

Vision for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve

Youth, families, educators and community members are coming together to build a new vision of education and schooling. We are working together because we know our communities have the power to transform our schools and our society. Our voices matter and they need to be heard. We want students in L.A. to become literate, self-motivated, critical thinkers who participate in our schools and communities. Students need to be able to build skills in a nourishing environment and be prepared for our lives when we leave school.

Unfortunately, we see that schools have historically not done this and that the current trends in education are still moving our schools in the wrong direction. We need to stop reforms that focus on testing, school closures, reconstitutions, pushing out more students, corporate charter companies running more schools, and cuts to vitals areas like arts, ethnic studies, libraries, counseling,, adult education, and early childhood education. In addition, we need to change the culture and practices of our schools so that they truly support every young person. For example, we don't want to see some students branded as "good kids" and others as "bad kids." We don't want students to be pushed out of schools because they are being racially profiled, are low on credits, are gang affiliated, have Special Education needs, are facing homophobia, or have recently immigrated here.

We have a very different vision for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve, and we are working together all across the city to make this vision a reality.

The Schools L.A. Students Deserve...

1. Educate and care for the whole child

- Function as community centers with enough resources to serve the many needs of students, including physical, emotional, and mental health services.
- Support students' intellectual, emotional, cultural, creative, and logical and linguistic development.
- Help students identify as intellectuals, scholars, and responsible community members who understand their value, strengths and areas for growth.

2. Ensure equity and access

- Schools should serve ALL students. End push out and exclusion of all types. Public and charter schools need to stop the practice of pushing out or excluding students: English language learners, Latino and Black students, Transgender/Bisexual/Lesbian/Gay students, students requiring special education services and students with low test scores.
- Recognize that every person is capable of learning. There is no such thing as a "good kid" or a "bad kid" – all young people learn and can be supported to enjoy learning.
- Recognize that people learn in many ways and that art, music, physical movement and other ways of learning are important. When schools cut athletics, arts, theater, music, and other programs these can also lead to push out for many young people.

3. Provide full funding for services and resources

- Reduce class size and counselor loads to give students adequate time and attention
- Improve school facilities (including technology, laboratories, auditoriums, etc.)
- Ensure that every school has a fully staffed and open library, sufficient college and post-secondary counselors, psychiatrists, nurses, clerical, custodial and cafeteria staff.
- Remove systemic funding inequalities that leave low-income schools of color behind.

4. Focus on student needs, not only on test scores

- Offer classes in diverse languages, arts, drama, dance, music, and health as well as Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer, Ethnic and Women's Studies.
- Expand learning outside the traditional classroom: community internships, field trips, and experiential opportunities to gain practical skills, learn from and give back to the community.
- Create structures for students to voice their interests and reflect them in the curriculum.
- Ensure students have post-graduation plans supported by mentors and a college/career counselor. Students with low test scores are not pushed into the military or out of school.
- Teach critical thinking. Real learning and growth are not measured on standardized tests. Success on multiple choice tests and in classes focused on basic facts is not enough.
- Reduce unnecessary testing and detach high-stakes from all standardized testing. The purpose of tests should be to help students, families and educators to figure out what students know, and help figure out how to move forward -- NOT to punish students or schools.

5. Prioritize the community

- Break down barriers and improve relationships between parents, community and school staff.
- Expand community outreach, community engagement and community education.
- Provide professional development for schools staff that is created and led community members in partnership with educators, students, and families.
- Increase staff diversity; recruit, support and retain staff who come from the school community.
- Fully-resourced education at the Adult Education and Early Childhood Education levels.
- Keep schools open beyond 3:00, with classes and workshops run by community members, families, students and staff for community members, families, students and staff.

6. Make real decisions for ourselves

- Democratically decide school policies and budgets by families, students, school staff and community. Reconstitutions, school closures, school conversions, or other reform efforts should not be decided by a Superintendent or School Board.
- Ensure adequate funding so that we are not forced to make harmful decisions.

7. Develop safe, clean and green spaces

- Support students and staff to use transformative or restorative justice practices, so that we can meet students' needs and move away from punishment and criminalization of young people.
- Re-direct money from school police and law enforcement towards counselors & Peace Builders.
- Systematically end bullying by students, staff and school police.
- Ensure that each campus is clean, environmentally sustainable, and providing green jobs.

Changes in schools require changes in the community so families and communities get what they deserve too. This is our vision of the communities L.A. students deserve:

8. Promote economic and community health

- Expand living-wage job development, affordable housing, recreational spaces, healthy food access, and public transportation in low-income communities of color.
- Redirect money from corporate tax breaks, military, police, and prison development to schools, youth programs, and living wage employment opportunities.
- Support unionization and fair working conditions for all school staff in all schools.
- Promote health and safety for youth/families by ensuring environmental justice and ending police violence.