

June 15, 2023

Hello, Superintendent Carvalho:

Our Parent Advisory Committee appreciates the responses you have provided to our Comments on the draft 2023-24 Local Control and Accountability Plan. Having reviewed your responses, we now present our feedback on them.

An initial review of responses drafted by your staff as well as various department heads produced the following overall impressions:

Broad Themes	Comment Number
Some training for educators should be mandatory rather than optional and only "offered."	4, 8, 9
Some Responses need raw data where percentages are offered, others need percentages, and still others need more detailed, specific, and/or disaggregated information to provide greater transparency.	4, 7, 21
Opportunities exist for parent leadership and voice in the work of the District.	3, 5, 11, 20, 28
Some Responses only state current District practice, when the Comment is actually asking for programs to be changed or improved.	10, 11, 13, 26, 30, 33

Now we go into detail on a number of Responses to lay out our observations:

GOAL 1: 100% Graduation

Comment 3:

Offer support and funding for more schools to start International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

RESPONSE:

Funds are provided to interested schools to move through the interested, candidate and authorized phase of the IB program. The interested phase requires a school to investigate the process to become an IB school and fund a “feasibility team” through a gap analysis and IBO training. The feasibility team consists of the head of school and up to 3 other site members. For more information, please see achieve.lausd.net/domain/266.

First, parents by and large have absolutely no idea how to go about inquiring about the IB process or even know that it exists. Beyond this, the “feasibility team” referenced in the Response must include at least one parent or guardian of a student at the school site.

Comment 4:

Equitable Grading and Instruction (EGI) must be fully implemented District-wide, with every teacher trained and certified.

RESPONSE:

The A-G Intervention and Support Office, Division of Instruction, and the District as a whole are dedicated to supporting the expansion of Equitable Grading and Instruction (EGI) practices, with the declaration that everyone can learn when provided with the right conditions and support. The Superintendent's Strategic Plan includes support for expanding EGI in LA Unified in Pillars 1A and 1D. A 2026 measure of success for this asserts that we will do the following: "Increase the percentage of teachers with EGI Certification by over 50% from 2021-2022." The 2022-23 measure of success metric called for the District to "Increase the percentage of teachers with Equitable Grading and Instruction (EGI) certification by 14% (from 2021-22)" It is noteworthy that as of April 14, 2023, the number of teachers with EGI certification increased by 20.6% from the 2021-22 benchmark, exceeding the growth goal by almost 50%.

The district will continue to offer differentiated professional development opportunities to staff including the following:

- **Workshop series for teachers and school teams that can lead to certification**
- **Implementation support sessions and UnConference events for Certified teachers**
- **Facilitator training for Certified teachers that will equip them to train others**
- **Micro-Credential program (launched in 2022)**

Further increasing the numbers of EGI trained and certified faculty in our schools will expand implementation in our classrooms, building momentum for continued growth to reach scaled and sustainable implementation of EGI. With the long-term mission to prepare all students to be “ready for the world”, EGI is positioned to support students as creative learners who will take charge of their own learning to reach postsecondary success.

Mastery Learning and Equitable Grading, as this concept was until recently known, represents a sea change in grading practice, which has remained essentially unchanged since modern concept of public education first began in the 1840s. Though the Ed Code dictates that teachers “own” their grades and associated grading decisions, districts are indeed able to create grading policies which must be followed by classroom teachers.

Having learned about the many negative effects on students of the current grading practices through my participation last year in the Mastery Based Learning and Equitable Grading Advisory Group, I was particularly eager to see the response to this Comment. However, wading through the plethora of percentage increases touted above, it was clear that making sense of these numbers is literally impossible without corresponding raw numbers on how many teachers have actually completed EGI training and/or certification courses. Whether this omission was intentional or merely inadvertent, I’m stunned that such an obviously incomplete response could have been produced by our Division of Instruction.

