



## OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS 2026 ADVOCACY GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

As the second largest school district in the nation, the Los Angeles Unified School District (Los Angeles Unified) serves a diverse community of more than 500,000 students in pre-Kindergarten through Adult Education. Los Angeles Unified families speak 160 languages in their households. Over 86 percent of our students are identified as low-income, English learners, and/or foster youth. These students demonstrate extraordinary resilience and persistence, constantly striving to overcome the challenges they face. Supporting the academic achievement and social-emotional well-being of students, while closing educational equity gaps, requires strong partnerships with federal, state, and local governments.

The Office of Governmental Relations (OGR) informs the Board and the Superintendent of legislative developments and opportunities for advocacy engagement, and responds to advocacy priorities identified by the District's leadership. These guiding principles frame the advocacy and engagement that OGR undertakes on behalf of Los Angeles Unified, and guide OGR's work when evaluating legislation or funding proposals introduced by governmental entities, particularly the California Legislature. OGR will consider opposing or seeking amendments to legislation that contradicts the following guiding principles or undermines the District's discretion to adopt local policies that best serve the interest of students.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Los Angeles Unified's principles are guided by the five Pillars of our 2022-26 Strategic Plan, as well as a focus on equity, fiscal responsibility, and local control.

#### **Academic Excellence**

Students' academic achievement is essential to forming a meaningful path to college and career. A culture of academic achievement and high expectations spurs student curiosity and engagement and prepares students to participate in civil society and democracy. The State must continue to advance efforts to address opportunity gaps and chronic absenteeism. In alignment with our Strategic Plan, we will support efforts that allow us to improve student performance and graduation rates, so that all students graduate ready for the world.

#### **Joy and Wellness**

Student health and wellbeing anchors the core of everything we do as a district. All policies we sponsor or support must serve our students' ability to learn, grow, and thrive in a safe environment that helps them achieve their greatest potential as scholars and citizens. As part of this effort, we will support policies that are consistent with the principles of educational equity and that prioritize access to limited resources in areas of highest need.

#### **Engagement and Collaboration**

Building trust among internal and external community partners is a critical step in supporting the needs of students. OGR remains committed to strengthening communication with parents and

external partners on the District’s advocacy efforts, and to solicit support on advocacy priorities where coalition efforts are warranted.

### **Operational Effectiveness and Investing in Staff**

As the second largest employer in Los Angeles County and second largest public education system in the country, Los Angeles Unified is committed to ensuring the organizational sustainability of the school district by supporting an educator and staff pipeline of highly qualified and diverse personnel. We will advocate for flexibilities that allow the District to prioritize positions that support services for the whole child, and oppose legislation that takes away the District’s discretion to meet the students’ best interest and/or contradicts the District’s Strategic Plan initiatives.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

Recognizing that California has a requirement to present a balanced state budget, we will holistically consider how requests for increased state or federal funding for certain programs may impact other District advocacy priorities. We believe that it is important that the State fund any new mandates or requirements that it places in school districts. As a large and diverse district, we value flexibility in funding and protecting the principles of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and will explore and respond to options suggested for structural changes to the LCFF. We will continue to advocate for sustainable, ongoing funding that allows the District to invest in our students, staff and families over the long term.

### **Local Control**

Los Angeles Unified is a unique district within California and the United States. Our student body is over four times larger than the next largest district in the State and offers services “in-house” that in most districts are supported by their County Office of Education. We recognize and respect that each district serves a unique population and faces unique challenges. For that reason, we value local control and local discretion to determine curriculum, provide services and administer programs according to local student needs wherever possible.

## **AREAS OF FOCUS**

### **Adequacy of Funding**

Serving students requires investing in a full and fair funding strategy that includes investments in preschool through Adult Education. The Legislature should consider that costs, such as health insurance and housing, are rising far above the rate of inflation, since the annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) is often insufficient. We will continue to advocate for California to join most states in funding schools based on student enrollment, rather than attendance, which more accurately reflects the fixed costs of serving students. Further, the state legislature should prioritize the reimbursements of costly mandated activities that result in less discretionary funding for school sites and the classroom.

As enrollment declines, per pupil funding in Proposition 98 will likely increase, creating a dividend that can be invested in different ways. We will be actively engaged in conversations about the best possible uses of this funding, and associated changes to the LCFF structure.

### **Adult Education**

Adult Education provides English as a Second Language (ESL), basic skills, high school diploma, and career technical education classes to adults and out-of-school teens to help them reach their college, career, and community goals. To expand and improve services to effectively meet the needs of adult learners, we will support state policies that provide flexibility in addressing changing workforce needs and increase community access to adult education programs and services.

