and coordinator for break-ins, vandalism, emergencies, etc., until I could arrive at the school.

Of course, there were other countless safety and security needs. AALA has also provided a clear description of the numerous accountabilities, responsibilities and obligations expected at each school site in the second largest school district of the nation.

Again, thank you, AALA Team.

Elementary school administrators: AALA is collecting information about the loss of safety and security due to the elimination of plant managers during the day at many sites. Please forward such examples to cvacca@aala.us so we may share them with the Superintendent.

THE SUMMER SOLDIERS OF SCHOOL REFORM

By **Diann Woodard** – President, American Federation of School Administrators - AFL/CIO

The hype about "Waiting for Superman" has given leaders of the business model of school reform an opportunity to promote their cause with renewed vigor, as evidenced by an opinion editorial in *The Washington Post* on October 10, 2010. In it, heads of 16 of the nation's larger urban school districts reassert their arguments for charter schools and data-driven performance measures as solutions to the challenges hampering improved student performance.

Ironically, the case offered by the heads of these school districts—among them New York, Chicago and Washington—is strikingly at odds with factual evidence long available to more experienced educators.

For instance, to strengthen their claim that educators and their unions are the primary, if not singular impediment to improved student performance, the *Post* authors wrap their argument in the mantle of President Obama's politically charged assertion that the single most important factor determining whether students succeed in school is the quality of their teachers.

While neither my union nor those representing teachers would diminish in any way the significance of teacher performance, unfortunately for the avatars of reform, countless studies have shown that the quality of parenting has the most profound impact on student performance.

Among the studies that have escaped the notice of these "leaders" are those showing that the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement is the extent to which that student's family is able to create a home environment that encourages learning, high but not unrealistic expectations, and their involvement in their children's education at school and in the community.

In fact, a review of 66 studies involving parental involvement and student achievement found that when parents are involved in their children's education at home, their children do better in school.

The "Superman" crowd's conviction that "we also must make charter schools a truly viable option" is as ill informed as its singular focus on firing teachers and principals—often without due process and in violation of legally binding collective bargaining agreements.

Available studies on charter schools reveal that 17 percent of them perform better than public schools while more than twice that many—38 percent—fall short of public school performance. Somehow these readily available statistics have eluded the data mavens of reform. These evidentiary "oversights" vividly expose the willful blindness of the business model reformers to the social and economic forces at play in their communities.

One wonders, for example, if **Michelle Rhee**, who doggedly adheres to the business model in Washington, really believes that the 30 percent unemployment rate among African Americans in her city has no impact on the quality of family life and hence student performance. And these economic pressures are heaped atop the preexisting pathologies of drug use, violence and parental abandonment plaguing inner-city children and their educators.

THE SUMMER SOLDIERS OF SCHOOL REFORM (Continued)

The 16 leaders also characterize their penchant for closing neighborhood schools as "a difficult decision that can be very emotional for a community." It can also be a very bad idea, as it has been in Chicago, where moving students across neighborhood boundaries has, among other things, triggered heightened gang warfare.

"There has never been a time when Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has been as destabilized as it is now," says **Clarice Berry**, President of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association.

A Chicago schoolteacher who retired out of disgust with experimental reforms after 30 years service recently wrote, "There should be less emphasis on testing, more on tapping these students' gifts. Many of my kids could take an engine apart and put it back together. I had some of the most talented artists, even if it was street graffiti. So what does CPS do? They close down all the auto shops, drafting and wood shops, where my kids were in a comfort zone for their abilities."

Nor is it insignificant that these "leaders" are proving themselves the summer soldiers of school reform. **Ron Huberman**, CEO of Chicago Public Schools, announced his resignation just 2 days before his name appeared as a coauthor of the Post op-ed, abandoning an unresolved budget, unfinished preparations for state tests, and thousands of educators who have made a lifelong commitment to improving children's lives—hardly a paragon of public service.

"Until we fix our schools," the Post op-ed concluded, "the gap between the haves and the have-nots will only grow wider and the United States will fall further behind the rest of the industrialized world in education, rendering the American dream a distant, elusive memory."

To which the educators we represent reply, "Amen," fully aware that this can only happen when solutions are based on facts instead of myths, and when those of us on the frontlines of overcoming the challenges have a voice in fashioning the plans for improved student performance.

VIRGINIA TEXTBOOK CLAIMS BLACKS FOUGHT FOR SOUTH

A textbook distributed to Virginia fourth-graders says that thousands of African Americans fought for the South during the Civil War—a claim rejected by most historians but often made by groups seeking to play down slavery's role as a cause of the conflict. The passage appears in "Our Virginia: Past and Present," which was distributed in the state's public elementary schools for the first time last month. The author, **Joy Masoff**, who is not a trained historian but has written several books, said she found the information about black Confederate soldiers primarily through Internet research, which turned up work by members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Scholars are nearly unanimous in calling these accounts of black Confederate soldiers a misrepresentation of history. Virginia education officials, after being told by *The Washington Post* of the issues related to the textbook, said that the vetting of the book was flawed and that they will contact school districts across the state to caution them against teaching the passage.

