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Los Angeles Unified Board of Education Unanimously Approves Board Member Tanya Ortiz Franklin's First Resolution to Explore Mastery-Based Learning and Grading

LOS ANGELES (Feb. 23, 2021) — The Los Angeles Unified Board of Education voted unanimously today to adopt Board Member Tanya Ortiz Franklin's first-authored resolution, co-sponsored by Board President Kelly Gonez and Board Member Jackie Goldberg, to explore mastery-based learning and grading.

The resolution, "Exploring Mastery-Based Learning and Grading," commits to achieving equity for all student groups in college readiness and recognizes that mastery-based learning and grading may be one important way to do so. Mastery-based learning and grading is a growth mindset approach to teaching and learning, based on the expectation that everyone can learn when provided with the right conditions and support.

"While the pandemic has exerted unimaginable pressure and challenges for our students, families and educators, it also provides a unique opportunity to focus on what matters most in teaching and learning," Board Member Ortiz Franklin said. "With this resolution, our goal will be to collectively explore the ways we can shift the focus of traditional grading, which is usually weighted, averaged grades of assignments completed over time, to instead reflect a student's true understanding of learning targets and content standards, demonstrative of college and career readiness."

The resolution also directs the Superintendent to create a vision and multi-year, district-wide equitable grading plan, including a path to mastery-based learning and grading, incorporating guidance from a newly formed mixed stakeholder Grading Advisory Group.

"I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution," Board President Kelly Gonez said. "Moving toward mastery-based learning and grading will not happen overnight, but it is an important step to ensure an equitable education for all of our students. This shift will help our educators meet the unique needs of each child in their classrooms and, in turn, help more students graduate ready for success in college and 21st century careers."

“Grades should reflect what a student actually knows,” Board Member Jackie Goldberg, also a co-sponsor, said. “Mastery-based learning and teaching give teachers the flexibility they need to make sure all their students get it, not just those who get it the first time the new information is presented.”

“Children learn in different ways,” Board Member Dr. George J. McKenna III said. “This approach is another tool for our teachers to use to help all students do their best.”

“Los Angeles Unified affirms its commitment to every student and family by focusing on mastery grading work,” Board Member Mónica García said. “Post COVID recovery will require more work to maintain or accelerate graduation and college readiness. We must eliminate barriers and bias in policy and practice.”

“As a lifelong educator, I know that a good education and social emotional supports can transform a student’s life and lead them toward success,” Board Member Scott M. Schmerelson said. “Unfortunately, our most vulnerable student populations have suffered and fallen behind during this distance learning period. A student’s mastery of the subject is not defined by a letter grade. I support my colleagues and the District’s commitment to providing ongoing professional development for our teachers in mastery-based learning and grading, and a second opportunity for students to learn with differentiated instruction and a flexible grading system so they can graduate college and career ready.”

“Our mission is to prepare every student to graduate college-and-career ready,” Board Member Nick Melvoin said. “I’m proud to support this move toward a more holistic, equitable grading system that focuses on the content students have mastered, rather than simply the amount of work they complete – especially now as we work to address the learning loss that so many kids are experiencing during the pandemic.”

Tanya Ortiz Franklin is the newest member of the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education representing Board District 7, where she was previously a student, teacher, teacher-educator and advocate. She is committed to ensuring all students graduate fully prepared to thrive in the college and career of their choice. Los Angeles Unified Board District 7 includes the diverse communities of South LA, Watts, Gardena, Carson, Lomita, Harbor City, Wilmington and San Pedro.

To learn more about the resolution, please visit laschoolboard.org/02-23-21SpclBdCharter.

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