

UPDATE

Week of September 28, 2009

NOW THAT THE SHADES ARE DRAWN, WILL A PURGE BEGIN?

ALA members will recall that the "Mayor's Majority of Five" Board Members eliminated the Board of Education committee structure, thereby silencing the public's opportunity to address educational issues in a public forum. Further, the Mayor's Board voted to give the Board President, at regular board meetings, the discretion to limit public speeches to one or two minutes as opposed to the three-minute time frame of the past.

The "Mayor's Majority of Five" has pulled the shades down and certainly appears to void valuable input from the greater Los Angeles educational community. Is a leadership purge their next action? As the *Los Angeles Times* recently reported and restated in an editorial on Wednesday, September 30, 2009, "The District handed the new Mendez Learning Center in East Los Angeles to Mayor **Antonio Villaraigosa's** Partnership for Los Angeles Schools without community input or public airing." It should be noted that a Board vote did not take place on the wholesale turnover of the school. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, "Superintendent Cortines was pressured into doing so by Board President **Mónica García**, a close ally of the Mayor." **Since when does a single Board Member have the right to mandate an action by the Superintendent?**

This week **Guy Mehula**, who has successfully led the District's Facilities Division by building 80 new schools, completing 19,000 modernization projects and winning a number of awards on behalf of the District, has chosen to resign. His resignation, apparently, is based upon the Superintendent's desire to provide certain limitations to Mr. Mehula's leadership and perhaps open the door to the Mayor's future political needs. ALA congratulates Guy Mehula for a job well done! The loss of his leadership could negatively impact the District's successful building program. **Constance R. Rice**, an exemplary member of the District's Bond Oversight Committee, noted her concerns in a *Times* column, stating,

Now Cortines has rescinded key provisions that helped shield the facilities division from unwarranted interference. He announced the removal of the unit's specially assigned and quasi-independent lawyers and limited many new employees to 10 months of work and pay per year—something few competent construction professionals would agree to. Cortines and the Board also want to set salary limits that are not competitive. Mehula resigned because these and other proposals would end the independence that has made the school construction unit a success. Cortines' actions come as the construction program is also facing other threats. Some Board Members, in actions reminiscent of the group that brought us Belmont, have started pushing for expensive and wasteful changes to building contracts. They have tried to use bond funds for things that are prohibited by the bond measure. And they have increasingly questioned contract awards and dismissed the judgment of facilities professionals.

WILL A PURGE BEGIN? (Continued)

Questions that need to be addressed include:

1. Will other key District leaders with diverse opinions be forced to resign?
2. Will friends of the Mayor be offered construction contracts by direct order from the Board President to the Superintendent?

The shades are drawn and transparency is gone. Is the Board majority now going to sell off bond-funded schools for the vested interests of some?

Stay tuned!

UCLA TIER I and DEGREE PROGRAM

The UCLA Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) Tier I and Master of Education degree program invites aspiring administrators to apply for the upcoming cohort to begin July 2010. The PLI prepares educators to be social justice leaders who promote rigorous, high quality learning. To attend an information session, please go to the website at: <http://gseisweb.gseis.ucla.edu/centerx> or get in touch with **Nancy Parachini**, Director, Principal Leadership Institute, at: (310) 825-6212 or nparachi@ucla.edu Application deadline is January 15, 2010.

"SKILLS-BASED" CURRICULA SERVE NO ONE

In an editorial in *The Boston Globe*, education professor **Diane Ravitch** of New York University writes that our drive for "21st century skills" has sidelined a knowledge-based curriculum, even though "skill-centered, knowledge-free education has never worked." Skills-based learning has been propagated in one guise or another throughout the 20th century, Ravitch says, and in every instance, failed. Yet its philosophical impact has been substantial: "[supporters] inserted into American education a deeply ingrained suspicion of academic studies and subject matter," Ravitch argues. "But we have ignored what matters most. We have neglected to teach [students and teachers] that one cannot think critically without quite a lot of knowledge to think about." Thinking critically, she says, involves comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing what one has learned. What matters most is our capacity to see beyond our own immediate experience. "The intelligent person, the one who truly is a practitioner of critical thinking, has the capacity to understand the lessons of history, to grasp the inner logic of science and mathematics, and to realize the meaning of philosophical debates by studying them." Without a love of knowledge and learning, we cannot expect anyone to use his or her mind well.

Read more:

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/09/15/critical_thinking_you_need_knowledge/

HEALTH BENEFITS FAQ*

What should I do during the Open Enrollment period between November 1 and November 22?

