

AUSTIN BEUTNER UPDATE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY – MAY 24, 2021

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

Today I'll share information about the vaccination effort at secondary schools, give more details on what school will look like in the fall with the additional path to recovery funding, and we'll learn about a new opportunity for special education students to learn job skills as well as an exciting new partnership to provide high school graduates with jobs while they attend college.

Los Angeles Unified serves communities spread across 710 square miles and has almost 300,000 students ages 12 and older in our schools. It's worth noting these are about half of the entire population of children that age in the communities we serve.

No other organization has the relationship with children and their families that schools do. Principals, teachers and school staff are in almost daily contact with their students. This engagement is a critical piece of any vaccination effort. There is no better place to provide vaccinations to children than at their local, neighborhood school.

For the past year, Los Angeles Unified has been working with Stanford, Johns Hopkins, and UCLA to put in place COVID safety plans and protocols in our schools, including testing and vaccinations. This school-based vaccination effort for children is the next logical step. Please listen as two UCLA doctors Jennifer Peralta, a pediatrician, and Alejandra Casillas, a specialist in internal medicine, as they tell us more about the importance of this vaccination effort.

More than 80% of students in schools in Los Angeles Unified are from families who are struggling to get by. They live in communities which have been hardest hit by the virus but lack access to healthcare services. 30% of students we serve do not see a pediatrician regularly. One can see the disparity in access by comparing the rate of vaccinations of 16- and 17-year-olds since February, when the vaccine was first made available to them. Twice as many children from more affluent communities have been vaccinated compared with their peers. A school-based effort will help address this disparity.

We started this vaccination effort for students during this school year while school principals, teachers, staff and their students are still in schools. Educators can share information with families and help encourage students to get vaccinated. Schools can empower student voices to speak about this opportunity with their peers like these students from Venice High School and the Santee Education Complex.

Los Angeles Unified is operating this program much like it's already doing with COVID testing and its existing school-based vaccination sites. Mobile vaccination teams visit

each school on a predetermined schedule to administer doses of the vaccine to students. Schools can use the Daily Pass to share information and schedule appointments as is now being done for COVID testing and adult vaccinations.

The plan is to visit each middle and high school campus to offer vaccinations to students at least once before the school year ends and again during the summer. Food trucks will provide refreshments for students and their family members, and schools where more than 30% of students are vaccinated will each receive \$5,000 for projects at their school and students can decide how the money is used.

Vaccination schedules and locations are available on the Los Angeles Unified website. Any child, any adult in the community can come for a vaccine.

Because health authorities require a family member to accompany anyone under 18 when they are being vaccinated, Los Angeles Unified will provide paid time off to all employees to help their children. The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Central City Association of Los Angeles, Los Angeles Business Council and the Valley Industry and Commerce Association have joined us in encouraging businesses to support this effort. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power has followed our lead in offering paid time off to employees to help their children get vaccinated. We encourage all employers in the Los Angeles area to do the same.

The on-campus COVID testing of students and staff continues with about the same number of cases, about 40 each week.

To date, the only case of possible transmission on a school campus has been between two unvaccinated adults. This is in line with what the world-renowned Cleveland Clinic recently reported – 99% of patients they have admitted for COVID treatment since January had not been fully-vaccinated.

If you have any questions or need assistance in receiving a free vaccination at a school in your neighborhood, please call our Family Vaccination Hotline, or visit Los Angeles Unified's website.

Since this crisis began, we have advocated for what we have called a Marshall Plan for schools – to make sure schools have adequate funding to help the students and families they serve. Thanks to actions at both the state and federal levels, this has become a reality. Schools in Los Angeles Unified will have record amounts of funding for each of the next several school years.

All of this helps put students on the path to recovery.

The additional funds will allow schools to add reading and math teachers in elementary schools to help students build a foundation in literacy, math and critical-thinking skills. Secondary schools can add more teachers to reduce class sizes. Children in schools will benefit from additional mental health services while students with learning

differences and disabilities will receive more direct supports. Schools will be cleaner and safer with an increase in custodial staff. For the first time in decades, there is sufficient funding to do all of this.

Staff have been preparing plans to implement these steps for months and they will be bringing to the Board of Education this week a specific set of actions in all of these areas to add teachers and staff to schools to provide more direct services to students.

This is a momentous step – it's the largest increase in the number of teachers, counselors and custodians in schools in more than a generation. This increase will help improve the education all students receive.

Out of crisis comes the opportunity to do what was once unimaginable. This is a once in a lifetime chance to make things meaningfully better for the children we serve. But only if we go about it the right way.

