Lessons from a Grassroots Movement for Educational Equity in Los Angeles
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The A–G Story
Lessons from a Grassroots Movement for Educational Equity in Los Angeles

INTRODUCTION
In June 2004, the initial gathering of over 30 organizations marked the beginning of a coordinated effort to effect unprecedented reform in the second largest school district in the country. Two years later, between May and September 2006, individuals who participated in this countywide coalition for educational equity were asked by United Way of Greater Los Angeles to share their experiences and to recall the factors that contributed to the success of their efforts. This is their story.

With the documentation of this significant story, United Way of Greater Los Angeles hopes to communicate the intricate processes and planning that led to the A–G resolution in the Los Angeles Unified School District so that grassroots organizations, policy-makers, and other leaders who are fighting for similar causes in California and across the nation can discover how success can be realized in their own communities. To achieve great victories in social justice as one coalition did in Los Angeles, we must reflect upon the lessons learned through this inspiring story, which has become a symbol for our own struggle with the day-to-day challenges that affect our communities and our own ability to triumph when we unite to overcome. Thus, this story belongs to us all.

Interviewees
Goldie Buchanan  Executive Director, African American Parent Community Coalition for Education Equity
Veronica Melvin  Executive Director, Alliance for a Better Community
Alberto Retana  Director of Organizing, Community Coalition
Anonymous Youth  Community Coalition's South Central Youth Empowered Through Action (SC-YEA)
Russlynn Ali  Executive Director, Education Trust-West
Dr. Linda Murray  Superintendent in Residence, Education Trust-West
Maria Casillas  President, Families in Schools
Maria Brenes  Director of Youth Organizing, InnerCity Struggle
Luís Sanchez  Executive Director, InnerCity Struggle
Anonymous Youth  InnerCity Struggle’s United Students
Hon. José Huizar  Former President of the LAUSD Board of Education, current Member of the Los Angeles City Council
Mónica García  Formerly of Boardmember Huizar’s Office, current President of the LAUSD Board of Education
Marlene Canter  President, LAUSD Board of Education
Mike Lansing  Member, LAUSD Board of Education
David Tokofsky  Member, LAUSD Board of Education
Dr. Julie Mendoza  Formerly of UC/ACCORD, current Director of UC College Prep
Dr. Jeannie Oakes  Director, UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access
Sandy Mendoza  Director of Special Projects, United Way of Greater Los Angeles
Masen Davis  Director of Development, United Way of Greater Los Angeles
On June 14, 2005, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) passed a historic resolution to adopt a rigorous A–G course sequence as a part of the district’s high school graduation requirements. For the dozens of organizations involved in the Communities for Educational Equity (CEE) coalition and for the thousands of students, parents, and community members who mobilized to demand their right to a rigorous curriculum, this day marked an important battle in the fight for educational equity. A policy has been constructed, but the true measure of success will be indicated by the degree of systemic educational reform that must ensue. What follows is a documentation of the history and processes that led to the passage of the A–G resolution in the LAUSD, a vision for the future of A–G as a doorway to systemic reform, and the lessons that can be learned from the grassroots struggle for educational equity in Los Angeles.

1 The A–G sequence encompasses the 15 minimum course requirements (and 3 recommended courses) needed for freshman admission at California State University and University of California schools.

Whereas...

The Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles has committed the Los Angeles Unified School District to become one of the best urban school districts in the nation and is committed to eliminating the Achievement Gap among all of its students;

...All District students currently do not have a choice to pursue an array of options after high school since they are unable to enroll in a college preparatory coursework, commonly known as the A–G course sequence;

...Currently, the District fails to properly educate a significant number of students and provide them with the skills necessary for success in life and the 21st century workforce, and successful implementation of the A–G graduation requirements will result in the improvement of educational outcomes at all levels of the K-12 system;

...The gap in completion of a course sequence that satisfies the A–G requirements between Latino, African American and White and Asian counterparts is severe and reflects inequity in the educational services provided.

Therefore, be it resolved...

That the Board of Education of the City of Los Angeles directs the Superintendent to provide access to A–G courses beginning in the 2006-2007 school year for every student who requests enrollment into any course in the A–G course sequence provided that the necessary course requirements have been met;

...That beginning in 2008, every student entering the ninth grade will enroll in the A–G course sequence. In the second semester of the tenth-grade year, a student and his or her parent/guardian may request a waiver from the A–G course requirements for high school graduation. The school will inform the student and parent/guardian of all factors associated with admission to community college, trade schools, UC/CSU and other post-secondary opportunities. In addition, each student will establish a high school course plan or career and technical education pathway with the participation of their parent/guardian and school counselor;

...That beginning in 2012 every student entering the ninth grade must complete the A–G course sequences in order to graduate from the Los Angeles Unified School District. A waiver from the A–G requirements will be available to special education students with disabilities only if it is specified in the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). In addition, a waiver will be available to all English Learner students who enter high school at the 11th or 12th grade and do not have transcripts, and students who at the end of the ninth grade choose to take a Career and Technical Education (CTE) sequence that incorporates the CTE standards as adopted by the California State Board of Education. Students will complete an individual learning plan based on the existing 2005 graduation requirements. Parents and students will be included in the development of an agreed upon individual learning plan.


THE A–G COURSE SEQUENCE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>History/Social Science</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3 years, including Algebra, Geometry and Algebra II</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2 years, including Biology, Chemistry or Physics</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Visual/Performing Arts</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>College Prep Elective</td>
<td>1 year</td>
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**PRECURSORS TO THE LOS ANGELES MOVEMENT**

*Once Upon a Time: The National Landscape*

The history behind the A–G movement in Los Angeles begins decades ago when national leaders first began to recognize that the United States had slowly lost its stronghold on worldwide economic dominance, and a growing urgency to produce a globally competitive workforce sparked debate about the quality of the nation’s educational system. Bill Gates, chairman of Microsoft and co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, summarizes:

> When I compare our high schools to what I see when I’m traveling abroad, I am terrified for our workforce of tomorrow. In math and science, our fourth graders are among the top students in the world. By eighth grade, they’re in the middle of the pack. By 12th grade, U.S. students are scoring near the bottom of all industrialized nations. …In the international competition to have the biggest and best supply of workers, America is falling behind. (Gates, 2005)

Now more than ever, the demands of a global economy are requiring that students complete an academically challenging curriculum that will prepare them to be successful in the 21st century, whether “success” means attending a postsecondary institution or entering the workforce with the technological skills needed in a 21st century job market. According to research by the American Diploma Project (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2002), employers cite the importance of strong reading and comprehension skills; a background in literature; the ability to write and research; and an aptitude for college-preparatory math, data analysis, probability and statistics, and problem-solving. Eighty-five percent of today’s jobs are classified as skilled jobs (Education Trust-West, 2004), and without exposure to classes that teach the necessary skills, students risk becoming trapped in unskilled, low-wage jobs that cannot support a family, do not provide benefits, and do not offer pathways for advancement (Achieve, 2004). Echoing Gates’ fear, Russlynn Ali, Director of the Oakland-based Education Trust-West, asserts that high schools are short-changing students by providing “a 20th century diploma for a 21st century economy.”

Yet a more disturbing problem lies just beneath the surface of national concerns about global competitiveness and an adequately educated workforce. “It’s about race and social class, and even though everyone is talking about excellence for all students, it’s not computing,” insists Dr. Jeannie Oakes, Director of UCLA’s Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), who has researched issues of educational inequity for decades. Despite national policies and priorities designed to alleviate gaps in educational attainment—such as Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the Higher Education Act (1965), the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), the standards-based reforms of the 1980s, George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and American Competitiveness Initiative (2006)—educational opportunity has consistently been limited for economically disadvantaged students and students of color. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), approximately half of Latino and African American fourth and eighth graders tested “below basic” competency on 2005 national standardized tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Furthermore, a Harvard University Civil Rights Project study revealed that while the national graduation rate for White students is 75 percent, only approximately half of Black, Latino, and Native American students earn diplomas alongside their classmates (Losen and Wald, 2005). Black students, in fact, are two times more likely to drop out of high school than Whites (U.S. Department of Education, 2005), yet because...
of misleading and inaccurate reporting of dropout and graduation rates, the public remains largely unaware of this educational and civil rights crisis. The U.S. Census Bureau (2004) cites that only 17.3 percent of the country’s African Americans and 11.4 percent of Latinos over age 25 held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2003, compared to 30 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. Coelen (1993) forecasted: “Growth in an educated workforce now heavily depends on improving the educational success rate of minority populations. Without a concentrated effort to increase educational attainment, there will undoubtedly be an inadequately trained work force…during the next decade.”

As postsecondary success is heavily influenced by academic preparation, including the quality and rigor of secondary schooling (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), this racial gap in college graduation rates is significantly influenced by similar gaps in the rates of minority student participation in rigorous high school curricula (Lumina Foundation, n.d.). Numerous studies have alarmingly revealed that African American and Latino students in the U.S. participate at much higher rates in vocational curricula and at lower rates in academically challenging curricula than White students (Ekstrom, Goertz, and Rock, 1988; Horn and Kojaku, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 1985; Oakes, 2005). Using a nationally representative student survey, the National Educational Longitudinal Study also discovered that African American and Latino students across the nation are significantly under-represented in high level mathematics courses compared to White and Asian students (Braddock and Dawkins, 1993). Specifically, 35 percent of Whites were “tracked” into high-ability mathematics classes compared to only 15 percent of African Americans and 18 percent of Latinos (Braddock & Dawkins, 1993). Such tracking of students of color into lower-ability, remedial classes affects their academic achievement over time, fosters low self-esteem, promotes school misbehavior and dropping out, and contributes to lower rates of college attendance and completion, lower income levels, and lower aspirations (Oakes, 2005). “Perhaps most important,” Oakes (2005) asserts, “is that tracking separates students along socio-economic lines, separating rich from poor, whites from non-whites. The end result is that poor and minority children are found far more often than others in the bottom tracks. And once there, they are likely to suffer far more negative consequences of schooling than are their more fortunate peers” (p. 42).

To address an apparent complacency toward such educational inequality in schools, grassroots efforts and a small number of top-down efforts (e.g. initiatives of the National Governor’s Association and Achieve’s American Diploma Project) were launched and while limited, are growing. Communities and leaders across the country have begun to demand that their schools cease tracking economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and other under-represented students into low-wage jobs and high-risk futures. Support for this notion of “detracking” has pushed three states (Texas, Indiana, and Arkansas) and several school districts to implement rigorous default curricula aligned with college-ready expectations and designed to prepare all students—regardless of race or social background—for postsecondary success in higher education and the workforce (Achieve, 2004). While students may “opt out” of these courses of study with permission from parents and school administration (Achieve, 2004), the adoption of the default curricula demonstrates a marked divergence from traditional systems in which students have to “opt in.”