There are four Important To Do's when the 2010 Benefits and Enrollment Guide arrives:

- Open right away; do not discard.
- At the very minimum, read the cover letter and note major changes in plans. Read the details of your plan and any others you might consider.
- Determine whether you will retain or change plans.
- Consider a Flexible Spending Account (FSA).
-

What if I don't do anything during Open Enrollment?

If you don't make an election, then you are subject to the following default rules:

- Current Anthem HMO enrollees to Anthem Select HMO
- Current Anthem HMO Plus, PPO and FFS actives and under age 65 and retired enrollees to HMO Select (within California)
- Current PPO and FFS retirees over age 65 out of California and retirees under 65 out of California to Anthem EPO
- Current HealthNet HMO enrollees to HealthNet HMO
- Current Kaiser HMO enrollees to Kaiser HMO

What should I do if am currently enrolled in the Anthem HMO and want to continue my care through UCLA or Cedars-Sinai?

Those who need to stay with Cedars or UCLA can change to HealthNet or the new Anthem EPO plan.

If I elect the opt-out cash back option of \$3,000, is the amount subject to taxes? If yes, what can I do to save on taxes?

Yes, the \$3,000 will be considered taxable income. To save on taxes, you may opt out and direct your monthly amount to a tax free Flexible Spending Account (FSA) or a tax sheltered annuity (401b) plan.

The FSA may be used to cover many of out-of-pocket medical expenses such as co pays, glasses, prescription drugs, crowns, bridgework, root canals, etc. You must enroll in FSA during Open Enrollment.

My spouse and I are both retirees and have dual coverage of medical benefits. Would we qualify for the opt-out cash-back option?

No. Internal Revenue Service guidelines consider the opt-out amount a pension benefit.

What are the least costly options for Medicare retirees?

The Medicare Advantage programs--Secure Horizons, Kaiser Senior Advantage and HealthNet Seniority Plus—provide retirees with the least out-of-pocket expenses. There are no changes in these programs for 2010.

I don't have Medicare Part A or Part B or both? What should I do?

This is a complex issue and has several different scenarios. We will provide a full description of what your options are within the next several weeks.

Next FAQ: More about your 2010 benefit options

*For more information regarding all LAUSD Benefits, visit the website: <http://benefits.lausd.net>.

TIER II IN BRAZIL FOR SCHOOL LEADERS
March 26-April 4, 2010

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!

Join a select group of school administrators for this highly rated and well-respected program! The SPRING program was designed in collaboration with the University of California, Irvine's FastTrack Tier II Program, and it will support candidates to FULLY complete Tier II requirements. You can finish the entire Tier II requirement with this program, and earn a Certificate in International Leadership, too. And, yes, spouses (significant others), family and friends may also come and "vacation" while you work — and we can assist in their travel arrangements, too.

For more information contact Dr. **Linda Orozco** at <http://leadership-innovation.org> or call (562) 368-4844 or e-mail Orozco@Leadership-Innovation.org.

Cost: \$3,255 (includes International Program Tier II tuition, airfare & hotel)
(OR \$2,655 without Tier II)
Dates: March 26-April 4, 2010

**SHIFTING TERRAIN IN CALIFORNIA'S
EDUCATION POLICY LANDSCAPE**

"The nation's public school teachers are feeling the squeeze from all sides these days," writes McClatchy Newspapers, "and some of the heat is coming from unlikely sources: minorities and longtime Democratic allies." Among these, says the paper, is President **Barack Obama**, which teachers and their unions did not expect when they organized to elect him. In fact, some union members are saying that it's difficult to distinguish the education policies of the current president from his predecessor, and longtime political alliances are in flux. Last month, California NAACP head **Alice Huffman**, who helped lead fights against school vouchers and merit pay when she worked as an organizer for the California Teacher Association, stood next to California's (admittedly moderate) Republican governor when he proposed merit pay for teachers and lifting the cap on charter schools. "The only place the NAACP can be is with this governor," Huffman declared. "If the teacher unions put a better proposal on the table, we would stand with them." And in L.A., a former employee of United Teachers Los Angeles, Mayor **Antonio Villaraigosa**, has turned against the union to push for a school-choice plan that could allow private operators to take over failing schools.

Read more: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/washington/story/75673.html>

ED. NOTE: AALA takes exception to the Mayor's perception of "failing schools." He paints with a broad brush without the benefit of factual research.

