

Los Angeles Unified School District

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

333 S. Beaudry Ave., 24th Floor

Los Angeles, CA 90017

Phone: (213) 241-6766

Fax: (213) 241-8952

www.lausd.net



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 4, 2020

Contact: Shannon Haber, (213) 241-6766

Board Approves Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action Timed to Coincide with Black History Month

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles Unified Board of Education today endorsed the first week of February as Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action, as a growing national movement of teachers, administrators, students and parents participate in this annual week of lessons, discussions about racial bias, social justice, black identity as well as related artwork and student performances.

Intended to affirm the right of black students to be treated equally with respect and dignity at schools, this initiative started at an elementary school in Seattle in 2016. Conversations and trainings about equity and race renewed the staff’s commitment toward working for racial justice.

The Los Angeles resolution calls for schools to be “places for encouraging equity, fostering understanding and creating pathways to freedom and justice for all people” while also intending the week of action “to highlight, uplift and affirm the rich history and contributions of the Black community and to cultivate in Black students a sense of pride, self-worth, and self-love.”

The resolution also invites educators across grade levels and content areas to use resources inclusive of all learners to enrich instruction throughout the school year.

“I am honored to have had the opportunity to introduce this very important resolution to recognize and uplift the participation of Los Angeles Unified educators, staff, and students in this year’s Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action,” Board Vice President Jackie Goldberg said. “We hope this effort helps to encourage courageous conversations in our schools regarding systemic racism, social injustice, racial and ethnic bias in our society. These are conversations we all should be having, and I applaud the organizers of this ‘Week of Action’ for creating a dedicated time to focus on them.” She sponsored the resolution, which was also co-sponsored by Board Member Dr. George J. McKenna III, Mónica García, Board Member Nick Melvoin, Board Member Kelly Gonez and Student Board Member Frances Suavillo.

“We need to make sure every student has the opportunity to succeed in school and in life,” Superintendent Austin Beutner said. “For too long, an opportunity gap has existed, and it’s time we do something about it.”

Los Angeles Unified recently launched a comprehensive, research-based, equity-focused plan to achieve parity for low-performing schools in Local District West. The new initiative – known as the Humanizing Education for Equitable Transformation (HEET) Community Schools Plan – sets goals and timelines for increases in proficiency as measured on standardized tests.

“As a District that serves over 600,000 students across Los Angeles, it is important to support and uplift each and every one of our students,” Board President Dr. Richard Vladovic said. “We can do this through this resolution by reflecting discussing the ongoing social injustice and racial bias in our society and how we can be agents of change.”

“We are constantly reminded that our black students are still seen as less than,” Board Member Dr. George J. McKenna III said. “Why would a teacher require the only black student in an Advanced Placement Chemistry class to provide written proof that he belongs there? Why would a student from an immigrant family insist that his black classmate is not a U.S. citizen? Why would an affluent white parent assume that her child’s black playmate is from a poor family? These are the kind of stubborn racial biases that need to be addressed. I hope that teachers, parents and communities will engage in deep conversations about the rich diversity of the black experience for national Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action and continue the conversations forever.”

“I stand in solidarity with the movement to affirm and uplift the history and contributions of the black community,” Board Member Mónica García said. “Los Angeles Unified must be a leader for the nation in embracing our diversity and seeing it as an asset to student learning.”

“We can only overcome this country’s history of racism by calling it out and making the necessary changes to provide justice for our black students,” Board Member Nick Melvoin said. “That’s why we voted last year to end random wandering in our schools, and that’s why we support the Black Lives Matter student groups advocating for progress in our schools.”

“I hope that all schools will take time during this Week of Action to declare that Black Lives Matter at school and start conversations on how we can combat systemic racism and uplift our black students and families in our schools and in our communities,” Board Member Kelley Gonez said. “It takes all of us working together to combat the ugly legacy of white supremacy and achieve true racial equality.”

“As the student board member, I now have the opportunity to be the voice for over 600,000 students,” Student Board Member Frances Suavillo said. “I want to voice my support for the Black Lives Matters at School Week of Action movement and emphasize the importance of student voices.”

###