2 Oakes (2005) offers an excellent review of the history of the national movement.
In other parts of the country, however, resistance has considerably delayed the movement to create opportunities for all students to be adequately prepared for higher education and the 21st century economy. “There’s still so much fear about racial integration in schools,” Oakes observes. Concerned that low-achieving students of color will diminish the quality of education for other students, opponents to the movement argue against a college preparatory curriculum for all. “The biggest accusation,” continues Oakes, “is that if you put everyone into the same classes, teachers will teach to the middle and kids who are high-achieving will get shortchanged.” Instead of acknowledging issues of class and racial inequity, schools continue to reserve college preparatory and advanced placement classes for the “brightest” students, who typically come from White, middle to upper-class backgrounds, and push vocational training and technical education on students of color who are unfairly labeled “slow” or believed to be incapable of postsecondary success (Oakes, 2005). High levels of academic achievement simply will not be attained in the United States until such practices are eliminated and true educational opportunity is available to all children regardless of race or class.

The California Gatekeeper

According to Russlynn Ali of the Education Trust-West, “The trend is coming, and whether California is to be at the back end of it or forward-thinking remains to be seen.” Indeed, the trend toward higher levels of academic rigor and equity in academic achievement seems to have reached the Golden State. In California,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>History/Social Science</th>
<th>2 Years (1 year of world history, 1 year of U.S. history or half year of U.S. history and a half year of Civics)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>3 Years required, 4 years recommended (Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2 Years required, 3 years recommended (2 of the courses must be Biology, Chemistry, or Physics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>2 Years (one language), 3 years recommended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Visual/Performing Arts</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>College Prep Elective</td>
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University of California / California State University: A–G Course Requirements.
Source: Education Trust-West

The intense debate over eliminating a two-tier tracking system in favor of rigorous high school curricula and opportunity for all students has focused on the availability of a course sequence known as A–G, which encompasses the 15 minimum course requirements (and 3 recommended courses) for freshman admission at California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) schools. In the late 1990s, studies conducted by Education Trust-West and UCLA’s IDEA revealed that these courses were disproportionately available to California students in high-income regions and from families of European and Asian descent. Researchers from these and other institutions disseminated a series of reports to reveal to policy-makers and to the public the statewide lack of access to the A–G curriculum for students of color, which in turn has prevented such students from attending postsecondary institutions. Grassroots campaigns attempted to persuade
the State Department of Education in Sacramento to incorporate the A–G courses into existing high school graduation requirements, but three bills (SB 1731 in 2002, SB 383 in 2003, SB 1795 in 2004) introduced by Senator Richard Alarcón (Democrat, Senate District 20) were eventually defeated.

After these setbacks in the statewide effort, it became clear to reformers that the Sacramento agenda needed to be bolstered by some local work. “We had gone as far as the state seemed to be ready and the legislature seemed to be willing to go,” recalls Ali. In the spring of 2004, the Education Trust-West therefore convened a statewide summit as a call to action for local districts to assume the battle. Present at this meeting were representatives from grassroots organizations across the state whose interest in access to the A–G curriculum sparked local reform efforts throughout California. Among these devoted leaders were representatives from Alliance for a Better Community (ABC) and Community Coalition, two organizations that would become key players in the fight for A–G in Los Angeles. After years of hard work and relentless advocacy, successful local efforts in several school districts, like San Jose Unified, Fontana Unified, Los Angeles Unified, San Mateo, and Montebello have revealed that “A–G for all is not just a pipe dream of overzealous policymakers and advocates” (Education Trust-West, 2004, p. 5), but a catalyst for the transformation of California schools.

**Raising the Bar in San Jose**

As policy initiatives were beginning in several states and reform efforts were slowly spreading across California, federal courts began to take an intense look at the implications of tracking practices. The San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) was one of several districts in the country in which evidence demonstrated that district tracking practices were segregating students and restricting access to educational opportunities for African American and Latino students. Plaintiffs in San Jose charged the SJUSD with intentional racial discrimination, which led to a 1994 detracking and desegregation decree issued by the court in agreement with the district’s settlement with plaintiffs. With the court mandate supporting them, dedicated district leaders—who had already been struggling on a local level to overcome obstacles to equity-minded change—finally felt able to begin an intense and politically unpopular change process to institute rigorous standards for all students (Oakes, 2005). These efforts, along with the court mandate, eventually led to the adoption of the A–G course sequence as part of the SJUSD high school graduation requirements.

Former SJUSD Superintendent Dr. Linda Murray, who recently joined the Education Trust-West to share her A–G expertise statewide, described the difficult work that preceded the passage of the policy mandating all SJUSD students graduate with A–G compliance beginning with the 1998 ninth-grade class. “It took a long time to make sure that when we actually implemented the policy we had every reason to believe we could bring every kid through it. A lot of work had to be done in the early years even before the policy was adopted.” Part of this initial work included an intense surveying of the community to ensure the reform was what parents and students wanted. “We really probed into the question of educational quality in San Jose. Is it rigorous enough? Are you satisfied with the education your children are getting? We got a resounding response from every segment of the community,” Murray described. While students and parents of Murray’s focus groups overwhelmingly voiced support for more rigor in their schools, those most skeptical of proposed reforms were San Jose’s teachers. “Teachers were scared, I think, perhaps feeling inadequate,” Murray continued. “What came out of our teacher focus groups is that they really
needed a lot of support and professional development opportunities so they could [be] successful with these kids.” Prior to the passage of this 1998 policy, SJUSD created the professional development opportunities needed to prepare its teachers for the reform, which complemented programs established by the district to prepare SJUSD students for the new curriculum. “We needed to build safety nets for the students,” Murray described, which included designing methods to better prepare middle school students to succeed in an A–G high school curriculum.

Murray recalls the astonishing results of the district’s 1998 A–G policy. “Every piece of evidence that has emerged from the San Jose reform validates that raising the bar for kids who have traditionally been kept in a dumbed-down curriculum has a positive impact on kids of color, kids of poverty, English learners…students no one thought could be successful in a rigorous curriculum.” In fact, in the four years immediately following implementation of San Jose’s policy, graduation rates rose from 73 percent in 1998-99 to 79 percent in 2002-03. Math and reading scores advanced at higher rates than the majority of California’s school districts, and the achievement gap between Latino and White students and between African American and White students decreased dramatically (San Jose Unified, 2002). With such compelling statistics and the overall success of the A–G policy, the San Jose Unified School District soon became a model for similar reform efforts across the state, including those in much larger urban districts like Los Angeles and Long Beach and districts like Montebello and Ventura, with whom the Education Trust-West continues its work. While Murray speaks of the value of San Jose’s model, she cautions against assuming the journey toward reform in other districts will go as smoothly as in the SJUSD. According to this former superintendent, mobilizing the San Jose community to support an A–G policy was relatively easy in the small district that serves 32,000 students through one elementary school, seven middle schools, and seven high schools. “It’s hard to make major change and have it stick. If [a superintendent] is there long enough, you develop a culture in the district and the vision is bought into; and if it’s a district the size of SJUSD, the process can happen much easier than in a giant district like Los Angeles Unified.”

THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

In contrast to San Jose Unified, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the second largest school district in the nation. Serving 27 cities throughout Los Angeles County and housing over 700,000 kindergarten through 12th grade students in over 850 K-12 schools, the LAUSD serves a tremendously diverse student body. Having drastically transformed over the past quarter century, the ethnic makeup of the LAUSD’s student population is 72.8 percent Latino, 11.6 percent African American, 9.0 percent White, 3.8 percent Asian, 0.3 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0.3 percent Pacific Islander (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2006). Only 25 years ago, the LAUSD enrolled approximately 527,000 students, some 46 percent of whom were Latino and 24 percent were African American, and the percentage of White students has dropped from 24 percent in the same year to just nine percent today (Council of the Great City Schools, 2006). A majority of students are also low-income: 72 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch, and 20 percent of LAUSD families receive some form of welfare assistance (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2006). With 42 percent of LAUSD students classified as English Language Learners (Council of the Great City Schools, 2006), language barriers also pose a challenge for the district. In the 2004-05 school year, LAUSD per-pupil spending rested at $8,112, exceeding the statewide average of $7,127 per student
(California Department of Education, 2006c), but falling short of the national average of $8,287 per student (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

The LAUSD is governed by a seven-member Board of Education elected to represent seven Board of Education geographical sub-districts. In 2005, when the grassroots A–G campaign was initiated, board members included Marguerite Poindexter-LaMotte (District 1, South Los Angeles); board President José Huizar (District 2, Central Los Angeles); Jon Lauritzen (District 3, San Fernando Valley); Marlene Canter (District 4, Westside Los Angeles); David Tokofsky (District 5, East and Southeast Los Angeles); Julie Korenstein (District 6, San Gabriel Valley); and Mike Lansing (District 7, South Los Angeles and Harbor Region). Serving four-year terms, board members may be re-elected indefinitely by their constituents. For instance, Julie Korenstein, first elected in 1987 to serve an unexpired term, has been re-elected four times and is the board’s senior member, having served for almost two decades. Repeatedly elected members can be stifling to reform efforts, however, as seasoned members are more likely to defend the status quo.

Roles of the Board of Education include establishing district policy, monitoring the superintendent’s administration of the district, and communicating with government agencies, staff, and communities. The superintendent of the district (Roy Romer, 2000-2006; David Brewer III, 2006 - present), who is selected by the board, manages instructional and operational functions, implements and coordinates policies and procedures, oversees legal affairs, and coordinates employer/employee relations. The senior deputy superintendent, chief instructional officer, chief operating officer, local district superintendents, and chief facilities executive all report directly to the district superintendent. Together with the chief instructional officer, eight local superintendents oversee eight local districts of the LAUSD (distinguished from the seven Board of Education sub-districts), which are organized by location, number of schools, student density, and the particular needs of surrounding communities. (Augustine, Santibanez, Vuollo, Epstein, and Jauregui-berry, 2005; Council of Great City Schools, 2006).