### **Charter Schools**

We support legislative efforts that support all authorizers in the state to advance strong oversight, particularly in the areas of academic achievement, governance, and fiscal transparency, as well as accountability for charter school operations, and equity and access for all students. As the largest authorizer in the State, we believe charter authorizers across the state need to receive ongoing levels of support to implement effective oversight.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Robust instructional supports are essential contributors to student success. We will advocate for state support of curriculum and instructional practices by ensuring that sufficient resources are available to effectively implement new and existing curriculum requirements and practices. The State should promote the development of robust curriculum frameworks and additions integrated into existing frameworks, while remaining mindful of the impact that new curriculum requirements have on graduation rates, student enrichment opportunities, and the ability of local school boards to design a curriculum that meets local needs and preferences. We call upon the Legislature to avoid any new requirements without considering which existing requirements can be removed or consolidated. We support efforts to maintain and expand access to online tutoring, virtual learning and coursework, and other digital resources.

### **Before and After School Programs**

Through the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program, school districts can better support working families and expand learning opportunities for students, including access to arts, music, sports, enrichment activities, and field trips that would be otherwise out of reach for many students. We are committed to continuing to strengthen before- and after-school program coherence, quality, developmental appropriateness, and accessibility. We will advocate for ongoing dedicated support for before- and after-school programming and appropriate reimbursement rates to continue these programs.

### **Data-Driven Practices**

Academic achievement and post-secondary success can be achieved most readily when targeted instruction and intervention are guided by real-time, multiple-measure data, both qualitative and quantitative, across transitions from pre-kindergarten to elementary; elementary to middle; middle to high school; and high school to college or career. The State should invest in and support local education agencies' ability to monitor effectiveness and guide technical assistance. We believe that the State should hold schools accountable for metrics that are actionable and should avoid penalizing districts or creating the perception of lower performance for activities or outcomes out of their control. When the State identifies schools to receive additional assistance, the State should also provide timely and transparent policies for how schools will exit this identification for support.

### **Digital Equity and Safety**

Access to high-speed and reliable internet has proven to be a necessity—not a luxury—allowing students, families, and businesses to access valuable information online to continue instruction, stay socially connected, and complete daily work. The digital divide is especially harmful to public education in low-income communities and communities of color which are disproportionately impacted, leaving the highest-need families disconnected. The State adopted a Digital Equity Bill of Rights and must go further to ensure that these principles are translated into action by supporting affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband, and by building out middle-mile and last-mile infrastructure to underserved areas. We also recognize that technologies can negatively affect student health, safety, and wellness. Both State and Federal governments must enhance social media safety and protect students from social media-related dangers including cyberbullying, hate speech, sexual harassment, and propaganda; and by implementing policies that allow schools to effectively manage the use of smart phones and social media on campus. We recognize that cyberattacks threaten our networks and will continue to work with state and federal authorities to protect our network assets, information, and community against increasingly sophisticated cyber criminals. Finally, we are attentive to both the opportunities and challenges inherent to the rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and will be a voice for students as state guidelines, policies and regulations are developed.

### **Early Childhood Education**

High-quality pre-Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten programs improve a child’s social-emotional development and lead to stronger mathematics and literacy skills. Los Angeles Unified is committed to providing every student with a quality education and believes in laying the foundation early to prepare children for kindergarten and beyond. We will support policies that expand access to high-quality early learning for children ages 0-5, including, but not limited to, the implementation of the alternative reimbursement rate system, greater supports to increase the quality and preparation of the workforce, the creation of Kindergarten as a mandatory grade and the removal of administrative barriers that prevent eligible children from accessing the programs. The State must ensure that new or more stringent program requirements are funded before those requirements are implemented, and that districts are provided sufficient time and resources to implement any new requirements.

### **English Learners and Language Acquisition**

We will support policies that allow English Learners to acquire English fluency and reclassify as English proficient while maintaining their home language and graduating college- and career-ready with the California Seal of Biliteracy. We support efforts that will allow English Learners with special needs to have access to the same opportunity to reclassify as their peers with typical needs. We will seek to expand dual language education programming and offer world language classes that reflect the diversity of our district, and to provide multilingual pathways for all students to become bilingual and biliterate.

### **Federal Policies**

We will continue to monitor and advocate through the annual appropriations cycle for increased funding of Titles I-IV formula programs; and 21<sup>st</sup> Century program funds for after-school programs. In addition, we will actively advocate for full funding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); passage of federal legislation to fund schools’ physical and

digital infrastructure, including school greening projects; and increased funding to state and local education agencies under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

We will support a permanent solution for undocumented youth and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries, and the end of immigration policies that impact learning and family stability. We will oppose efforts to create Federal laws, policies, or practices that require school districts to cooperate with Federal agencies and immigration personnel in any way related to immigration enforcement action.

