

INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE
Los Angeles Unified School District
Office of the Superintendent

TO: Members, Board of Education **INFORMATIVE**
DATE: May 20, 2019

FROM: Austin Beutner
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: The Work Ahead: Simplifying a Complex System for School Leaders and Families

Los Angeles Unified serves the needs of almost 700,000 students and their families across 700 square miles takes extraordinary commitment and teamwork by the more than 60,000 people who work in the District. Los Angeles Unified also has to make certain all of its funds are well spent and all rules and laws are complied with. Taken together, the system is quite complex.

At the same time, we need to make it possible for principals to be the leader we want them to be, to help teachers engage with and educate their students and for families to engage in their child's education. Anything we can do to reduce bureaucracy and restore the focus to classrooms will help our students.

These past many months we have had several teams and interdepartmental groups united to do just that. David Kooper, with the help of Tony Aguilar and Pedro Salcido has been leading the work. They are making progress in identifying opportunities and implementing system change so all can benefit. The new approach was to act as expedite a problem for one individual of one school. Their approach has been to identify the root cause of the problems and to develop and implement solutions which solve the same issues across all of Los Angeles Unified. And slowly, but surely, they are making real progress. They are working with various stakeholder working groups of Principals, Teachers, and Families as well as Administrators to better understand the issues and make sure the solutions are workable ones.

In simplest terms, before we can ask people to do more—more focus on instruction, community building and other priorities—we have to create the time in their day by reducing something else. Simplifying a complex system, while maintaining standards and compliance, will allow more time to focus on the priority of student achievement.

A few highlights are set forth below.

I. School Leaders

Efforts to simplify processes and reduce bureaucracy for school site administrators include: 1) reduction and simplification of communications to administrators; 2) streamlining and reduction of administrator certifications; and 3) ongoing problem solving with an administrator workgroup.

Communications to Administrators

In prior years, school administrators received both a biweekly communication from the Central Office, as well as regular communications from local districts. The multiple communications often contained redundant information and took many hours to review. For the 2018-19 school year, the Office of the Superintendent coordinated and consolidated these messages so that school administrators now receive a single, biweekly communication that is much more concise.

Administrator Certifications

Throughout the year, school administrators are required to certify that their schools and staff are in compliance with various District requirements. These range from certifying that they have reviewed the employee attendance policy with staff to certifying that their school's facilities are safe. The District is working to reduce the number of annual certifications that administrators need to complete from 147 to 103, so they can focus more of their time on work with students, teachers and families

The number of certifications will be reduced by eliminating unnecessary certifications, combining redundant certifications, and reducing the frequency of certifications. In addition, the online process for completing certifications will be simplified. Examples of these improvements are listed below:

- 2019-20, redundant certifications requested by both the Office of Data and Accountability and Division of Instruction will be combined into a single certification.
- Administrators will certify twice a year, instead of monthly, that their school is satisfying all federal, state, and district requirements regarding English learners.
- The number of "clicks" required to complete certifications will be significantly reduced.
- Administrators will be required to upload fewer documents as part of their certifications.
- 2018-19, several certifications required twice a year were reduced to once a year and as of January 2019, administrators no longer need to certify monthly that their schools are flushing the drinking fountains to provide clean water; instead, they are entrusted to perform this important task on their own. (Additionally, the District is working to upgrade drinking fountains so that one day they will not have to be flushed at all).

Attached is a more detailed summary of the improvements being made to certifications.

Principal Workload

A working group comprised of school administrators from all levels, school types, and local districts has been looking at administrator workload and is drafting initial recommendations on how to increase the focus on students, families, and teachers. Initial recommendations include the following:

- Offer new methods of professional development, including virtual and local district-designed “grab and go” PD, to personalize and differentiate offerings for teachers while reducing time needed to plan PD
- Simplify plan writing (form, data dashboard aligned to plan requirements, continuity from year to year) and require schools to write only ONE plan
- Increase social-emotional learning and psychiatric social worker support, including a thorough catalogue/database of local resources in community
- Provide more flexible school support for budget and compliance items

The working group is developing details on how to implement each of these.

In addition, the District is in the early stages of launching an Administrator Help Desk number (213-241-6000) that will allow administrators to receive priority support on urgent matters.

II. Families

Efforts include: 1) changes to the fingerprinting policies; 2) streamlined process for using school facilities; 3) improved parent and community help desk; and 4) streamlined LAUSD website.

Fingerprinting

For the 2018-19 school year, the District eliminated the \$56 fingerprinting fee for volunteers, increased the number of fingerprinting locations, and updated the fingerprinting policy to a tiered system that requires fingerprinting only under limited circumstances. These changes have made it easier for parents to volunteer while still ensuring campus safety.

PTA, PTO, and Booster Clubs

For the 2019-20 school year, the District is making it easier for PTA, PTO, and Booster Clubs to use school facilities for fundraisers and other events.

- Propose an annual, one-time fee for PTA, PTO, and Boosters clubs to schedule use of facilities per fiscal year.
- Exempt PTA, PTO, and Booster members from processing fees when they request a permit to use school facilities for fundraisers and other events.
- Simplify and expedite the process for acquiring an event permit (from 45 days to 15 days) by utilizing an online application system that better coordinates the various Central Office departments that need to provide authorization.

- Provide an online module, as well as three in-person trainings during fall 2019, to help develop the capacity of PTA, PTO, and Booster Club members to plan events on school facilities.
- Create and manage pre-approved vendor/PTA/PTO/Booster Club rosters that includes completed insurance certificates to facilitate a more expedited use of vendors.
- Currently, District policy does not allow more than one fundraiser at a time at a school, and no more than 5 per year. We are providing school administrators with additional flexibility around when and how many fundraisers are scheduled at the school site as not all fundraisers target the same students.

Parent and Community Help Desk

The District is improving its Parent and Community Help Desk number (213-241-1000) to make it easier for parents to receive support that is more timely and helpful. Improvements include:

- An upgraded and state-of-the-art Call Manager to route calls more efficiently.
- A streamlined phone menu to help stakeholders connect to the right place much faster.
- Additional staff to ensure calls are answered in an efficient manner.
- Propose a systemwide customer relationship management system that measures and resolves complaints received.
- A targeted emphasis on answering parents' questions on the first call. When call transfers are required, our representatives will stay on the phone to provide direct assistance to the new department rather than an automated answer machine which will ensure that the call is appropriately transferred.
- New oversight of the 213-241-1000 number within the Information Technology Division, so that one division can more efficiently manage all help desks and reallocate resources quickly during periods of high call volume.

III. Communications

The LAUSD website is being organized to help families find information that helps them support their most important and common concerns quickly and easily. Areas will include parent portal, schoology, unified enrollment, school finder, uniform complaint procedures and others.

For more information on this board informative or if you have questions, please contact Pedro Salcido at pedro.salcido@lausd.net.