In the past decade, the LAUSD has attempted some degree of reform to improve its schools, including the 2000 implementation of system-wide elementary reading and math programs (managed instruction) in an attempt to mitigate the impact of student transience and the inequity of access to a high quality, rigorous elementary curriculum. In October 2000, the Board of Education directed the superintendent to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that by 2006 all families and children have access to quality after-school programs that provide a safe, secure environment. In an effort to meet the mandate, the LAUSD created its Beyond the Bell Branch, which includes the nationally recognized flagship program LA’s BEST, currently serving more than 18,000 students in 104 elementary schools across Los Angeles. The passage of Measure R on March 2, 2004 provided $100 million for facilities modifications to enable full-day kindergarten programs, to which the Board of Education responded with approval of a waiver to allow a four-year phased implementation of full-day kindergarten across the district. In May of 2006, the Board also approved an incentive program to recruit and retain highly qualified math, science, and special education teachers to be placed in traditionally hard-to-staff schools. Finally, the LAUSD has embarked on a $13.6 billion public works program as the result of four consecutive bond measures approved by voters since 2000. According to the LAUSD, the construction of 150 new schools and repair of 800 existing schools will allow every student to attend a neighborhood school by 2012,
ending year-round schooling and a decades-old practice of bussing students to surrounding neighborhoods due to overcrowding. To date, the district has opened more than 55 new schools, allowing several schools to replace year-round schedules with traditional August to June school calendars.

Despite best intentions, the district’s multiple efforts have been largely insufficient to address a growing gap in educational opportunity between diverse student populations. The LAUSD still faces severe challenges that threaten the future of its students and the vitality of Los Angeles. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the LAUSD lies in the bottom third of California district rankings on national standardized tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In 2005-06, only 26 percent of sixth graders and 24 percent of LAUSD ninth graders scored at the proficient level or above on the state’s standardized English-Language Arts test. On the state math test in the same year, only 27 percent of LAUSD sixth graders scored at the proficient level or above, and only 8 percent of ninth graders scored at proficient or above on the Algebra I test (California Department of Education, 2006a). In addition to low proficiency rates, the district is plagued with high dropout and low graduation rates. Despite a requirement by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) for districts nationwide to maintain a graduation rate of 82.5 percent, the LAUSD has failed to achieve this level for years. Though the district (which calculates its high school graduation rate at approximately 67 percent) and external researchers do not agree on an exact figure, district-wide graduation rates have been calculated as low as 44 percent by a 2005 University of California All-Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity (UC/ACCORD) study (Oakes, Mendoza, and Silver, 2004). Disturbingly, the study also concluded that only 41 percent of Latino students and 43 percent of African American students who began ninth grade in 1998 in the LAUSD graduated from high school four years later, compared to 58 percent of White and 67 percent of Asian students (Oakes, et al., 2004). Furthermore, only 20 percent of the same sample of LAUSD African American and Latino students graduated having passed a college preparatory curriculum (A–G) to qualify for admission to the University of California or California State University systems (Oakes, et al., 2004). With college preparatory classes largely unavailable to students in poorer areas of the district, and with the district employing an average of one guidance counselor for every 575 students 3 (California Department of Education, 2006b), students remain uninformed and unprepared to attend postsecondary institutions upon high school graduation—if they graduate. “Counselors need to inform students about A–G,” one high school freshman emphasized. “We have, like, two counselors for just one track 4 and it’s not enough.” Such inadequacy of educational service and such poor district performance has led to widespread dissatisfaction and a growing impatience for dramatic improvements. According to the Council of the Great City Schools (2006),

In many ways, the Los Angeles Unified School District is at a critical juncture and its leadership needs to make some important choices beyond those that it has already embraced in the name of reform. [The district must] take the next steps in its own reforms to ensure that it does not suffer the same fate as other public school systems across the country that are now trying to dig themselves out of some very deep ruts. (pp. 10-11)

3 Ratio calculated by dividing the total number of students enrolled in the district (708,461) by the number of district-employed counselors (1,232) in the 2006-07 school year.

4 More than 200 schools in the LAUSD use one of two different year-round calendars that operate under a three or four-track system to accommodate heavy enrollment. Students are assigned to a track (A through C or D) and have vacation time on staggered tracks throughout the year.
AN A–G MOVEMENT IN LOS ANGELES: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Isolated Efforts

In an attempt to rectify the challenges of Los Angeles school districts like the LAUSD, isolated efforts to create educational opportunity for all students have been occurring across Los Angeles County since the early 1990s. Mentored by the Achievement Council, a nonprofit organization that has since dissipated, and led by parent Goldie Buchanan, the African American Parent Community Coalition for Educational Equity (AAP/CCEE) had organized parents in Westside LAUSD high schools for nearly two decades and promoted its “Comets to College” efforts at Westchester High School in the early 1990s. The Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), headed by Maria Casillas, was established in 1994 with a $53 million Annenberg Challenge grant to increase the stability of students’ educational experience in the LAUSD through the creation of 28 “School Families,” schools connected in a pre-K to 12th grade feeder pattern.

In 2000, Community Coalition, a grassroots Black and Brown organization, launched its “Equal Access to College Preparatory Classes” campaign in South Los Angeles. It organized youth to speak against “penitentiary tracking” and in favor of rigor and higher expectations in schools. After the LAUSD began construction and later suspended (several times over the course of almost two decades) its 1988 plan to build a new high school that would relieve the overcrowded Belmont Senior High in the dense Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles, Alliance for a Better Community (ABC) organized to press the district to follow through on construction of the Belmont Learning Center (later renamed Central Los Angeles High School #11). InnerCity Struggle, based in East Los Angeles, had organized since 2000 around issues of equity and college preparation and regularly targeted members of the LAUSD Board of Education, including David Tokofsky, who represented East Los Angeles schools. And research institutions like UCLA IDEA and UC/ACCORD had for several years provided data and technical assistance to grassroots organizations working for educational reform across the county.

But these isolated efforts of independent organizations eventually “hit the wall,” according to InnerCity Struggle Director Luis Sanchez. “There really wasn’t a venue for communication between organizations,” echoed Goldie Buchanan, Director of AAP/CCEE. Maria Casillas, President of Families in Schools—a successor organization that has continued LAAMP’s efforts to strengthen partnerships between schools, parents, and communities—admitted that even with the large base of funding available, larger institutions like LAAMP had not sufficiently engaged grassroots organizations in school reform. This division between larger mainstream organizations, which possessed legitimacy in the political arena and among powerful/influential entities and decision-makers, and grassroots organizations, which maintained legitimacy within Los Angeles communities and among parents and students, created a chasm that organizations had undeniably not yet bridged.

In addition to scarce communication and insufficient collaboration, overall efforts were diluted by the diverse, yet not conflicting, targets for reform. During these early years, some organizations were targeting the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which had been created in 1999 by former Senator Jack O’Connell (current State Superintendent of Public

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5 Community Coalition defined “penitentiary tracking” as the practice of tracking students of color into remedial courses that fail to provide a path of advancement to lift them out of poverty, which eventually leads them to a life of crime and tracks them into prisons.
Instruction) in an attempt to bring increased value to the high school diploma in California and to ensure that students who graduated from a public high school had met at least a minimum academic standard. Despite best intentions, the CAHSEE caused controversy and attracted several lawsuits against the State Department of Education due to its negative effects on low-income students, students of color, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and other underserved youth. Some organizations focused on parent engagement in schools, admittedly absent from larger districts despite the parent involvement requirements of No Child Left Behind. Others turned their attention to the LAUSD’s decentralization plan of 2000 in which decision-making authority was moved from the district’s central office to newly formed local districts. Still others targeted the Small Learning Communities movement, which attempted to create smaller, more personalized learning environments and is currently being implemented throughout the LAUSD. With disparate efforts placing pressure on such distinct levers for reform, Los Angeles organizations were not yet ready to undertake a campaign for educational equity on a united front.

The Los Angeles Landscape

Despite the inability of the Los Angeles community to unite around a common educational reform platform at that time, a storm of dissatisfaction with the state of education began to brew across the county. With a backdrop of heightened school violence, concern over poor-performing schools, a perceived dropout crisis, and a host of other concerns highlighted by widespread media attention, the LAUSD in particular faced mounting public frustration that eventually triggered a widespread revolution for district reform.

In the spring of 2005, the eruption of massive fights between African American and Latino students in several LAUSD high schools highlighted the changing racial dynamics of the county and exposed the “enduring myth of Black-Brown solidarity.” The principal at Jefferson High School, where students brawled in April 2005, feared that racial tensions were “coming out of the community and into the school” (Hutchinson, 2005). Through immigration and higher birth rates, Latinos have now displaced African Americans as the largest non-White minority in the United States. In fact, the ethnic makeup of Los Angeles now rests at 48 percent Latino, 31 percent White, 11 percent Asian, and 10 percent African American. Fueled by growth of the Latino population and changing ethnic realities in Los Angeles over the past decade, tensions between Latino and African American students have always lurked dangerously close to the surface. And now that the physical separation has broken down due to Blacks and Browns living together in many residential neighborhoods, the “hard truth,” asserts Hutchinson (2005), a political analyst and social issues commentator, is that African Americans and Latinos are now undergoing a painful period of adjustment.

Some community groups have been able to bridge the culture and language gap as they join forces to protest crime and the deterioration of schools and housing (Hutchinson, 2005), but the idea of focusing on common problems instead of retreating into ethnic enclaves is rather difficult to practice. “Welcome to the topsy-turvy world of ethnic politics in the 21st century,” echoes Cose (2006) of Newsweek, “when Blacks and Latinos, once presumed to be natural allies, increasingly find themselves competing for power and where promotion of racial harmony is as likely to evoke anger as admiration.” While such descriptions of school violence in Los Angeles may overestimate the effects of racial tension, the playing out of community issues in Los Angeles high schools has nevertheless focused attention on the devastating circumstances that allow the violence to occur and on the system’s inability to rectify them.
Increased attention to the district’s dropout crisis also contributed to widespread public dissatisfaction with Los Angeles schools. The Harvard Civil Rights Project, a leading national organization founded in 1996 and devoted to research and policy analysis concerning critical civil rights issues, brought attention to California dropout rates with its acknowledgement of a more accurate calculation method that uses the Cumulative Promotion Index instead of a “flawed National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) formula that dramatically underestimates the actual number of dropouts” (Civil Rights Project, 2005, p. 1).