In UPDATE, the week of September 21, 2009, we published a letter written by Randall Delling, Principal of North Hollywood High School to Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of public Education. Here is the response to that letter.

Dear Principal Delling:

Thank you for contacting the California Department of Education (CDE) regarding California's accountability systems.

I appreciate the frustration that results from having state and federal accountability systems that measure academic performance differently. The state accountability system, Academic Performance Index (API), measures growth over time. The federal system, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), is a status bar that has a fixed target that all students must meet.

The API gains for North Hollywood Senior High School in 2009 were truly outstanding. Not only did the school's API improve by 37 points over 2008, but also all numerically significant student subgroups surpassed their API growth targets. This translated into the school meeting 21 out of 22 criteria on AYP. Unfortunately, the English language learner subgroup missed the percent proficient status bar in English-language arts (ELA). As a result, North Hollywood High School is a Program Improvement (PI) school once again.

I have consistently advocated relying on our state accountability system, which is based on the API, to identify California schools for PI. I have always believed that growth is a better accountability indicator because it measures progress and levels the playing field and produces more valid results. I plan to continue making this argument with the current administration in Washington. I remain hopeful that the current administration will eventually be more flexible in its application of the accountability provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. I am also optimistic that additional flexibility will be a major subject of discussion in the pending reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

However, in accepting Title I funds, the CDE agreed to implement the NCLB legislation as required by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The CDE is required to annually submit for approval an Accountability Workbook detailing how the federal accountability system will be implemented. Although the CDE has continually submitted accountability plans that take advantage of any flexibility offered by the ED, the basic premise of the accountability model (e.g., status bar) has not changed.

Schools that accept Title I funds are required to meet all AYP criteria under NCLB. If schools do not meet AYP in the same content area or on the same indicator for two consecutive years, they are identified for PI, regardless of how many criteria they did meet. Unfortunately, as the AYP targets increase each year, more schools will continue to be identified for PI. I continue to advocate for a growth model system and am hopeful that when NCLB is reauthorized, growth models will be given more consideration as a viable option for federal accountability.

In regard to your question about the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE), we use the cut score of 380 solely to establish the proficiency of a student for purposes of establishing AYP under the federal NCLB Act. It does not represent a passing score for purposes of graduation, which as you note is a score of 350.

SUPERINTENDENT O'CONNELL'S RESPONSE (Continued)

The administration of CAHSEE in grade ten represents the only point in time when all high school students take a common assessment in mathematics. By utilizing CAHSEE results to determine AYP for schools and districts, we do not need to introduce another math assessment in high school. In order for us to use CAHSEE in this fashion, the results should be consistent with those of the California Standards Tests (CSTs) in mathematics and ELA for grades two through eight as well as for the CST in ELA for grade ten. This explains the higher cut score for NCLB proficiency than for passing on the CAHSEE.

I am aware of the communication problem that this procedure presents; however, I am also sensitive to the added burden that the introduction of a grade ten NCLB mathematics test would present to local educators and students.

I understand this is disappointing after all your efforts and progress. Even though North Hollywood Senior High is in year one of PI, the staff, students, and school community have every reason to be proud of the gains that your school made from 2008 to 2009. The academic improvement demonstrated in your API is to be commended. You are providing students with the opportunity to learn and are making admirable progress in closing the achievement gap.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Robert Bernstein, Administrator, Academic Accountability Unit, at 916-319-0629 or by e-mail at rbernste@cde.ca.gov.

Again, thank you for contacting the CDE.

Sincerely,

JACK O'CONNELL
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

A NEW APPROACH TO DESEGREGATION

Philadelphia has set in motion a host of reforms, similar to what Secretary of Education Arne Duncan would like to see across the country. These policies include eliminating seniority from hiring decisions, revising the teacher evaluation system, and offering financial incentives to teachers in low-performing schools. But they are distinctive for a particular reason, writes the Center for American Progress. Philadelphia must implement them as part of a consent agreement to end a 39-year-old desegregation lawsuit filed by the Pennsylvania Human Rights Commission. The suit contended that Philadelphia's schools were unlawfully segregated by race, denying minority students educational opportunities equal to those for white students. The resulting agreement emphasizes a change in teacher policies at racially isolated, low-performing schools and "signifies a new approach to remedying the problems that desegregation lawsuits first attempted to solve." To ensure that students in poverty have access to effective teachers, the human capital system -- from recruitment strategies to tenure policies -- must be dramatically restructured, in the view of the center. Such changes are a radical and often unpopular departure from the customary hiring and placement practices of most districts, but are critical to attracting, developing, and retaining successful teachers, the article says.