I want to add a note of caution to the conversation. Almost all of the money provided to schools is used to pay people who work directly with students. The additional people schools will need don't grow on trees. To stay with the metaphor, the orchard will need to be nurtured and grow quite a bit to be able to provide the people schools will need, not just in Los Angeles Unified but across the state. Yes, more money would allow schools to hire more reading teachers... if there were more to be hired. While it's great that schools will have adequate funding for the first time in a generation, money alone won't solve the problem. It's how the money is used, the people who are hired and how they are trained that will make the difference.

Looking down the path to recovery and the new school year which starts this fall, all students will have the opportunity to participate in full-day, on-campus, in-person instruction.

That means elementary school students will be on campus 5 days a week for a full day of in-person instruction with their teacher and classmates. Middle school and high school students will be on campus 5 days a week for a full schedule of instruction, changing classrooms for each period. For both elementary and secondary students, after-school programs will be available from the end of the school day until 6:00 pm.

While we have some sense of what school will look like, our COVID crystal ball is not perfect. The good news is infections continue to decrease, more people are being vaccinated and health authorities tell us conditions should continue to improve. Whatever it looks like in the weeks or months ahead, we will continue to meet or exceed state and local health standards in our schools.

Los Angeles Unified has in place the highest set of safety standards of any school district in the nation. Air-filtration systems have been upgraded in every school and the air is filtered through the equivalent of an N-95 mask, schools have adequate supplies of masks and personal protective equipment, custodial staff has been increased to keep

schools clean and safe, and all students and staff on campus are tested regularly for COVID-19. These safety measures will continue and be in place when the new school year starts in August.

We expect students and staff will continue to wear masks until more children have been vaccinated, just as Dr. Anthony Fauci has recently stated. But August is still 3 months away and we can't predict exactly what standards health authorities will tell us are appropriate at that time.

You can rest assured Los Angeles Unified will continue to meet or exceed all state and local health guidelines and will continue to maintain the highest standard of safety of any school district in the country. We will do what's necessary and appropriate to protect the health and safety of all in the school community.

While we are looking forward to welcoming all students back to schools in August, for students who are unable or choose not to participate at schools for in-person instruction, an online option must remain in place for the next school year. Some students and some staff members may need to stay at home until all at schools are vaccinated due to health reasons because they live with an immune-compromised family member. Students at all grade levels will have the option to participate in online classes staffed with Los Angeles Unified teachers. We expect the vast majority of students, teachers and staff to be at school every day but recognize that we must provide the online opportunity for those who need it.

Students are continuing to pursue their studies, whether in-person or online, and attend school regularly every day. Overall attendance for students who are at schools is slightly higher than online attendance since campuses reopened in early April. As we have seen throughout this pandemic, the impact is greater in communities which are struggling to get by. This is reflected in student attendance as well.

Attendance rates for elementary school students from more affluent communities are about 10% higher whether in-person or online.

With only 3 weeks left in the school year, more than 78% of seniors are on track to graduate with their classmates. This reflects the extraordinary persistence students have shown and the extraordinary commitment of teachers and school staff to help. We expect the number to improve just a bit before the school year ends.

The next step for many graduates from high schools throughout Los Angeles Unified is to continue their studies at a local college. Unfortunately, the pandemic has brought financial challenges for many low-income families which has impacted the ability of their children to pursue their dreams and continue learning.

We reached out to Amazon to help and, together, we created a groundbreaking new effort to help ensure that graduating seniors who are facing financial hardship do not have to postpone or forgo a college education.

Beginning this June with the Class of 2021, graduating students who enroll full-time in a local college will have the opportunity to secure one of several hundred jobs with flexible hours that Amazon will make available for these students. This will help students to attend classes and still earn money to help support their families.

Please listen to what a couple of students had to say about this exciting new opportunity.

This partnership is just a start. We hope other employers in the region join us in this effort to make sure every student has the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

This past week, the Magic School Bus took me to Banneker Career and Transition Center. We had a chance to see the current efforts and listen to the excitement of students and their teachers about equipment that will allow them to create bumper stickers and lawn signs for schools. Mr. Jarvis' class have been hard at work learning carpentry and creating beautiful benches for neighboring schools. Once the new equipment arrives, students will learn new sign and decal-making skills and the entire school community will have additional ways to recognize students at their local schools. Please take a look at what these talented students are doing and watch for Lyshunder, a multi-talented young woman who was giving me cooking lessons just a few weeks ago. I can't wait to see what the students come up with next.

Thank you for your continued patience and support.