In March 2005, the organization opened the eyes of policymakers and the public by presenting its startling calculations at the *Dropouts in California: Confronting the Graduation Rate Crisis* conference held in Los Angeles. According to Harvard’s new calculations, the overall graduation rate for the State of California actually stood at 71 percent, 16 points lower than California’s official rate of 87 percent. Even more disturbing were the findings that only 60 percent of Latinos and 56.6 percent of African Americans graduated from high school in the state (Civil Rights Project, 2005). At this rate, Professor Russell Rumberger of the University of California, Santa Barbara calculated that just one year of high school dropouts cost the state $14 billion in lost wages caused by higher unemployment and underemployment rates due to dropouts’ ill-preparedness to join the workforce (Civil Rights Project, 2005). Dr. Julie Mendoza, former Co-Director of UC/ACCORD’s College Opportunity Indicator Project, also presented data related to LAUSD dropouts during the conference. Dr. Mendoza recalled, “We were trying to shake it up a little by presenting this landmark study to Los Angeles decision-makers, but it almost backfired. A–G and any solution to the dropout crisis were completely complementary, but the dropout crisis was sometimes used as an excuse not to do A–G in the district.”

Fortunately for the livelihood of the A–G campaign, the Harvard conference occurred in the midst of a heated mayoral campaign between former City Council-member Antonio Villaraigosa and incumbent Mayor James Hahn. The dropout crisis and other concerns with the state of education in Los Angeles quickly became the focus of the 2005 mayoral race, despite the fact that the Los Angeles mayoral position had no legalized control over the LAUSD. Villaraigosa attracted widespread media and public attention to the failure of Los Angeles’ educational system and what he called the “new civil rights issue of our time” (Landsberg, 2006) as he pushed his platform to transform a broken educational system into one that could effectively meet the city’s needs in a 21st century economy. Following a landslide victory (59 percent to 41 percent), the newly elected Villaraigosa finally announced his intention to “takeover” the district like mayors of other major U.S. cities and began working on legislation to introduce in Sacramento. Feeling attacked by the mayor’s plan, LAUSD leadership immediately went on the defense. Major political battles between Villaraigosa and the district ensued and have continued to draw attention to a failing and “complacent” system, in the words of the new mayor (Landsberg, 2006). Former Superintendent Roy Romer, highlighting accomplishments of his tenure such as steadily rising test scores in elementary schools, retorted, “That’s not complacency, folks! That’s change!” and added, “We have real challenges going forward, but to deny what we have accomplished together would be foolish” (Landsberg, 2006).

As the heat rose beneath a kettle of dissatisfaction on the verge of boiling over, two facts became evident for Los Angeles. First, greater visibility of district shortcomings had led to a growing frustration with the status quo that placed the district under intense scrutiny and caused a massive uproar from stakeholders across the county. Second, considering the failure of past
isolated efforts to reform the system and the apparent district complacency when it came to the dysfunction of its schools, diverse communities realized the urgent need to work together if they wanted to produce any lasting change in the district. The perfect storm was beginning to shape itself, but communities still needed the nudge that was to commence a united effort for concrete educational reform.

THE TIPPING POINT: THE LATINO SCORECARD

In 2000, United Way of Greater Los Angeles published American Dream Makers: Facts and Opinions About Los Angeles’ Emerging Latino Majority to raise awareness about the county’s growing, multifaceted, and increasingly influential Latino community. Acknowledging the emergence of Latinos as the country’s largest ethnic group—and perhaps responding to the mounting controversy surrounding immigration in Southern California—American Dream Makers combined a tapestry of testimonials and statistics to provide a snapshot of Los Angeles’ Latino community, the “pivotal population” that possessed an enormous potential to help define the future of the county. The report was the first call to action to (1) build stronger Latino communities, (2) fuel the “economic engine” of the Latino population, and (3) promote life-long learning as a priority for Latino children and adults. The report asserted:

The future of the Latino community is the future of Los Angeles County. [This report] is the continuation of a process; a bridge across which all of us may walk, acknowledging the hard work that has come before, taking ourselves and our community to the next level of success and opportunity.

By producing this initial report in what was destined to become a series, United Way of Greater Los Angeles communicated a clear need to focus energies and resources on moving forward an action agenda and engaging people and institutions in the promotion of the American Dream.

With its enthusiastic illustration of the “vibrant face of Latinos as an asset to the Los Angeles community,” the 2000 American Dream Makers report was the first of its kind for United Way as well as for Los Angeles, according to Sandy Mendoza, United Way’s Director of Special Projects, who coordinated the development of the report in collaboration with researchers and external organizations. Yet United Way, already engaged in a new strategic plan, was not prepared at the time to tackle the action agenda offered in the report. Three years later, however, with the Latino Scorecard 2003: Grading the American Dream, United Way was finally able to take the important next step toward the realization of that dream. Where American Dream Makers probed deep into statistics, perceptions, and implications surrounding the Latino community in Los Angeles, the Latino Scorecard challenged Los Angeles to put that knowledge to work for the benefit of Latinos and for all of Los Angeles County. The 2003 Scorecard “graded” the Latino community in five key areas: Economic Development, Education, Health, Housing, and Public Safety. Each of these five issue areas was tackled by leading university researchers, who developed baseline indicators and provided the data to accurately portray Latino successes and challenges. Within the Education issue, researched by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) at the University of Southern California, the Scorecard revealed low preschool enrollment for Latinos, reading and math achievement scores below county and national averages, high dropout rates, and a low rate of college preparation by Latino high school graduates, all of which added up to a “D” in Education for the Latino population of Los Angeles County. Specifically related to the A–G
movement, the 2003 Scorecard exposed the startling reality that only 26 percent of Latino high school graduates had completed required coursework for admission to California public universities, compared to 31 percent of African Americans, 44 percent of Whites, and 69 percent of Asians.

Incorporating the perspectives of educational experts and stakeholders countywide, the Scorecard urged community leaders and policymakers to address this educational gap by:

- Developing a comprehensive vision and a practical plan to dramatically increase the number of spaces available and the quality of preschool education for Latino children, including family literacy programs;
- Encouraging parents, community, and school leadership to work together for the common goal of school improvement;
- Initiating an effective, practical, and research-based plan of action to target issues of literacy and academic achievement;
- Promoting more aggressive action in the school system by adopting effective dropout intervention strategies;
- Demanding that school districts keep better track of high school students and reliably report the outcome of their high school academic experience;
- Improving access to college by increasing the availability and quality of college preparatory classes; and
- Ensuring that parents and students become better informed about how to prepare for a college education.

The action agenda collaboratively developed from these recommendations focused on both systems-level and community-based action to promote school reform, including a “best practices” movement to research school practices that promote student achievement so they could be replicated throughout the county school system, and a “parent engagement” strategy to promote a better understanding among parents of how their children’s schools are performing, what they can do to improve them, and how to prepare their children for higher education. While most reports tend to conclude by providing only a vague outline of recommendations for others to adopt as desired, the Latino Scorecard 2003 was planned as only the first of a series of very deliberate and collaboratively developed action agendas, with report updates (accompanied by agenda progress reports) scheduled to be published in 2006 and 2008.

As educational reformers reflect on the A–G movement, some disagree about the importance of the Scorecard to the movement’s success. “Reports are published every year,” one educational reformer commented in a 2006 interview on the report’s significance to A–G. Even former Board of Education President José Huizar did not pay close attention to A–G when he first heard it through the Latino Scorecard: “I didn’t take it that seriously because I didn’t think there was going to be any actual action on it as quickly as there was.” Regardless, published during an era of escalating concern over the quality of education in Los Angeles, the Latino Scorecard attracted broad attention to the educational inequity specifically faced by Los Angeles’ Latinos and, most importantly, provided a clear framework to address very complicated issues affecting the county’s emerging Latino population. “You take these complex issues such as education in Los Angeles and all these horrible outcomes, and one, two, three, four, here’s what you need to do to make a difference,” described Veronica Melvin, Director of Alliance for a Better Community (ABC). Dr. Julie Mendoza described her reaction to witnessing so many people come together for the Scorecard launch: “The [report] was huge. When I saw [Superintendent]
Romer and José [Huizar] talking together and saw that people had committed to working together on the ‘best practices’ agenda, it was the first time I realized that this fight [for educational] equity could happen.” In fact, the clarity of the Latino Scorecard helped to galvanize over 100 different Latino-oriented individuals and organizations who used the report in various ways to move toward removing the barriers to educational opportunity for Latinos. Designed as a policy tool to promote progress in government, a communication tool to create dialogue and combat myths, an accountability tool to keep reformers on track, and a leadership tool to pool the county’s greatest resources and move its diverse communities forward, the Latino Scorecard series has continued to place pressure on the educational status quo from all four angles, but most importantly it served as the thrust needed to unite diverse organizations around a common educational agenda.

COMMUNITIES COME TOGETHER

High School for High Achievement

Following the launch of the Latino Scorecard, ABC assumed the responsibility for creating an action agenda around the Scorecard’s recommendations. Having interacted during the Education Trust-West’s statewide convening earlier that year, ABC and Community Coalition decided to meet to discuss the work that each organization was currently doing around education reform. “We came out [of that meeting] with priorities, and for us it was clear that A–G was really the issue,” Melvin recalled, who along with Community Coalition became determined to bring together other stakeholders to discuss the problems with access to college preparation in Los Angeles high schools. “[Community Coalition] pulled together all the folks they knew, and we invited all the folks we knew to talk about high school reform,” said Melvin. Wanting to make certain that the interest of students and parents was the driving force for any reform and that the issue would not be diluted by competing interests, ABC and Community Coalition very deliberately selected who they wanted around the table.

On June 24, 2004, close to forty representatives of community-based organizations and research institutions attended the first High School for High Achievement (HSHA) meeting to discuss, according to the invitation, how to hold the LAUSD “accountable for…graduating [its students] prepared for success in college and the workplace.” In this first convening of organizations across Los Angeles, ABC and Community Coalition wished to initiate a regional discussion around mobilizing the community to ensure that the LAUSD’s high school curriculum adequately prepared students to become engaged, responsible participants in civic and social spaces. UC/ACCORD, the Achievement Council, and other education experts presented background data on academic outcomes and local policies that affected student outcomes, particularly college preparation. After devoting an entire day to identifying the issues central to educational reform—the CAHSEE, high dropout rates, student achievement, overcrowded schools, college preparation, student bussing, etc.—attendees determined that a focus on A–G could trigger a transformation of the K-12 system, a transformation capable of addressing each of the issues on which so many organizations had been individually focusing their efforts for years. Participants within the group repeatedly emphasized, as Casillas explained, that “it’s not about making certain kids have tougher classes. It’s about reforming an entire K-12 system with a new set of expectations and a new delivery of curriculum so that all kids can succeed and have the supports to do so.” The initiative taken by ABC and Community Coalition in organizing that first
critical consensus-building roundtable resulted in the commitment of a diverse and broad-based coalition to embark upon a sustained local campaign.

