

AUSTIN BEUTNER UPDATE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY – OCTOBER 26, 2020

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

Today we'll discuss continuing efforts to provide a safety net for the students and families we serve, take a look at the extraordinary work taking place in schools, give a quick update on the overall level of COVID-19 in the community and Los Angeles Unified's COVID-testing program and see how students are engaging in the democratic process.

Los Angeles Unified has now provided more than 72 million meals to the students, families, and communities we serve – the largest food relief effort of its kind in our nation's history. In addition to meals, Los Angeles Unified and our partners have provided millions of much-needed household, baby and recreational items. You can find upcoming menus and giveaways each week on our website, and don't forget to stop by this week for a free pumpkin and masks for children, along with your meals.

This past week, Co.Protect joined the effort donating 10,000 Halloween-themed masks for children. You can help by texting NEED to 76278 or visit LAsStudentsMostInNeed.org to donate.

We all know the best place for learning is at school, but while students are online, teachers and school leaders are committed to providing the best education they can. This week I'd like to highlight the great things taking place at Plainview Elementary School in Tujunga. Plainview is a small school with just 261 students, but it offers a world of opportunity.

Principal Kenneth Johnson and his staff have worked together at the school for many years and have created a family-like environment. Most teachers have chosen to teach from their classrooms, taking advantage of the technology and other materials at school.

More than half the teachers are involved in offering one-on-one, in-person tutoring after school. Staff are bringing their children to the on-campus, childcare program, and almost all staff – including those who are working from home – have participated in the district's COVID testing program.

Please enjoy a short portion of my visit to Plainview You'll hear a consistent theme – all are working together to provide the best possible education for students.

Los Angeles Unified continues to offer additional opportunities for students to learn, with enrollment happening now for the semester which starts in January. The offerings include after-school and Saturday instruction and exciting new classes including Lee

Strasberg Method Acting and learning about artificial intelligence in collaboration with Intel.

We'll expand guitar classes for middle school students together with our partners from Fender. This past summer, we launched what was then the largest online guitar class of its kind, with 1,000 guitars, basses and ukuleles sent directly to students' homes. Teachers provide instruction and have free access to additional lessons on the Fender Play app. All of this, including the guitar and App, is provided for free to students.

This semester, 2,000 more students joined the fun. Next semester, we're adding another 2,000 students, bringing the total participation of 5,000 new musicians. I look forward to the day when students are back in schools and all 5,000 students, their teachers and their families can come together at the Hollywood Bowl for a concert to celebrate.

I had an opportunity to visit the class of Sarah Urias teaching guitar last Wednesday, with a special guest, Max Arias, Executive Director of SEIU Local 99. We got to hear the students play, and Max shared his connection to music and showcased his talent.

We're adding more learning opportunities for next summer, including an expansion of the popular animation program together with our partners at Illumination. For the first time, we'll be able to offer high school students a 10-credit Cartooning and Animation class that will meet both high school graduation and college entrance requirements. Coming soon to an online classroom near you.

While the current crisis has encouraged innovation and expansion of online learning opportunities for all, there's no greater imperative than bringing students back to schools. But they can't return until it's safe and appropriate to do so. In the Los Angeles area, the overall level of COVID remains well above the levels the state has set for schools to consider reopening.

The Bay Area remains at levels well below the state guidelines for schools to consider reopening, but both Oakland and San Francisco have announced they'll not return to schools before January.

Los Angeles Unified continues to lead the nation with our effort to provide testing for COVID-19 for all students and staff. This initial phase will provide testing for all students and staff to help gain important information about the prevalence of the virus in the school community. Our effort at schools is also bringing testing into communities which have not had access to testing and other services during this crisis.

We've now administered almost 80,000 tests and implemented additional safety protocols which allow the testing of members of the school community who are experiencing symptoms of COVID or have been exposed to the virus.

An enormous undertaking like this is only possible because the extraordinary work being done by many involved in the testing program – administrators, logistical teams, clerical staff, nurses, a data team and, of course, the advice and support from our outside partners.

The portion of those who are testing positive for the virus remains about the same, a bit more than 1/4 of 1%. The data thus far confirms that people of all ages do carry the virus. Other research has shown children can and do spread the virus. Together, it's an important reminder of the need to be quite careful in how and when students are allowed to return to campuses.

We'll continue to be deliberate in the steps we take to put in place plans to bring students and staff back to campuses in the safest way possible. The health and safety of all in the school community is not something we can compromise on.

Please make an appointment to be tested. It's safe, quick and free. If we all follow the guidelines from state and local health authorities and participate in this testing program, we can help reduce the spread of the virus. And we'll have a program in place which will help students, teachers and staff return to schools in the safest way possible.

The results from the initial, baseline testing will provide us with valuable information. And all in the school community will gain experience about the program and how it works so we'll be better prepared when it's possible to consider the reopening of schools.

As we approach the November 3rd election, students from San Pedro High attended both the League of Women Voters' Understanding your Ballot 2020 event and the *GirlsBuild'20 – Virtual Summit*. Students learned about ballot measures, heard from elected officials including Congresswoman Karen Bass, and participated in discussions on the importance of voting.

Special thanks to their teachers, Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Barazza, Mr. Bruhnke, Mr. Lucien, and Mr. Mossberg for guiding students in this journey and reminding us how important it is to participate in the election process and vote.

On October 27th, debaters from high-schools in Los Angeles Unified will take center stage for an in-depth discussion of criminal justice reform issues and solutions in their communities while engaging with a panel of civic and community leaders. To kick off the event, former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who is also advising Los Angeles Unified on its COVID testing program, will offer a short keynote speech. Good luck to the students who will participate – Briana Villatoro from STEAM Legacy High School, Andrew Subingsubing from the Dr. Richard A. Vladovic Harbor Teacher Preparation Academy, Dana Agbede from Downtown Magnets High School and Amina Reyes from the New Designs Charter School, University Park.

The November 3rd ballot includes Measure RR, the School Upgrades and Safety Measure, which Los Angeles Unified has placed on the ballot.

If approved by voters, Measure RR will provide funds to fix leaking roofs, replace air-conditioning systems, make schools earthquake safe, help in COVID-19 response, provide access to all schools for students with disabilities, update technology and address inequities.

The cost to property owners is estimated at about 2 cents per \$100 of assessed property value, but the measure would not increase taxes, and the overall tax rate will not increase.

Regardless of how you plan to vote, I encourage you to do your homework, ask questions and make your voice heard by voting.

Thank you for your continued patience and support.