

June 10th, 2016

Hon. Steve Zimmer, District 4 (President)
Hon. Dr. George McKenna, District 1 (Vice President)
Hon. Mónica García, District 2
Hon. Scott Schmerelson, District 3
Hon. Dr. Ref Rodriguez, District 5
Hon. Monica Ratliff, District 6
Hon. Dr. Richard Vladovic, District 7



RE: LCFF Report Card Findings

Esteemed Members of the Board of Education,

We are proud to share our Year 3 LCFF Report Card analysis that supports the collective effort to ensure all students in L.A. Unified graduate college-ready. We ask that you consider these findings and our recommendations in your deliberations regarding next year's fiscal priorities. Over the last five years, K-12 funding levels have increased over 50 percent since the recession, presenting a great opportunity to further close the achievement gap that persistently hinders low-income students of color. To take advantage of this opportunity fully requires thoughtful collaboration, bold investments, and aggressive targets for high-need student achievement.

This report describes the realities of our district and identifies solutions to ensure a steadfast connection between monetary investments and academic outcomes. As elected public servants, your final budget approval on June 21st should produce a budget that advances equity and gives high-need students what they deserve.

There has been significant progress in meeting community and state expectations for LCFF over the last three years, but there is much work to be done to connect monies to increased student outcomes that close the opportunity and achievement gaps. The CLASS coalition remains largely concerned at the extremely low outcomes for low-income, English learner and foster youth in particular. We will not be satisfied until all investments, allocations and policies are rooted in equity, and precipitate improved outcomes for our students. We can accomplish great things when we act with equity, transparency and true leadership—as seen in the recent A-G credit recovery efforts. The CLASS coalition remains largely concerned at the extremely low outcomes for low-income, English learner and foster youth in particular.

You will find included an additional study produced by UC Berkeley and United Way of Greater Los Angeles which describe the realities of budgeting practices and policies around persistent achievement gaps. Combined, these reports represent two years of budget analysis, policy research, and the voices of thousands of parents, teachers, and students. Our findings, though observing a slight progressive shift and increase in equitable school site allocations, have not identified a clear, cohesive strategy for the distribution of dollars. Moreover, we urge the District to track investments and their effects on high-needs students.

Accordingly, the CLASS Coalition strongly recommends that Superintendent King and the Board move with all deliberate speed to address the following:

- **Distribute Whole Budgets with Equity.** Close the long-standing opportunity gap by distributing resources per a strategic formula that acknowledges the level of need within a family of schools. Need should be determined by student demographics and a school's academic performance and student-perception.
- **Tie Investments to Outcomes.** Create at least one high-level and centrally-held District official/team to monitor how LCFF investments are benefitting sub-groups, and how historically low-performing school sites are using the dollars to create a healthy school ecosystem. We recommend that this person or team work through the revived Independent Analysis Unit that is closely linked to the Offices of Curriculum and Instruction and Data and Accountability.

- **The California Department of Education’s recent ruling reallocates \$450 million for the Targeted Student Population.** This money should be used to fund the official/team to monitor LCFF investments and to fully fund the *A-G Navigating a Path to Graduating College and Career Ready* plan.
- **Develop Clarity of Intention for Budget Practices at School Sites.** School leaders need additional capacity building regarding the intent of LCFF dollars and the practices that improve academic outcomes for high-needs students. Central offices designated some flexible TSP dollars to school sites with limited clarity around the intention of those dollars. This support is needed at the local district and school site level.
- **Create an Ongoing and Meaningful Dialogue with Community.** Parents, students, and teachers, who have provided input and identified areas of improvement, must be increasingly involved in school site and district budgeting decisions. Although there has been great strides in the community input process, the budget does not fully reflect stakeholder desires or concerns.

To respond to this letter, please contact Elmer Roldan, Director of Education Programs and Policy at the United Way of Greater Los Angeles at eroldan@unitedwayla.org or 213-808-6283.

Yours in education and equity,

The CLASS Coalition



cc:
 Superintendent Dr. Michelle King
 Local District Superintendents
 Megan Rilley, Chief Financial Officer
 Dr. Frances Gipson, Chief Academic Officer
 Dr. Cynthia Lim, Executive Director, Office of Data and Accountability