Also, the fact that EGI, like so many other promising practices throughout our District and in public education, remains optional for teachers is astounding. I’ve lost count of how many times the question has been asked during a presentation to a parent committee or other group as to why this is the case,

only to hear the presenter beg off with the reply that it's a bargaining-unit issue and quickly move on to the next item. For some strange reason, no one is willing to address the "why" of this question.

I'd say it's high time we were given a clear, detailed answer on the reasons that so many important teaching practices and related training courses purportedly cannot be made mandatory for all LAUSD teachers. Considering that our kids are literally the District's customers, parents have a right to know.

GOAL 2: Proficiency for All

COMMENT 10:

Students need "Life Skills" instruction in high school to prepare them for life as adults.

The District does not offer Life Skills classes. Currently, however, many of the skills that were taught in that class are taught in our Secondary Career Technical Education (CTE) classes. Students write resumes, cover letters, learn to fill out job applications, earn financial literacy certificates and participate in mock interviews. They also take aptitude tests to explore their interests and talents.

CTE is not a required course of study. Currently there are 36,500 high school students enrolled in a secondary CTE course. For more information on CTE please see ctelinkedlearning-laUSD-ca.schoolloop.com or email the CTE-Linked Learning office at: ctelinkedlearning@lausd.net

This Response utterly fails to acknowledge any possibility that all high school students will be able to complete what were formerly known as "life skills" or "civics" courses, which taught them how to survive in the adult world after graduation. The fact that only those students enrolled in CTE classes are taught this skillset should be a concern to us all.

COMMENT 11:

Encourage schools to review and revise their attendance- incentive programs each year with input from parents and families, using appropriate funding sources.

Schools do not have an allocation for attendance incentives. Therefore, the following is in place:

Pupil Services and Attendance counselors solicit donations and partner with community businesses to support school attendance incentive programs.

The LAUSD Office of Partnership and Grants also connects with partners to solicit donations for student incentives.

It's truly sad that this Response makes no mention of the Comment language, "input from parents and families."

GOAL 3: Excellent Attendance

Comment 13:

Provide Foster Youth Parent Liaisons in each Region to serve as a contact person for caregivers ("resource parents") and families, to be a familiar face for them.

RESPONSE:

There is an assigned Student Support Programs administrator in each region available to provide direct support and connection with the identified school foster liaison. The administrative staff directory is available on the Specialized Student Services webpage.

Program information may also be accessed through the department webpage at achieve.lausd.net/studentsupportprograms

I'm highlighting remarks here from our member who served as Chair of the Foster Youth Subcommittee and who has personal experience with the topic:

Several things about this Response:

- *This is not addressing the issue or the Comment.*
- *I never knew anything about this position.*
- *This is how many steps away from the front door of school and parent access? That position may as well be sitting on the banks of the Mississippi with a help desk. There is no access in the school for these families.*
- *“Foster Liaison”: WHAT is that position? WHO is that person? Again, I **think** I knew who this was in my small school but in 2-1/2 years not once did I ever meet with them or discuss anything.*
- *Administration staff directory is on the webpage? LOL. That is just hilarious. The contact information for this support person must be hidden deep in the LAUSD website.*

GOAL 4: Parent, Student, and Community Engagement

COMMENT 15:

Parents and students who serve on SSC and ELAC must be given meaningful, ongoing training to fully understand their roles and responsibilities.

Training for parents and students serving on the SSC and ELAC is currently provided annually within Regions in the fall. These include segments which cover valuable topics for new and returning members. Beginning with the new school year, each Region will continue to offer virtual training, and an additional in- person option will be provided by FSEP and SFACE.

Parents and students are also currently invited to attend a Family Academy webinar series in which in-depth learning is provided.

A second training will be expanded for members during the spring semester to offer members consultations where they learn further about topics of interest including: Parliamentary procedure, School Plan for Student Achievement, Budget development process, roles and responsibilities of SSC and ELAC. This additional in-person training will be led by FSEP and SFACE.