» [Read full article:](#)

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/19/AR2010101907974.html?wpisrc=nl_education

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

For the past two years, AALA and ACSA have been developing a transformational leadership academy specifically for LAUSD. The goal of this program is to provide principals with the "nuts and bolts" to transform the culture of their schools.

Transformational Leadership will focus on building and supporting site leadership capacity to "transform" our schools into learning communities filled with academic optimism. Recent research has demonstrated emphatically that schools that develop a sense of academic optimism are places where students perform at high levels. Although specific pathways to transform our cultures and practices must be site specific, the direction of this work will be based upon construction of three common traits that we will support leaders to develop in their schools:

1. Collective Efficacy (belief that the faculty can make a positive difference in student learning)
2. Relational Trust (faculty trust in one another, in students and parents fostering cooperation to improve learning)
3. Academic Press (enacted behaviors focused upon student success, valuing hard work, learning and achievement)

For the first year of the program, AALA has paid all costs for the program development and presenters. The participant pays only \$225 for materials and catering.

The program is four Thursdays: Thursday, Nov. 18; Thursday, Jan. 20; Thursday, March 3; and Thursday, April 28. The base location is Plummer ES in North Hills.

The design of the program is to allow participants time to practice and reflect in between meetings.

Registration: Please visit www.regonline.com/transformational_leadership

ENROLL IN "THE ONLY WEEKEND PH.D. PROGRAM"

Why a Ph.D. in Education at Claremont Graduate University (CGU)? The Ph.D. in Education with an emphasis in Urban Leadership is an innovative program designed to meet the needs of urban K-14 educational leaders. As the only weekend Ph.D. cohort program at a selective private institution, the UL program allows you to remain in your profession full time while advancing your career and education. The CGU Urban Leadership Program offers personalized attention, a self-practitioner training with a mission towards social justice and accountability.

Take the next step in your career; enroll in the *CGU Urban Leadership Ph.D. Program* and attain the foundation and skills to make a difference. For program information call 909.607.8493 or e-mail Education.Info@cgu.edu. Visit the website: www.cgu/urbanleadership.edu.

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.

CLASSIFIED POSITIONS AVAILABLE

SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, MAYOR'S OFFICE OF EDUCATION

The Senior Policy Analyst will work with the Deputy Mayor of Education to carry out the Mayor's education policy agenda. Compensation will be negotiated within established annual salary range commensurate with demonstrated skills and work experience. Interested individuals should send a letter of interest and résumé to **Alysha-Stein Manes** at alysha.stein-manes@lacity.org.

PROGRAM AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is seeking a highly qualified and motivated individual with extensive knowledge and considerable experience managing the entire life cycle of large-scale school reform initiatives. The individual chosen to fill this position will be part of the innovative team that will be setting strategic vision for the District's future. For information about this opportunity go to:

<http://lausdjobs.lausd.k12.ca.us/appv1/main> or http://lausdjobs.lausd.k12.ca.us/appv1/main/pdf/ppda_monique.pdf.

CERTIFICATED POSITIONS AVAILABLE

INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALIST

Huerta School (PLAS) MST 37 (Temp. Adv.), 260 East 31st School, Los Angeles, CA 90011

Huerta is a B Basis school. For information and application procedures contact employment@partnershipla.org. **Filing deadline is Friday, November 12, 2010, or until filled.**

The following positions are available to view in their entirety by going to the AALA Website, <http://www.aalausd.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 |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|--|
| Instr. Specialist | Markham Middle School | Until filled | employment@partnershipla.org |
| <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. | | | UNTIL FILLED |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SPECIALIST, INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA SERVICES, MST 38 (Temp. Adv.), A Basis, Office of Curriculum, Instruction and School Support For information and application procedures contact Esther Sinofsky, Director, Instructional Media Services, at 213.207.2255. | | | 5:00 p.m. Mon., Nov. 8, 2010 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DIRECTOR, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT TEAM, MST 45 (Temp. Adv.), E Basis, Office of the Superintendent For information and application procedures contact Sharon Robinson, Special Assistant to the Superintendent, at 213.241.7000 or sharon.robinson@lausd.net. | | | EXTENDED DEADLINE 5:00 p.m. Mon., Nov. 15, 2010 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PRINCIPAL LEAD, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT TEAM, MST 45 (Temp. Adv.), B Basis, Office of the Superintendent For information and application procedures contact Sharon Robinson, Special Assistant to the Superintendent, at 213.241.7000 or sharon.robinson@lausd.net. | | | EXTENDED DEADLINE 5:00 p.m. Mon., Nov. 15, 2010 |