Read more: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/09/philly_schools.html

GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN ASKS AMERICA TO "RETHINK LEARNING NOW"

"Why are we tolerating a national culture of testing," asks **Sam Chaltain** of the Forum for Education and Democracy, "When we all know from personal experience that what we need is a national culture of learning?" In an op-ed on the *Anderson Cooper 360* blog, Chaltain advocates a "subtle shift in thinking," returning the national conversation on education to what we know about learning and the core conditions that support it. To bring this about, he and others have launched a national grassroots campaign and asked people to reflect on what they already know to be true about powerful learning, to share those personal stories, and then to use that collective wisdom to help the country better understand what a healthy, high-functioning learning environment actually looks like. The Rethink Learning Now campaign (rethinklearningnow.com) is soliciting personal stories from across the country as it begins to outline a core set of essential conditions that schools can cultivate. "As that list takes shape," Chaltain writes, "We'll all be better equipped to hold ourselves, our lawmakers, and our local communities more accountable to implementing policies that are based more clearly on what young people need in order to thrive - and stay - in school, and not just on what is easiest to quantitatively measure."

Read more: <http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2009/09/08/rethink-learning-now/>

Visit the campaign: <http://rethinklearningnow.com/>

IN MEMORIAM

DR. ROBERT "BOB" MARTIN – Former Assistant Superintendent, Region C. Bob passed away on September 14, 2009. Services were private. Condolences may be sent to the family at 432 South Curson Avenue, Apartment 12-D, Los Angeles, CA 90036.

For your information —

NEED TO RAISE FUNDS?

Many schools look for fundraising opportunities. If you eat breakfast, lunch or dinner at Mimis Café, they will donate 15% back to your school or organization. Here's how the program works:

- Set a date and time (typically a 4-hour window for members of your school or organization to meet and dine at Mimis.
- Distribute flyers to your members one week prior to the scheduled event date.
- Meet at the designated Mimis Café to dine during the specified hours.
- 15% of sales on the designated day will be donated back to your school.
- Make Mimis your monthly meeting place and raise funds every month.

Contact your Mimis Café General. To find a location nearest you visit www.mimiscafe.com.

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.

PRINCIPAL, ELEMENTARY

Weigand Avenue School (7) MST 41, 10401 Weigand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90002
 Weigand is an E Basis school. For information and application procedures contact **Francisco Gonzalez**, Director, at 323.242.1315. **Filing deadline is Wednesday, October 14, 2009.**

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, SECONDARY

San Pedro High School (8) MST 40, 1001 West 15th Street, San Pedro, CA 90731
 San Pedro is a B Basis school. For information and application procedures contact **Juan Flecha**, Director of School Services, at 310.354.3400. **Filing deadline is Friday, October 9, 2009.**

ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL, EARLY EDUCATION CENTERS (MST 32, A Basis)

52nd Street Early Education Center (7), 901 West 52nd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90037
Parks Huerta Early Education Center (7), 1020 West 58th Place, Los Angeles, CA 90044
 For information and application procedures contact **Iadrana Williams** at 323.242.1307. **Filing deadline is 4:00 p.m., Friday, October 9, 2009.**

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 NONSCHOOL-BASED POSITIONS AND CLICK ON ANY POSITION TO VIEW THE SPECIFIC FLYER.

POSITION	FILING DEADLINE
Specialist, Student Information Systems Branch, Temp. Adv., MST 38, E Basis, Office of Data and Accountability. For information and application procedures contact Dan Cruz , Director, at 213.241.2450.	5:00 p.m., Friday, Oct. 9, 2009
Specialist, Federal and State Education Programs, Temp. Adv., MST 39, B Basis, Federal and State Education Programs Branch. For information and application procedures contact Debbie Ernst at 213.241.6990.	5:00 p.m. Friday, Oct. 9, 2009

PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED POSITIONS STILL AVAILABLE

Position	Location	Deadline	Contact
Director of Instructional and Operational Oversight	Charter Schools Division	UNTIL FILLED	213.241.2656
Principal, Secondary	West Adams Preparatory High School - DEADLINE EXTENDED TO	10/16/09	213.745.4978
Asst. Prin., SCS	Garfield High School - DEADLINE EXTENDED TO	10/09/09	323.224.3120