Parents for many years have been expressing their concerns around the often improper, inequitable, and unlawful operation of the School Site Council and English Learner Advisory Committee at their kids' school sites. With each PACE Unit overseeing 'school governance' functions in the former Local District model of approximately 140 school sites – and now, with the current Regional structure, over 200 sites – there is no way that any PACE Admin or their coaches can even try to fully monitor all the SSC's and ELAC's in their Region area.

That said, this Response does lay out promising practices in the areas of ongoing training and enhanced accessibility to training for parents and family members who serve on SSC and ELAC. For far too long, principals have ignored the crucial need to provide proper training to parents, students, teachers, and classified staff on what school governance is, what a member's role is, and how these two entities must interact to support maximum student achievement.

When a member is not trained correctly, they tend to believe their responsibility is only to show up and raise their hand to vote "yes" on every action item presented by the principal or designee, who may even be running the meeting as the elected chairperson looks on, clueless about what is happening or what they should be doing to preside over the meeting and move through the agenda. What I describe here is *always* – without exception – the SSC and ELAC concern most often highlighted by parents on CAC, DELAC, and PAC.

Yet despite serious, ongoing operational problems, these concerns are never addressed in any sort of meaningful way by PACE Units. Without real oversight, principals and designees continue to violate the law and District policy (specifically BUL-6745.5) in the name of "efficiency" and fulfilling preposterous promises to teachers that, "We will get you out of here in less than an hour."

GOAL 5: School Safety and Climate

COMMENT 20:

LAUSD must offer social-emotional support to any student in acute need, without having to ask their teacher for a referral form.

Agreed. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that students in need receive the support and care they require in a timely fashion. Specialized service staff are trained to assess initial needs and to work with families to coordinate ongoing services and care. A teacher referral form should not delay access and delivery of services.

Parents/caregivers are also encouraged to call the Student and Family Wellness Line to seek immediate social-emotional support: 213-241-3840, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Nothing of concern with the text of this Response, though the stated hotline hours, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., are too limiting for families. We suggest that schedules of operators be staggered to allow extended hours for live support, perhaps 6 a.m.-6 p.m.

GOAL 6: Basic Services

COMMENT 26:

Cafeteria menu items must be more appealing to students, so they will eat their food rather than throwing it in the trash.

Multiple food choices are provided to students daily. At elementary schools, up to three daily choices along with a fruit and vegetable bar are available . At secondary schools 4-6 choices that include vegan and vegetarian choices are served every day.

We hosted 5 vendor food tasting events attended by over 2700 students from multiple schools across the district to choose things that will go on menus. All our menus are student approved, and we provide ongoing choices to keep students engaged.

Student/parent menu tasting events were hosted at most schools and the response was favorable.

This particular Comment was severely limited in length due to the factors mentioned above, so it did not include details which would have made it much more robust and self-explanatory.

Our concern with the Response falls into two elements: (1) how or if survey data from student food-tasting events is used to determine which food items go into cafeteria menus; and (2) why parents by and large remain totally unaware that tasting events are scheduled for them to attend.

Stating that, "... over 2700 students from multiple schools across the district ..." attended these "vendor food-tasting events" leaves us wondering precisely which school sites received invitations to send students. Also, the claim that, "Student/parent food-tasting events were hosted at most schools and the response was favorable" cannot possibly be accurate. How many school sites actually hosted these events, how were parents and students notified and invited, and how were their opinions surveyed? Merely claiming that, "... the response was favorable" tells us nothing at all.

Once again, a response to one of our LCAP Comments is noticeably long on hyperbole yet sadly short on facts.

GOAL 7: English Learner Supports

COMMENT 28:

Dual-language programs MMED should be offered in more schools, beginning at the Early Ed level, and continuing, vertically aligned, through grade 12.

MMED's mission is to expand Dual Language Education at all school levels within L.A. Unified. Currently, the District is offering Dual Language Education at 6 Primary Centers, 148 Elementary Schools, 30 Middle Schools, and 11 High Schools. As this is a school community generated request, MMED is ready to collaborate with schools to establish new programs.