Supported by funding secured through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the High School for High Achievement (HSHA) Taskforce—a placeholder until members could collaboratively determine a formal name for the advocacy group—began to meet regularly. The most critical initial task for the coalition became aligning the goals of diverse organizations by determining a joint vision, mission, goals, and guiding principles. To assume this responsibility, HSHA established a Steering Committee that worked to refine the HSHA Taskforce goals, discuss potential strategies to accomplish such goals, and examine various scenarios that could affect the outcome of their efforts. Melvin described the way the Steering Committee sought constant feedback from the larger taskforce and regularly revisited and reassessed its goals: “We were really in a planning phase; taking the information back to the group, seeing what they had to say about it.” As a result of this collaborative process, HSHA approved its initial policy agenda in September 2004, establishing the taskforce’s primary policy goal as ensuring the LAUSD Board of Education approved the A–G curriculum as part of the district’s high school graduation requirement (see Appendix A). This formalization of purpose marked the beginning of the HSHA’s ten-month campaign for educational reform in the LAUSD.

A SOLID FOUNDATION

Information Gathering

From the outset, HSHA was aware that the group needed to be better informed of the current situation in the LAUSD. The HSHA Taskforce scheduled an initial meeting with LAUSD representatives to learn about what the district was doing related to education reform. “They had some high school reform efforts brewing, but we weren’t familiar with them,” recalled Veronica Melvin. In August of 2004, prior to the development of its policy agenda, HSHA invited district decision-makers, including board members, superintendents, and department directors, to present LAUSD’s various components of secondary instruction and the district’s movement toward small learning communities within the high school system. At the same meeting, HSHA invited former San Jose Unified Superintendent Dr. Linda Murray to present her experience and expose LAUSD leadership to the San Jose A–G model. Through this initial engagement of the LAUSD, HSHA discovered that issues of educational inequity were left largely unaddressed by current and upcoming district reform efforts and would continue to plague students unless further action was taken.

Over the next few months, HSHA attempted to assess the feasibility of an A–G initiative that could fill the gap left by inadequate district efforts. Continued conversations occurred between HSHA and the LAUSD as HSHA began to request district information and statistics related to A–G. Some questions were answered by the district and some were not, but rarely were prompt responses provided. Perhaps this was due to a lack of awareness or indifference to HSHA, or simply because of the time needed to compile data to which the district had previously paid little attention. For instance, letters sent to Senior Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Dr. Maria Ott on November 19, 2004 and to Superintendent Roy Romer on December 2, 2004 did not receive responses until February 2005. In these letters, HSHA requested information related to the district’s prior success in implementing an Algebra I requirement for all eighth graders; the preparedness of high schools to offer two lab science courses to all
students; the ability of the district to supply sufficient qualified math, foreign language, and science teachers to teach A–G classes; and the district's revenues and expenses for secondary education. The district’s eventual response to the request for information revealed that several challenges needed to be taken into consideration for an A–G initiative to be successful. Despite the fact that since 2000 the LAUSD had

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**HSHA COMMITTEES¹** ESTABLISHED SEPTEMBER 2004

**Steering Committee**

Veronica Melvin, ABC  
Mónica García, Board Member Huizar’s Office  
Luis Sanchez, InnerCity Struggle  
Goldie Buchanan, AAP/CCEE  
Alberto Retana, Community Coalition  
Maria Casillas, Families in Schools  
Agustín Urgiles, ABC  
Sandy Mendoza, United Way

The Steering Committee continued to plan and guide the work of the larger coalition. As the HSHA campaign progressed, this committee became responsible for communicating with district officials, including meeting with local district superintendents to gather support and holding individual meetings with school board members. Steering Committee members served as the intermediaries and primary spokespeople for the campaign.

**Communications Committee**

Veronica Melvin, ABC  
Luis Sanchez, InnerCity Struggle  
Robert Battles, Community Coalition  
Shelaigh Polk, Community Coalition  
Sandy Mendoza, United Way  
Lester Garcia, InnerCity Struggle

The Communications Committee attempted to build public awareness of the HSHA mission and goals by generating media coverage of the coalition’s activities and by developing communication tools that could reach multiple audiences. In addition to planning a public event (April 2005) to officially launch the coalition’s campaign, this committee focused on identifying news outlets and developing media packets, press releases, and informational materials for students and parents.

**Policy Committee**

Veronica Melvin, ABC  
Dr. Julie Mendoza, UC/ACCORD  
Alberto Retana, Community Coalition  
Agustín Urgiles, ABC

Using available data and capitalizing on its ability to translate student needs into concrete demands, the Policy Committee worked to finalize a policy agenda that would communicate precisely what HSHA was requesting from the district.

**Community Action Committee**

Maria Brenes, InnerCity Struggle  
Mayra Soriano, SALEF  
Maria Estrada, CABE  
Goldie Buchanan, AAP/CCEE  
Susana Coracero, Community Coalition  
Hector Sanchez, Community Coalition  
Larry Aubry, NAACP  
Jeremy Lahoud, Californians for Justice

The Community Action Committee (CAC), which would assume the bulk of responsibility later in the campaign, began to perform the initial tasks necessary to mobilize thousands of students and parents. Regional meetings with youth and parents were organized by CAC in local LAUSD districts. CAC members were also responsible for petition gathering, identifying effective organizing methods, distributing information to targeted populations, and coordinating logistics for HSHA’s three demonstrations at LAUSD headquarters.

¹ Omission of any individuals serving on HSHA committees is unintentional.
annually hired an average of 3,087 teachers who were increasingly credentialed (from 33.8 percent in 2000 to 71.0 percent in 2004), the district admitted having an "acute shortage" of math, science, and special education teachers. To address the shortage and cope with a devastating national teaching shortage, the district indicated it had embarked on an intensive teacher recruitment and incentives program. When asked “Do all LAUSD high schools have sufficient lab facilities to offer two lab science courses to every high school student over their four years of high school?,” the LAUSD Division of Instructional Support Services responded with what some HSHA leaders believed to be a gross underestimate: “No, LAUSD is approximately 98 classrooms short of this goal.” Existing science laboratory facilities were found to be outdated and unsafe; 17 of 17 science classrooms in Crenshaw High School, 14 of 14 in South Gate High School, and 12 of 13 in Belmont High School, and a high percentage of facilities in other high schools were described as “inadequate” by the district. Concerning the status quo for A–G course completion, the LAUSD reported that only 52 percent of 8th and 9th graders passed Algebra I with a grade of C or better in 2000-01, and only 65 percent of LAUSD students completed two science courses during high school. Based on this information, HSHA realized that if an A–G policy passed in the district, implementation would inevitably be a great challenge. But the coalition continued to push forward.

**Coalition Building**

Between October and December of 2004, task-force members began to meet individually with LAUSD leadership (board members and superintendents), local neighborhood and school stakeholders (teachers, counselors, community leaders, and organizational representatives), and powerful Los Angeles organizations (United Teachers of Los Angeles, the business community, universities, and community colleges). The goal was to introduce the HSHA taskforce to stakeholders and decision-makers, identify opportunities for collaboration, and assess where decision-makers and others stood on the A–G issue. To aid HSHA members in this engagement process, the Steering and Communications committees worked together to establish and disseminate talking points, which included four clear and concise assertions:

- **There is a crisis in Los Angeles high schools.** Between beginning 9th grade in 1999 and on-time graduation four years later in 2003, 31,179 students disappeared from LAUSD high schools to produce a district dropout rate of 53 percent. Additionally, only 20 percent of LAUSD students who start 9th grade will graduate four years later with the minimum requirements to qualify for college.

- **These statistics are a tragedy for youth and families and create an economic and public safety concern for Greater Los Angeles.** Students who fail to complete high school experience limited career and education opportunities, lower wages, and are more exposed to crime and teenage pregnancy. High school dropouts and graduates who have not been provided a rigorous education contribute low-level skill and limited earning capacity to the region.

- **Today’s economy demands high skills.** The Los Angeles economy has transitioned from manufacturing to a high skill service industry base, and Los Angeles high schools do not provide appropriate education and training equitably to all students.

**Synergy: Splitting Up and Working Together**

Meanwhile, HSHA established three additional committees to supplement the work of the Steering Committee, divide the work of the coalition to be more effective, and utilize the strengths of individuals and organizations in tasks where they would be most valuable.
**The HSHA Taskforce is committed to improving Los Angeles’ high schools.**

The HSHA Taskforce has united to ensure that Los Angeles high schools engage students in a meaningful education that prepares them for entry and success in universities and the 21st century economy. If the taskforce fails, Los Angeles fails.

Equipped with a carefully articulated argument, HSHA attempted to raise awareness of the need for reform in LAUSD and to garner the support of stakeholders across Los Angeles. According to Luis Sanchez of InnerCity Struggle, “At the end of the day, our number one goal was to isolate the decision-makers: the Board [of Education]. HSHA wanted to make the statement, ‘Everyone is a part of this coalition, so are you going to vote with it or against it?”

Fortunately, HSHA did have one important ally that kept the coalition linked to the decision-makers. Critical to the coalition-building efforts of HSHA, Chief of Staff Mónica García was able to engage her boss, Board of Education President José Huizar, in a discussion regarding the issue of access to A–G within the LAUSD and to convince him to be the sole champion of the reform effort on the Board of Education. “As a school board president, I really didn’t have the time to attend [coalition] meetings or really digest all of the information. [Monica] was the lynchpin,” Huizar recalled. “For her to be able to come from those [HSHA] meetings to me, who could push [A–G] at the school board...it was direct access to the thinking that was going on.” Garcia described the importance of her insider position as an acknowledgement of the partnership between Huizar’s office and the community organizations involved in the HSHA coalition: “[The community groups] were allies to us [within Huizar’s office] that helped inform our work and helped provide the support we needed from our constituents and communities to move José [Huizar]’s policy agenda. And I think they felt our office was an access point to the district, where information was provided, where people were listened to, where invitations were accepted. It was important for our allies to have someone on the inside demonstrating that their voice belonged there.”

