



Mónica García, Board Member

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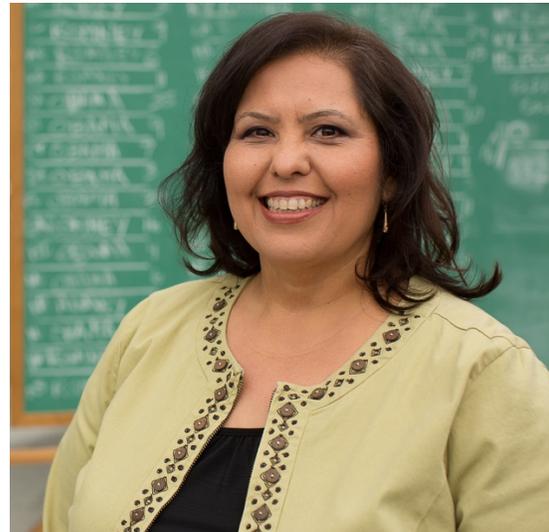
Board District 2: May, 2015

Dear Champion for Student Success,

Our LAUSD students and families deserve an educational system that believes in embracing a changing world and 100% graduation.

Believing in anything less is unacceptable and the *Equity on A-G: Re-affirming Our Commitment to A-G Life Preparation for All* resolution that will come forward to the L.A. School Board of Education affirms our community's demand for schools that prepare college and career ready graduates.

La Opinion, the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the United States, has endorsed our resolution (www.laopinion.com/editorial-commitment-to-students) and local high school students have written an open letter to the Board of Education (laschoolreport.com/commentary-a-plea-to-the-lausd-board-to-make-us-all-college-ready/) demanding college prep for all.



Our community's demand for justice is not new. In fact, it has always been a key component of the Civil Rights Movement for equal and equitable access to prosperity. On April 23, 1951, students at R. R. Moton High School, in Prince Edward County, Virginia walked out to protest inferior learning conditions.

The East Los Angeles Walkouts in March of 1968 were no different. Students tired of educational injustice rallied for equal access to a high school diploma that would provide a pathway to college or a career.

Juan Hernandez-Campos didn't know English when he arrived to the United States with his family. Yet, he completed his A-G requirements, graduated from Roosevelt High School in 2008, and completed his degree in Engineering Sciences from Harvard University in 2012.

Ester Ruiz experienced poverty and a single parent household in a neighborhood ravaged by gangs. And yet, she is not a victim of these barriers because she had access to and success at an excellent academic program in LAUSD from kindergarten to high school. Ester has completed her A-G graduation requirements at Garfield High School and will be graduating with the Class of 2015. Amongst her university options is a full scholarship to the University of California, Berkeley.

Juan and Ester are proud LAUSD graduates that had access to a college prep curriculum,

their A-G graduation requirements. They also were recipients of a support network of educators, staff, and community that have known all along that if we raise expectations, our children can and will succeed.

Our youth reflect the optimism and the expectations of those around them. Our district has experienced moments of instability but there are constant factors, like our parents who prioritize their children's education; teachers and administrators that hand-craft a student centered lesson plan; support staff that transport our students and keep our campuses clean; and, community organizations that continue their educational advocacy.

Student success is our community's success. But unlocking our student's potential is a relatively new concept at LAUSD.

LAUSD was founded in 1872 and since then, we've served some students well at the expense of all students. Over time, students across California and the nation, like Sylvia Mendez in 1946, Oliver L. Brown in 1954, Mary Ellen Crawford in 1977, Eliezer Williams in 2004, and Lilita Valenzuela in 2007, have taken time away from their classwork and spent time in the courtroom fighting for the schools that they and their peers deserved.

Court rulings have poked and prodded LAUSD to serve all students at the expense of none. We have the opportunity to stand with our community that demands greater success. And while we struggle with our new identity, we know that we are no longer a system for the few. We are an educational system that believes in the possibility and the capability in all of our students to achieve their personal greatness.

One pivotal moment that sparked this transition was the integration of the A-G courses as the default curriculum and graduation requirements in LAUSD.

On June 5, 2005, the L.A. School Board did something different, bold, and courageous. Some said our students and community didn't care about college access. Others said that not all students can pass a college-track curriculum or that there weren't enough resources, not enough money. But under then School Board President Jose Huizar, the LAUSD committed to giving every student access to college preparation courses to level the playing field and remove institutional racist and classist policies and practices that perpetuated educational segregation.

Great decisions stand the test of time. What we've accomplished since 2005 has defied everyone's expectations. The most recent exciting news is our 2014 graduation rates. Since 2007, our graduation rates have increased by 25 percentage points, from 45 percent in 2006-07 to 70 percent in 2013-14.

We are slowly moving away from a district that once provided certificates of satisfactory attendance veiled as high school diplomas to a district that prepares graduates who have successfully completed a college preparatory curriculum. We are on a mission to graduate 100% college and career ready citizens.

We celebrate our accomplishment of access to the A-G graduation requirements for all, but this is not enough. We must now turn our full attention to student success. For LAUSD to be successful and meet our goal of 100 percent graduation, we need to be bold and courageous in our will and our monetary investments by passing the Equity on A-G: Re-affirming Our Commitment to A-G Life Preparation for All resolution.

This policy recognizes our historic transition towards the new LAUSD, requests a formal report on our progress and a plan for full implementation, and refocuses on intervention and academic student supports to make sure our students have both access to A-G and success on their path to graduation.

Yes, concerns and questions have been raised.

Will this policy keep students from graduating? Not at all - this resolution demands LAUSD to fully fund every student's path towards an A-G high school diploma. Additionally, it calls for additional academic supports and interventions which are targeted towards youth that have been neglected in the past.

We have fought for access to basic services and A-G. We have fought for rigor and high expectations.

We stand with our community in their fight to be part of the leadership and decision makers that stand up for youth. To be part of the leadership that will not shut the educational door to our children of color and our children in poverty in the name of fear and rationalizations that uphold failed systems of the past. We know A-G is not about high school alone, it is about our commitment to every child reading at grade level and accessing support throughout their educational journey.

The time for providing students with access to a successful college preparatory pathway is long overdue. We need to recognize that in today's economy, a college degree is the new high school diploma. Without a quality high school diploma, we are failing our youth.

Education has the potential to heal, to empower, to lift, and to create a pathway to success. Our children are up to the challenge and they are asking all the adults to join them in recommitting to A-G for All.

In the spirit of hope,

Mónica

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