We will advocate for additional funding to increase access to high-quality preschool programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds, including support for increased reimbursement rates, teacher preparation programs and facilities renovations. We will seek to increase connectivity funding to provide students and teachers with access to devices and internet services for off-campus use and support changes to the E-Rate program to use funds to strengthen IT security infrastructure. We will also advocate for federal recognition of the Gabrielino-Tongva and Fernandño Tataviam tribes. In addition to these priorities, we will support federal legislation that is consistent with other policies and principles outlined in this document, as appropriate.

### **Post-Secondary Attainment and Success**

College readiness curriculum, providing access to the financial aid application process, and concurrent enrollment at secondary school sites builds students' identity as college and career ready. Los Angeles Unified is committed to preparing all students for postsecondary success by supporting state policies that enable us to align innovative resources equitably and effectively in support of student needs. We will support policies that remove barriers to college access for all students, especially those from underrepresented communities.

### **School Facilities**

With over 1,300 schools serving pre-kindergarten through Adult Education, Los Angeles Unified's aging and deteriorated school facilities require ongoing investments to provide safe, healthy, and functional places to learn for all students. We are still making up for decades of unmet capital needs, while new requirements and priorities emerge, and the backlog of unaddressed conditions continues to grow. We are committed to pursuing and supporting changes to state law that will maximize funding, address barriers to timely project execution, ensure efficient use of resources, and promote the District's climate goals including the transition to renewable energy. We support statewide investments in school facilities construction, modernization, and greening projects.

### **School Personnel Pipeline**

With the ongoing need to create a pipeline of credentialed teachers, nurses, psychiatric social workers, librarians, administrators, and other certificated and classified positions, we will continue to advocate for programs that expand career ladders, both pre-service and in-service, and draw highly effective candidates into the field of education. These efforts include funding for teacher preparation programs.

### **Special Education**

Special education is significantly underfunded in California and across the nation. The share of District's General Fund contribution directed to special education is more than double the State or

federal share. We believe the State and federal governments need to increase their investment levels to enhance equitable special education funding for pre-Kindergarten students with disabilities and students with moderate –to severe disabilities. We will continue to support federal funding efforts to match the initial principles of the IDEA to fund special education at the appropriate level.

### **State Mandates**

The passage of state legislation often results in new, unfunded mandates that local educational agencies pay out of the existing state funding received through the Local Control Funding Formula. With the passage of new legislation, the state legislature should prioritize the reimbursements of costly mandated activities that result in less discretionary funding for school sites and the classroom. The State must meet its obligations to reimburse school districts for prior mandate claims and should develop a clear and public process for the funding of future state-mandated activities – either through the constitutional claim process, or inclusion in the K-12 Mandate Block Grant Program. We will advocate for statutory changes to address liability issues.

### **Student Safety**

Student safety is one of Los Angeles Unified’s top priorities. The District takes a strong position against bullying, hazing, or any behavior that infringes on the safety or well-being of students, employees, or any other persons within the District’s jurisdiction or interferes with learning or the ability to teach. We will collaborate with local authorities, including the City of Los Angeles, other local municipalities within the District’s boundaries and the County of Los Angeles, to support safe passage to and from school for students, staff and families. We will advocate for funding for crossing guards and traffic calming measures that reduce pedestrian-related incidents. We will also advocate for new avenues to curtail the pervasive epidemic of gun violence through new legislative requirements, including, but not limited to, strengthening gun violence restraining orders, gun storage laws, restrictions of the sale of firearms and increased safety measures. Additionally, we will consider supporting legislative proposals and other opportunities that address domestic and dating violence.

### **Supporting the Whole Child**

Supporting the whole child is grounded on the principle that each student’s potential for success is positively influenced by an environment that fosters the health, mental health, safety, engagement, support, and academic enrichment of that student. Students learn best when we recognize that academic achievement is not limited to experience in the classroom. Accordingly, we will continue to advocate for whole-child well-being; including, but not limited to, expanding services for the health and wellness of students through Medi-Cal and other funding mechanisms, supporting Community Schools, and supporting measures that combat homelessness and remove barriers to success for homeless youth. We will support policies and programs that affirm our LGBTQ+ students and oppose efforts that cause harm to their mental health, safety, and wellbeing. We will support measures that contribute access to affordable housing for students, families, and school employees.