As strong as Huizar’s support was for the coalition, and as carefully constructed as the coalition’s argument was, HSHA proved to be less successful in convincing other board members and district superintendents of the need for a high school A–G curriculum. “We received all types of responses from school board members,” recalled Melvin. “But the most common was that not all kids are going to go to college. [HSHA] responded, ‘Sure, that’s true, but why should you be the ones to make that decision for them? It’s not up to us and it’s not up to the schools to decide what students are going to do with the rest of their lives. That [decision] is the student’s, and it’s [the schools’] job to make sure they’re prepared to make it.’ That was really our argument the entire time.” Unfortunately, notes from a December 19, 2004 taskforce meeting indicated that this argument, coupled with HSHA’s original talking points, was not receiving the kind of response for which HSHA leaders had hoped:

The meeting with board member Marlene Canter did not go as well as expected. Because of this, the Steering Committee has developed [revised] talking points that will enable us to obtain a sense of how a particular board member feels about A–G.... These points focus on concern about overall academic achievement and emphasize that the change process will require time and other resources. Talking about what this change might look like will keep [the district] from saying it cannot be done.
Canter had raised concerns about what HSHA had proposed in this initial meeting, and unexpectedly could not be persuaded to support the taskforce’s position. “She was neutral at that point,” recalled United Way’s Sandy Mendoza. “We walked into the meeting optimistically thinking we could sway her to our side.” Additional roadblocks were revealed through further conversation with board members and district officials, but HSHA adapted accordingly. The LAUSD appeared to be focused intently on the implementation of Small Learning Communities, and according to Alberto Retana in an e-mail sent to fellow Steering Committee members, later conversations with the district would require “injecting A–G within the Small Learning Communities framework.” Furthermore, HSHA realized that it needed concrete evidence to “debunk the myths” that the status quo in the LAUSD was adequately serving its students; that A–G would lead to an increased dropout rate; that rigorous coursework meant eliminating vocational education; and that most LAUSD students do not desire to attend college. In conversations with superintendents, HSHA needed to use “more than just rhetoric,” urged the Steering Committee, which determined that the next meeting should focus on reviewing data to demonstrate student underachievement in the LAUSD.

**Compelling Data**

Through its connections with UCLA’s Dr. Jeannie Oakes and Dr. Julie Mendoza, and with the Education Trust-West’s Dr. Linda Murray and Russlynn Ali, HSHA fortunately had access to ample data that would support its argument and effectively demonstrate the need for a more rigorous curriculum in the LAUSD. Years previous to the A–G campaign, UC / ACCORD had created the College Opportunity Ratio (COR) to report

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United Way of Greater Los Angeles

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The A–G Full Story
the effectiveness of California high schools in producing college-ready graduates (Oakes, Mendoza, and Silver, 2004). For every 100 ninth graders, the COR reported the number who graduated on time four years later and the number who graduated eligible for admission to state public universities by completing the A–G requirements. For instance, a ratio of 100:82:36 for 2002 reads: For every 100 ninth graders in 1998, 82 graduated on time in 2002, and 36 graduated in 2002 having completed the A–G requirements. With data also segregated by race to show discrepancies between White/Asian American populations and under-represented (Latino and African American) populations, the COR was calculated for every high school in the state of California and presented on geographic information system (GIS) maps to demonstrate the disparity of graduation rates and A–G eligibility between school districts and county regions. (See inset: “Graduation and College Preparatory Rates / A–G Course Offerings” demonstrates the COR and the percentage of A–G classes offered for LAUSD high schools in East Los Angeles, a primarily Latino region of Los Angeles, compared to White suburban high schools on the outskirts of Los Angeles.) Dr. Mendoza recalled scrutinizing every detail of the maps during their development in order to produce the most compelling summary of the “social construction of educational inequity” in Los Angeles. “Most data like this is broken down by school districts, which often overlap elected officials’ boundaries and can’t hold them accountable,” said Dr. Mendoza, who decided to divide the COR data by senate and assembly district and underlay it with data representing median household income (See inset: “2002 College Opportunity Ratio”). “We [at UC/ACCORD] were trying to figure out how to make the data more personal and demonstrate that these things were happening in the
"backyards of politicians," she stated. In the end, HSHA was able to use Dr. Mendoza’s compelling creations to demonstrate to elected officials, LAUSD decision-makers and the public that schools in low-income and primarily African American and Latino neighborhoods of the district graduated a majority of their students ineligible to attend four-year colleges. Moreover, these high schools on average provided 20 percent fewer A–G courses than high schools in higher-income, White regions of the district.

Such convincing data was coupled with grassroots action research performed by InnerCity Struggle’s student organizers. Youth from the organization’s United Students group surveyed fellow classmates at Garfield and Roosevelt High Schools to reveal that the majority (77 percent) of high school students surveyed desired to attend college but had been unable to enroll in college preparatory (A–G) and honors/advanced placement classes they had requested: 71 percent of Garfield High School students and 41 percent of students at Roosevelt High School had been denied access to A–G courses. The reasons provided for this ranged from lack of space in an A–G class, conflicts with class schedules, lack of awareness of the course requirements for college admission, failure to fulfill prerequisite classes, counselor or teacher discouragement, and insufficient grade point averages. Even more compelling were individual responses from students: “They showed me how to fill out a McDonald’s application in my Life Skills class,” one 17-year-old Garfield student commented. “I think they should have at least told me about the classes I’d need to go to college” (Riviera and Alcalá, 2005, p. 1).

Finally, to combat arguments that “not everyone can succeed in these classes” or “not everyone will go to college,” HSHA countered with data from the San Jose Unified School District, four years after it had implemented A–G as its default curriculum for all students. Demonstrating the jump in achievement for students of color, typically low-achieving students, and English Language Learners following implementation of the policy, the data quickly dispelled the myths regarding the inability of certain students to succeed in rigorous courses. Education experts from San Jose and well-respected research institutions—including Dr. Linda Murray and Russlynn Ali—presented San Jose district data at Board of Education meetings and to district leadership.

A Solidified Purpose

During this initial period of laying the foundation for its advocacy efforts, HSHA very vigilantly and honestly assessed how much power the coalition held and attempted to dissect the political landscape to help shape its campaign to pass an A–G policy. The initial conversations held by HSHA with district leadership and stakeholders across Los Angeles helped to inform the power analyses, the first of which was completed in early November (see Appendix B for the progression of CEE’s power analyses), but revealed that passing a policy would be more difficult than HSHA had first suspected. Strong opposition to “A–G for all” had arisen from supporters of vocational education, including Board of Education members Mike Lansing and Jon Lauritzen as well as United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), who felt an A–G curriculum could compromise vocational education. With such strong opposition to A–G and only one board member (José Huizar) whole-heartedly backing HSHA’s efforts, in December 2004 coalition members began to seriously question their exclusive focus on A–G and high school instructional reform. Most HSHA members opposed the inclusion of vocational education in their demands for reform due to the already intense focus on vocational education in LAUSD
high schools. “Community members overwhelmingly support access to higher education through A–G, not vocational education,” argued Maria Brenes of InnerCity Struggle. Other members favored inclusion of vocational education, however, due to the workforce demands of Los Angeles and the alignment of A–G with skills needed in various industries. Sandy Mendoza summarized this debate: “It seems that we are not clear ourselves as to what we are going to do as a group.”

After hashing out these differences of opinion, the coalition realized that vocational education and A–G were not mutually exclusive, but great complements to each other. According to the Education Trust-West (2004):

*Done right, vocational education classes can provide students with valuable skills that they can utilize in future careers. But alone they aren’t enough. Employers are clear that technical skills standing alone, without a strong foundation in academic disciplines like English and math, will not be sufficient for success in the workplace.*

Even more internal dissonance surrounded the coalition’s distinct focus on high school reform. “This is more complex than we thought. [Reform] is a systemic thing. [A focus on] high school might be too narrow,” Larry Aubry of NAACP iterated. Ultimately, the group determined that A–G at the high school level should be a lever for reform of the entire educational system; a transformation to ensure that all students complete an education that prepares them for higher education and the workforce. That period of debate was “a pretty intense and emotional one,” recalls Alberto Retana, Organizing Director at the Community Coalition and member of HSHA’s Steering Committee. “It allowed us to put everything out on the table and at the end of the day when we decided to [continue our A–G efforts], the ownership level went up exponentially.” The fact that the coalition was able to address the dissonance allowed HSHA to solidify its purpose and direction and begin the real work of its campaign.

**THE COMMUNITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY CAMPAIGN**

By the New Year, HSHA had engaged in months of information gathering, coalition building, and campaign planning and was ready to take action. “The group got edgy and wanted to do something,” recalled Melvin. “We’d been talking all this time.” On February 11, 2005, members of HSHA met for a full-day retreat to develop a campaign action agenda, devise strategies to realize campaign goals, and arrange a timeline for campaign implementation. At the retreat, HSHA determined that the overarching goal of its campaign would be for the LAUSD Board of Education to adopt a policy that made A–G the graduation requirement for the entering freshman class of July 2008. To achieve this lofty goal, HSHA brainstormed strategies and asked “What are the major obstacles to our agenda? What opportunities exist for us to interject and leverage our power? What strategies will best attract support from key district and community stakeholders?” Alberto Retana further challenged the group: “It helps us to ask ourselves whether A–G is really winnable and possible this fiscal year. All the information we have gathered tells us ‘No!’ So what does this mean? How does this impact our strategy to win policy changes at the district?” Addressing these complex questions led HSHA to develop a plan to gather over 25,000 postcard petitions signatures from students and parents; hold a press event to launch the A–G campaign and attract media attention; organize Educational Summits in four
local districts; and mobilize thousands of parents, students, and community members to demonstrate community support for A–G on the streets outside LAUSD headquarters. The target date for accomplishment of HSHA’s goal would be in May 2005, when the Board of Education was expected to vote on an A–G policy.

What’s In a Name?

With three months to carry out its strategies before the scheduled May vote, HSHA needed to be taken more seriously than it was being taken by the board. Discussion eventually turned to the title of the taskforce:

Should High School for High Achievement (HSHA) stay or go? Did its title effectively communicate what the coalition stood for? “Equity” seemed to be the focus of all of our conversations,” recalled Mendoza, so the word appeared fitting for the group as it brainstormed possibilities. The coalition ultimately determined it needed a prominent, attention-grabbing title, and so Communities for Educational Equity (CEE) was born.