As with so many other programs and services throughout LAUSD, parents in general have no idea how to request implementation of a dual-language option at their children's school site, or even that one is available. The Response states, "... this is a school community-generated request ..." though if a principal believes his or her teachers don't want a dual-language program, most likely parents will not be made aware of this faculty opposition, and they may even

be misled by the admin to believe that for one reason or another a dual-language program at the school is not possible.

COMMENT 30:

Examine legal requirements for reclassification and consider an interpretation of the Ed Code which allows students to complete all steps of this process in a timely manner.

L.A. Unified’s reclassification criteria and policies follow the guidelines established by the California Department of Education. The overall goal is for every English Learner to meet the reclassification criteria as quickly as possible once the student has demonstrated readiness to succeed academically without English Language Development support based on Summative ELPAC, grade level assessment scores, and parent consultation.

This Response is nothing more than a general restatement of current practice and ignores the very point of the Comment, which requests an examination of relevant Ed Code language to determine whether some interpretation other than that currently being used in LAUSD is legal and feasible, that would allow for more rapid satisfaction of the four-part criteria and allow EL students to reclassify before entering middle or high school as LTELs, avoiding all the attendant limitations and frustrations attached to this “long term” EL status.

GOAL 8: BSAP Implementation

COMMENT 33

The BSAP initiative overall has not been engaging and empowering Black parents and the Black community. We believe LAUSD must establish a District-level African American Parent Advisory Committee or AAPAC.

A District-level parent advisory currently exists, and meets on a monthly basis. For more information, please visit achieve.lausd.net/bsa.

The BSAP team is also encouraging schools to create site-based parent advisory groups for the upcoming year.

This may be the most misleading Response in the entire set. I say that because unlike the trio of existing central parent committees – CAC, DELAC, PAC – which hold public meetings under the Greene Act, this group, the “BSAP Parent Advisory Committee,” is private, open by invitation only, with parent members who seem to have been hand-picked by superintendents of the former Local Districts, giving a total membership of only 12 parents. The large group has LD-based counterparts which feed into it, with seven meetings held of the large group this past school year, in October 2022 through May 2023.

Also, unlike the committees mentioned above, the BSAP PAC has no easily accessible agendas, minutes, or meeting materials, and *is not even mentioned on the webpage shown in the Response*. This so-called “BSAP Parent Advisory Committee” bears no resemblance to a *District-level African American Parent Advisory Committee* as envisioned by the Comment. The question begging to be asked here is, Why the need of an ultra-low profile for these seven groups?

COMMENT 34:

BSAP parent centers must be established in all Region offices, so parents can visit and get information, have questions or concerns addressed, and to serve as engagement “touch points.”

The BSAP team agrees that it would be of benefit to our families to establish BSAP parent centers at all Region offices, and will coordinate with Region leadership to establish and coordinate with existing services to support Black parents.

While the overall tone of this Response is agreeable and hopeful, it remains to be seen how committed the BSAP team and senior District leadership are to “coordinate with existing services to support Black parents” and how specifically these services will be utilized to create spaces where Black families know they can come to not only obtain complete information on the BSAP and

related services, but also to feel welcome in places which are truly intended “to serve as engagement ‘touch points.’” Our Black families deserve the best.

KUDOS

GOAL 2: Proficiency for All

COMMENT 6:

LAUSD Early Education Centers should be located at all elementary sites, open to all families.

The District continues to work to leverage funds to expand early education offerings for our communities. Currently, there are 86 early education centers district wide to serve communities of high need. In addition, we are reopening centers at San Pedro in Region South, West Valley Occupational Center in Region North, and Kentwood in Region West.

In addition, to provide more pre-kinder options, the district opened 317 Universal Transitional Kindergarten programs this year, and in 2023-24, all district resident elementary schools will have Universal TK. All UTK programs are open to all families.

