

AUSTIN BEUTNER UPDATE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY **AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY – JUNE 29, 2020**

Good morning. I'm Austin Beutner, Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified.

Today, we'll share an update on our continuing efforts to provide a safety net to families, take a look at Summer School, recognize colleagues who are retiring this year and talk about the planning for the new school year which begins on August 18th.

Los Angeles Unified will soon have provided more than 40 million meals to children and adults since school facilities were closed. To give you some sense of scale that's about the same number of people who have attended a Lakers game since they moved to Los Angeles. The lines of people each day at our food centers are a sobering reminder of the impact the virus is having in the communities we serve.

Last week was the start of a Summer of Learning for students. A record number of children, more than 100,000, are continuing to learn using the tools, technologies and online connection their schools have provided. So many children, in fact, we've had educators scrambling to keep up, but everyone should be all set for this coming week. It's been a good learning experience as schools managed all of the enrollment online and that ability will help us going forward.

Students are focusing on the fundamentals in literacy and math with classmates from their local school and they're engaging in new adventures with students from all across town. There's focused instruction for English Learners, and high-schoolers are earning certifications in specific areas which can help lead to good-paying jobs when they graduate.

Whether it's the more than 400 students at Lomita Magnet learning about science and history during virtual visits to California's state parks, or the 500 students becoming animators and storytellers with the help of Illumination, or nearly 16,000 students taking a virtual field trip to the Aquarium of the Pacific, 1,600 students in Boyle Heights focused on language skills or the 454 students who earned Microsoft Office certificates in specific areas of technology, teachers and students across the school district are taking advantage of being connected with each other.

The end of each school year brings with it not only culminations and graduations for students, but transitions for our employees as well. This year, the Retiree Class of 2020 includes 1,586 employees. 659 of them have dedicated more than 30 years of their lives to students and families in schools. I wish time would allow me to acknowledge each retiree and the countless students they have helped along the way. On behalf of these many students and the colleagues you have helped mentor, thank you. Congratulations to all, and enjoy your retirement.

As I've said before, we have a team of educators, families and students looking at how we might return to school facilities on August 18th. The health and safety of all in the

school community, the learning needs of students and the impact the virus is having on working families are each difficult problems to solve. Balancing these three sometimes conflicting objectives will not be simple, and the situation continues to change, seemingly each day.

On March 13th, when we announced the closure of school facilities, there had been no occurrence of the virus in schools and less than 50 cases in the entire Los Angeles area. The past few weeks, we've seen a troubling increase in the number of cases in the community. And that's a cause for real concern.

No decision has been made yet about a possible return to school facilities, but a great deal of work is being done to make it possible if it appears that's the best course come August.

To help us better understand the views of all stakeholders in the school community, we've surveyed those who work in schools and the families we serve. Several important issues rise to the top.

There are a significant number of families who, based on current circumstances, would not send their children to a school facility. A significant number of employees also have similar reservations. This presents a challenge because we know the best learning environment for students is in a school. Our goal must be to have as many students and staff in school each day while doing the best we can to mitigate the spread of the virus.

All we surveyed want sound health practices in schools – regular cleaning and sanitizing, keeping people spread apart and wearing a mask (which, like standing far apart, is really just another way to keep our germs from each other). None of these are cheap or easy but we think we can properly implement these practices in schools.

Let's move on to a couple of the more difficult pieces.

All we surveyed want more and better information about the spread of the virus in their school community. Simply put, if you're going to be in a setting with lots of other people, like a school, it would be important to know if anyone else has the virus and what your risk of exposure is. And if someone did have the virus, that you knew they'd be quickly isolated from others.

The only way to do this is with extensive testing and contact tracing. We continue to believe state and local health authorities should be responsible for this – they have both the funding and expertise to handle the implementation. This shouldn't be an optional part of the puzzle. In all of the countries – Denmark, Germany, Israel and others where students are back in school facilities – they have put in place extensive testing and contact-tracing capability.

The testing and contact tracing will cost money. Let's give it a little perspective. If just 5% of families would be more willing to send their child to school because of proper

efforts in this area, that would mean about 25,000 more students in schools. 25,000 more children with a better opportunity to build the capability in literacy and fluency in math they'll need to realize their potential. It's the single best investment a society can make – providing every child with the best possible education which we know needs to be in a school setting.

The investment in testing and contact tracing will also benefit the public health of the entire community to help prevent the further spread of the virus. Los Angeles Unified is in effect the biggest petri dish in California. More than 75,000 employees serving almost 700,000 students who live with another 2-3 million people. What better place to control the spread of the disease?

The last big piece of the puzzle? Childcare. Due to the need for distance between students and staff while they're in a school facility, capacity limits of schools and the lack of funding to hire more staff, not all students can be at school at the same time. Who will take care of the children when they are not at school? Our own employees will need help and many of the working families we serve will as well. Most do not have the luxury of working from home. They need to work full time, not just the time or day their children are in school. In order for the economy to recover, a broad system of support will be needed for children, in particular for elementary school children.

Los Angeles Unified has the expertise to help organize and oversee childcare, but not the facilities, additional staff or any specific funding for this. All existing staff will be teaching students in school facilities, which will be full.

We've done some initial planning looking at other facilities in the communities we serve from public libraries and park facilities to Cal State campuses which will be empty since they've already announced plans for an online-only approach this fall. There are a lot of pieces to work out and this can only work as a collaborative effort with the cities and other partners in communities we serve. A rough estimate of cost to properly staff these facilities is about \$100 per child per day with the bare bones and about \$150 a day if one were to include any meaningful amount of instructional program or enrichment classes and activities.

Some simple math. We've nearly 250,000 students in elementary school. If one assumes about half are in schools at any point in time, about 125,000 won't be. If just 1/4 of their families need help with childcare, it will cost about \$3 million a day to properly staff a childcare effort.

That sounds like a good deal of money, and it is, but pales in comparison with the need to reopen what was the 5th-largest economy in the world just a few short months ago. State and federal government ought to be outlining a way to support this if they expect any meaningful recovery in the economy and in the job outlook for working families.

Summer has officially started for many students and an opportunity to continue to learn. For most of us in Los Angeles Unified, a great deal of work lies ahead to plan for the new school year. We'll keep you informed all along the way.

Thank you for your continued patience and support.