Targeting Decision-Makers

Coalition members by this time had spoken with each of the seven board members and had become aware of their individual positions on A–G. With only one board member fully supporting an A–G policy, CEE knew it would be an arduous task to convince the board to pass the requirement with a majority vote in May. Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte (District 1), who declined to be interviewed for this report, had been opposed to A–G due to the fact that students in her district did not typically attend college and due to her belief that all students do not need to attend college. Board President José Huizar (District 2) was the sole internal champion of an A–G policy and emphasized the need for learning supports and finances to fund more school counselors. Jon Lauritzen (District 3) was supportive of an A–G initiative, but was concerned that vocational education would be left behind or eliminated. Marlene Canter (District 4) appeared to be opposed to CEE goals and initiatives, but supported increasing the supply of A–G courses.

HSHA retreat notes indicated that Canter “philosophically supports a two-tier system.” David Tokofsky (District 5) appeared to remain undecided on CEE’s goals and saw implementation of A–G as only a minute part of the solution. “The irony of the whole thing is that 97 percent of the circumstances were already happening,” Tokofsky commented in a 2006 interview. “The only change was an extra year of foreign language, an
extra year of math. LAUSD’s required courses to graduate were essentially de facto A–G. If you look at all the other school districts in the county, this one was one of the 10 percent already toward that goal or at that goal [of A–G].” CEE at this time believed Julie Korenstein (District 6) would support an A–G policy as long as vocational education was included. Mike Lansing (District 7) appeared to be opposed to CEE goals and, due to high student failure rates following the district’s implementation of an eighth grade Algebra I requirement, was particularly concerned about how to ensure student success in a more rigorous A–G curriculum.

Policy Negotiations

Working with José Huizar, the only board member who wholeheartedly supported CEE’s goals, the coalition drafted an A–G resolution that was first presented to the public and the Board of Education during a public launch in April 2005. Mónica García played a critical role as she worked within Huizar’s office to translate the goals of CEE and community members into the language of the resolution. Much negotiation occurred between community groups and the Board of Education to develop an appropriate and inclusive language and to ensure that the desires of multiple stakeholders were represented in the proposed policy. García simplified this intense process of give and take: “There was a lot of jockeying: ‘I like blue, I don’t like red, you said purple.’” According to García, CEE members engaged in multiple conversations throughout these negotiations about “where the breaking point was” and at what point would the resolution’s language “no longer be aligned with [CEE’s] vision.” On one hand, a compromise in CEE’s demands meant compromising the quality of educational opportunity for thousands of students; on the other, failure to construct a resolution capable of winning the support of undecided board members meant failure to take any positive step forward in the quest for educational equity. Specifically, CEE considered whether to include language that would allow students to opt out of an A–G curriculum, at which year to make the course sequence a high school graduation requirement, and whom to include in an implementation planning and advisory committee. After considerable negotiations and multiple revisions, the resolution allowed for the phasing in of A–G as the high school graduation requirement: All ninth-graders would automatically be enrolled in A–G in 2008 with the option to waive the course sequence, and the A–G graduation requirement would begin with the entering ninth grade class of 2012. (See Appendix C for complete language of the adopted resolution with its revisions.)

Community Action

In arguably the most indispensable piece of the coalition’s entire campaign, CEE effectively mobilized thousands of students, parents, and community members in support of an A–G resolution. María Brenes, who chaired the coalition’s Community Action Committee, described the importance of direct community involvement in the campaign: “One of the key principles of the coalition as a whole—due to the involvement of grassroots organizations like InnerCity Struggle and Community Coalition—was that the community members most affected by this issue had to be the spokespeople, the leaders.” Following this philosophy, CEE’s community action strategies revolved around (1) developing tools to raise community awareness, (2) creating civic spaces for community members to voice concern to elected officials, and (3) coordinating community mobilization. Awareness tools used by CEE throughout the campaign included Educational Summits held in each of the LAUSD’s local districts to inform and to gather petition signatures (printed on postcards to distinguish A–G from other issues), GIS maps with COR data and fliers to provide visual verification of educational inequality across the district, and parent education efforts such as Parent Summits to inform parents of their children’s educational rights and
to provide tools like bookmarks to instruct them to talk to their children’s counselors about college preparatory classes. CEE organizations also developed unique ways to engage students through events like InnerCity Struggle’s Education Week in East Los Angeles high schools, at which performers presented what InnerCity Struggle employees Luis Sanchez and Maria Brenes referred to as “edu-tainment,” in order to create a fun environment for students to learn about higher education and financial aid.

As CEE worked to mobilize community stakeholders, coalition leaders knew that in order to win a vote by the LAUSD Board of Education they needed to demonstrate power in different geographical regions of the district. “LAUSD will not respect the power of the community unless it comes from all corners,” Casillas underscored, but successfully mobilizing “all corners” proved difficult in ten short months. Retana recalled, “We had a choice to build power across the city in areas we didn’t already have power, or to concentrate efforts where we were strong—South Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, the Pico-Union neighborhood.” Because grassroots organizations like Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, and ABC possessed long-standing relationships within those three communities, CEE chose to focus the majority of its mobilization efforts there. Every coalition member used his or her numerous community contacts to outreach to groups—including after-school programs, community organizations, parent groups, and churches—who could gather support for an A–G resolution and supply students and parents who were willing to sign petitions and attend CEE demonstrations. Youth also adopted leadership positions in the mass mobilization after Community Coalition and InnerCity Struggle trained students within their respective youth groups—South Central Youth Empowered Through Action (SC-YEA) and United Students—to present the issue and organize fellow classmates in Garfield, Roosevelt, Wilson, Fremont, and Washington High Schools, as well as Bethune Middle School. These youth organizers often surrendered their free time during lunch, study halls, and out-of-school hours to track phone numbers and call prospective supporters. “We even came in [to mobilize] on Sundays,” recalled one dedicated high school SC-YEA student.

CEE also had to attend to the logistical matters of organizing direct action against the Board of Education. To navigate the internal district roadblocks, Mónica García utilized her position and knowledge of LAUSD requirements. “From the inside, I dealt with a lot of logistics: Making sure school police were aware that a thousand people were going to come [for the demonstrations], making sure school police weren’t going to attack anybody, making sure the board members were aware of who would be [at the demonstrations], ensuring access and [figuring out] how we were going to manage getting everyone into the board room.” City restrictions also required CEE to obtain permits to block off the streets directly in front of district offices.
Parent permission slips had to be gathered to allow students to leave school for the demonstrations, parent volunteers were recruited to supervise students who left school to join the efforts, and multiple buses were needed for transportation from schools to the demonstrations held during Tuesday morning Board of Education meetings. Such careful planning and preparation led to the successful mobilization of thousands of students and parents who participated in three mass demonstrations in the streets outside LAUSD headquarters on May 10, May 24, and June 14, 2005.

**Media Action**

To inform the public about the need for A–G and to demonstrate to decision-makers that the majority of parents, students, and community members supported a resolution instating A–G as a district graduation requirement, CEE developed an elaborate six-page media plan. The plan emphasized the strategic promotion of shared values—such as equity, access, opportunity, the promise of and the right to a quality education, investment in youth, and investment in the future of Los Angeles—to attract the support of diverse constituencies as CEE sought endorsements from universities, businesses, clergy, unions, elected officials, and organizations that would strengthen the coalition’s credibility. CEE’s plan called for “well-trained, disciplined, and moving spokespeople” to stick to CEE’s message and “call out” decision-makers. In February 2005, a media training offered in Oakland by the Education Trust-West helped selected CEE Communications Committee members to fill this role and develop skills to effectively attract media attention. CEE members quickly became adept at pitching stories that featured student and parent leaders and producing fact sheets that presented compelling arguments to support the need for A–G in the LAUSD. Such careful consideration of the need for a communication’s strategy ultimately allowed CEE to generate approximately 120 media hits, including feature stories, television pieces, and editorials from the county’s three major newspapers (the *Daily News*, *La Opinión*, and the *Los Angeles Times*).

One of the most successful components of the plan was the manner in which CEE framed the A–G debate from the very beginning of the campaign. Providing a framework to introduce the problem and the solution before the campaign began “was so important because key decision-makers were put on the defense,” stated Luis Sanchez, a seasoned organizer with extensive media experience who was chosen to head the coalition’s Communications Committee. CEE immediately framed the A–G debate as a moral issue: A–G is about college-preparation, work-preparation, and preparation for life, and students are being denied the right to take A–G, how can district leadership stand idly by while students graduate ill-prepared for their futures? Under this framework, a stand against A–G became a stand against children and opportunity. Once CEE introduced A–G in this manner, “[the Board of Education] was forced to respond to our message, our frame, and never were they able to come up with their own,” Sanchez reiterated. “It became spin time for them.”

A second critical piece of the coalition’s media plan arrived with its first organized press event on April 26, 2005, the official public launch of the CEE campaign. CEE invited elected officials, LAUSD board members and district leadership, local newspapers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to present itself as an official coalition fighting for 21st century preparation in LAUSD schools. Along with this self-introduction, CEE sought to demonstrate the support of over 20,000 students and parents who had signed petition postcards and to reveal the initial A–G resolution drafted by Board of Education President José Huizar in collaboration...
with CEE. The press event clarified exactly what CEE was demanding from the district, and forced elected officials and powerful voices in Los Angeles to publicly take a stand for or against the resolution. “When we had our initial meetings with decision-makers,” recalled Sanchez, “they all said, ‘Yeah, we’re for A–G!’ But once we put it on paper and it was clear what we wanted, they said ‘Oh, but we’re not for A–G like this.’”

Following the press event, nevertheless, the coalition managed to garner the public support of Superintendent Roy Romer; State Superintendent Jack O’Connell; John Perez of the United Teachers – Los Angeles (UTLA) union; John Mack of the Los Angeles Urban League; Board of Education members Jon Lauritzen and David Tokofsky, who ultimately co-sponsored the resolution; and individuals from Los Angeles Trade Tech and the Building Trades Council, which had historically supported vocational curricula at the district. With the support of Councilmember Alex Padilla as well, the Los Angeles City Council followed suit with the unanimous passage (11-0) of a symbolic resolution on May 17, 2005 that “urges the LAUSD Board of Education and the Superintendent to implement a rigorous and relevant course sequence that satisfies the A–G requirements as part of the graduation requirements.” Even media outlets took a stance on the issue. While the Daily News and La Opinión voiced support for an A–G policy in the LAUSD following the press event, the Los Angeles Times took a stance against it, which might have been a detrimental blow to the coalition’s efforts had CEE not possessed the necessary support from other factions. (See Appendix D for media articles related to the A–G resolution.) “In order for a newspaper to take a stance, it has to be a big issue,” emphasized Sanchez, who agreed that CEE’s efforts forced A–G to become a major issue in Los Angeles. Aided by the already intense focus on education in Los Angeles following the 2005 mayoral race and widespread frustration with the LAUSD’s performance, CEE placed the A–G issue at center-stage with the coalition’s constant attention and commitment to its media plan following this public launch.