Based on the information provided in this Response, the work being done to expand EEC and UTK capacity and availability appears to be outstanding.

Goal 4: Parent, Student, and Community Engagement

COMMENT 16:

Communication must be directly to parents and families, rather than through principals. Simplify access to information and resources available on school and District websites.

In addition to posting a variety of resources on District, Region and school websites, communication is provided directly to parents through

Blackboard Connect Ed. by phone, text and e-mail, through Schoology and the Parent Portal.

The Office of Student, Family and Community Engagement, Communications, School Operations, Division of Instruction, and others will design a resource that periodically provides families with messaging about District resources and events.

Communication, or rather the lack of it, is a perennial complaint voiced by parents throughout the District. Over the past year, though, we've seen a significant increase in the quantity and quality of messaging on a variety of important workshop topics, primarily from SFACE. We applaud Antonio Plascencia and his team for going all out to provide many more opportunities for families to become informed, engaged, and empowered through the Family Academy, SSC-ELAC Ambassadors, Special Ed Ambassadors, and other Zoom informational and training events.

REFLECTIONS ON RECENT EVENTS

Two obstacles appeared late in the PAC Comment-development process which combined to make our work much more difficult than it should have been. These are: (1) the default maximum of 150 characters in each of the two ThoughtExchange fields; and (2) the fact that our two Committee of the Whole slide decks were limited to only three "themes" for each of the eight LCAP Goals. These conditions together were grossly unfair and inequitable to our members, who have been working diligently throughout the school year, assimilating numerous presentations, and learning about the many programs and services provided by LCFF allocations, in preparation for diving into the process of actually creating LCAP Comments during Spring semester.

Obstacle 2 (three items per LCAP Goal) was only shared with PAC officers by SFACE *after* we had completed the second slide deck, at which time it was announced that you would be responding to no more than the three bullet-point "themes" shown on the slide for each Goal. This unrevealed, unilateral decision put me as Chairman in the awkward position of pointing out that

SFACE had in fact violated the PAC Bylaws! Our foundational document specifies a process for the Committee to review a superintendent's responses to our LCAP Comments, generate and submit feedback on those responses, and then "strongly encourage" the superintendent to give us a reply.

The decision to prematurely halt this process created a last-minute dilemma which forced me to politely insist that SFACE schedule additional officer and Committee meetings during and after the last week of school, when clearly many members would be unable to attend. Also, the fact that it was decided without 'consultation' of officers, as required in the Bylaws, brings us to where we are right now, so far beyond the proverbial "11th hour" that, according to Sarah Chevallier, *our feedback here will **not** be incorporated into the draft LCAP prior to its adoption by the Board on June 20th.* Obviously I'm disappointed.

Such shabby treatment of a District-level parent committee must be viewed as unprecedented and inexcusable. With all the talk of "building trust" between families and educators, again we see that parent and family engagement is only important to LAUSD when it serves the District's perceived interests, but otherwise it's *pro forma*, going through the motions, almost an afterthought.

Superintendent Carvalho, I'm reiterating a request made to you for the creation of a new position, tentatively titled *Family Leadership Ombudsperson*, to serve as an advocate for members and officers of our CAC, DELAC, and PAC, in the event that issues arise with the Office of Student, Family and Community Engagement, OGC, or any other District department. To ensure maximum independence and effectiveness, this position should report directly to you.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Finally, thank you for working with our PAC during this 2022-23 school year. Our members have enjoyed meeting with you. Hearing the story of how you came to America at age 17, homeless, living under a bridge, working your way up through the most menial of jobs, we know you understand firsthand the mighty struggles of so many LAUSD students to simply survive each day.

I heard you say that you always view decisions through a lens of what's best for students in the classroom, and also that you're trying hard to be fired from LAUSD for doing right by kids. We of the PAC trust that you will continue to fight for students and help them to become *"ready for the world."* *Muito obrigado!*

Best regards,

Paul Robak

Chairman

LAUSD Parent Advisory Committee

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