**A Battle Is Won**

On June 14, 2005, during the CEE’s final mobilization of students, parents, and community members, the carefully-negotiated Huizar-Lauritzen-Tokofsky resolution passed with a vote of 6-1. Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte, the sole dissenter, looked at the faces of the students who had gathered in the boardroom as she cast her vote: “Too many of my students in my district will be negatively and adversely affected by this mandate. In their best interest and in the interest of some of your siblings, I cast a ‘no’ vote.” But as David Tokofsky rounded out the supporting votes, “From A to Z, yes,” students, parents, and organizers stood to cheer and to embrace in victory. “We were so happy when we heard the news,” one student organizer from Community Coalition recalled. “People were crying all over the place.”

**BEYOND THE POLICY: THE FUTURE OF A–G**

**A–G Implementation**

With the passage of the June 2005 resolution, implementation of the A–G curriculum was scheduled in gradual phases. By the 2006-07 school year, A–G courses must be made available to all students who request enrollment. Beginning in 2008, every student entering the ninth grade will be enrolled in the A–G course sequence with the option to opt-out upon approval from a parent or guardian. By 2012, every student entering the ninth grade will be required to pass the A–G course sequence in order to graduate from the district, with waivers made available to special
education students and English Language Learners. But successful implementation of this resolution encompasses much more than the creation or distribution of waiver forms and the rearrangement of student class schedules, as Russlynn Ali observed:

This [A–G resolution] is not a resolution like so many adopted by local districts that don’t require a transformation of the way things are done. A–G is about transforming how the entire kindergarten through 12th grade system operates. In order to implement it right, the leaders charged with implementing the resolution...have to look at this movement with those eyes. It’s about doing everything from digging into master schedules to figure out what classes have to go out the window, what classes have to be added, what classes have to change; to professional development for existing teachers; to a serious recruitment of new teachers; to a focus on bond dollars and facilities and science labs; to ensuring that you find creative ways to work within the [public university] system and the State Education Code. ...It’s about re-designing career tech programs so that they are A–G compliant. ...It’s about all of the piecemeal movements of the past wrapped into one. Unless the district leadership, the community, and everybody playing realize that [reality] on the front end, [the policy] won’t work.

Given the LAUSD’s history of poor policy implementation, Communities for Educational Equity knew that ensuring effective, equitable, and timely implementation of the A–G resolution would require constant pressure from the community. Prior to the passage of the resolution, CEE feared that upon adoption A–G might fall to the wayside like many of the district’s inadequately implemented initiatives and realized that community involvement needed to be formally written into the policy resolution. Demonstrating the seasoned wisdom, and perhaps healthy skepticism gained from decades of working within the bureaucratic educational system, Casillas emphasized that unless the community voice so effective during the A–G policy campaign continues to speak loudly during its implementation, “the district will not be responsive to 85 percent of the [district] population.”

An A–G Implementation Committee—on which sit several CEE leaders and other education stakeholders like the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and teacher’s unions—was established by the district to incorporate a community voice into the implementation of a phased-in A–G curriculum. “We wanted a process of collaboration to continue [between the community and the LAUSD],” Melvin described as the rationale behind the creation of the committee. “But [the A–G Advisory Committee] hasn’t been a highly functional or highly productive group because the district hasn’t [collaborated]. They just came in saying, ‘Here is what we’re doing, and here is what you need to know.’ And, ‘Okay, see you next month.’ When people tried to be engaged in the conversation and ‘advise’ as the title of the committee suggests, they were really shut down [by the district].”

If the resistance to a collaborative and representative A–G Advisory Committee is any sign of how implementation of the A–G policy will proceed, CEE and the LAUSD should prepare for a rocky road. “Policy by motions only yields motion sickness,” Board Member Tokofsky stated pointedly. “You have to have structural ingredients in place.... If you push from behind or underneath or from the side, that can help, but it doesn’t necessarily yield to institutionalization or implementation.” Publicly, LAUSD speaks of the A–G resolution with an air of accomplishment and
flawless execution. Current Board of Education President Marlene Canter spoke proudly of her creation of an A–G subcommittee of the Board of Education, whose responsibility is to focus solely on A–G implementation and to “periodically report to the public.” Canter expressed excitement about the secondary instructional reform initiatives scheduled for 2006-07, which include a fourteen-step plan for A–G implementation—since reduced to twelve steps—first introduced in September 2005 by Chief Instructional Officer of Secondary Instruction Robert Collins (see Appendix E for an illustration of the district’s strategic action plan with its twelve steps, a timeline for implementation, and the district’s perceived progress related to each step).

While minimal progress has been made by the district in establishing initial programs to facilitate A–G implementation, the discrepancy between the district’s plan and CEE’s Blueprint for A–G Implementation (See Appendix F) demonstrates a gap in what the district appears willing to do and what the coalition believes is necessary for effective implementation. Casillas would likely give a second “F” to the Board of Education for its failure to properly implement A–G as she publicly did months ago when the board was reluctant to admit it was failing its 720,000 students by not providing adequate academic preparation for the 21st century. So what will it take to “put some fire under the feet of the district” as so many CEE leaders feel must be done?

**A Changing Role for CEE?**

Faced with minimal district progress more than a year following the passage of the A–G resolution, CEE paradoxically appears both resolute and hesitant to take the next step. Attendance at CEE meetings has drastically declined since the passage of the 2005 policy, and several CEE leaders who played critical roles in the campaign have found themselves occupied with other organizational priorities. “I’m wearing other hats,” Retana regrets, “but it’s kind of an opportunity for younger [employees] to play a leadership role now.” Other CEE members have wondered if the coalition’s role will need to be re-examined. “Alliances come together for a particular issue, and we’ve won the issue. So now what happens to us?” some are asking. Perhaps this questioning has contributed to the waning attendance at recent CEE meetings, but now is a time when concentrated efforts are needed more than ever. The policy was only the commencement of the “trench-work” of educational reform for the LAUSD, according to Goldie Buchanan of AAP/CEE. Retana hypothesizes that the coalition has not yet clearly “mapped out a good enough reason for people to stay involved,” mainly because no one is quite sure of the appropriate next step. “We need to have some honest conversations,” Retana continued. “Is the alliance still strategic? Do we still have unity? What will we do if in 2008 or 2009 we realize kids aren’t doing well in the classes and many aren’t going to graduate because of this policy? We really need to figure out our role in this post-policy, implementation period.” Until such difficult conversations are had among its members, CEE will struggle as it moves forward into the next phase of A–G.

Despite hesitance in the face of uncertainty, optimism lights up the eyes of CEE members as they speak enthusiastically about the future of A–G in the LAUSD and the need for CEE to remain persistent and committed to ensuring that the policy is implemented correctly. CEE has attempted to find a balance between utilizing its expertise in grassroots strategies and delving into the novel world of policy implementation. Although “most of CEE is not in a position to provide leadership around policy implementation” according to Retana, close alliances with organizations and individuals who do have implementation expertise (such as Dr. Linda Murray and Russlynn Ali of the Education Trust-West and Maria Casillas of Families in Schools) and with...
those who can offer direct access to an often inaccessible district (such as Mónica García, who was elected with the strong support of CEE to fill Huizar’s vacant seat on the Board of Education in March 2006) will allow CEE to move more confidently into the uncharted waters of policy implementation. As far as sticking to what CEE does best, coalition leaders as well as some LAUSD board members have expressed that CEE must continue to be the bridge between the district and the community by bringing community feedback about A–G implementation to the board, encouraging students and the community to be fully engaged in the A–G implementation process, and holding the district accountable for equitable policy-making and implementation.

As CEE sorts out a new role that will likely combine its expertise in organizing and accountability with strengths yet to be discovered, coalition members have already gathered for several planning meetings and formed new committees to address the coalition’s new fundraising, research, and infrastructure needs. Since passage of the A–G resolution, CEE has received an additional $1.5 million grant from the Gates Foundation (January 2007) and a $500,000 grant from the Irvine Foundation (December 2006) that have allowed the coalition to amplify its A–G work and organize itself into five regional collaboratives: the Belmont Education Collaborative (BEC), Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative (BHLC), Valley Educational Collaborative (VEC), South Los Angeles Education Collaborative, and East Los Angeles Education Collaborative. While awaiting the official launch of collaboratives in South and East Los Angeles and coordinating efforts in three already-existing collaboratives (BHLC, BEC, and VEC), CEE has begun an intensive strategic planning process in the hope that well-coordinated regional efforts will lay a solid foundation for equitable educational opportunity across the county. CEE still struggles with navigating the unfamiliar post-policy territory, but the coalition’s foothold seems to become steadier as each month passes, each planning meeting is attended, and each progression in implementation is made.

**What Needs To Happen?**

While the details of just how CEE will manage the complicated and essential tasks that lie ahead have not been solidified, coalition members nonetheless speak emphatically about what must happen in the district to ensure the success of the resolution they fought so zealously to pass. The most obvious need involves the allocation and distribution of district resources to facilitate an effective implementation. Although a cost estimate for the reform has not been determined by the district, Board Member Mike Lansing estimated that A–G could cost up to $100 million to implement. “If this is going to be a true mandate, we have to put funding with it,” said Lansing in 2005 following the adoption of the resolution (Hayasaki, 2005). Contrary to what the district and skeptics may stress, the Education Trust-West (2005) analyzed data from the California Department of Education and concluded:

> Some might argue that ensuring that every student has access to the A–G curriculum may be morally right, but practically impossible. The reality of limited school budgets and teacher shortages (which are essentially the same thing given that teacher salaries typically make up 80 percent of a school's budget) tends to halt any conversations about reform. While it's true that California schools and districts could use more resources, the fact is that LAUSD's high schools already have nearly all of the teachers they need to teach the A–G curriculum to all students. (p. 1)

In fact, according to the Education Trust-West, 61 percent of LAUSD high schools either already have all the teachers they need or would need two or fewer additional teachers to provide every student
with the A–G curriculum, but they aren’t teaching the right classes. Such teacher “under-utilization6 wastes teacher talent as much as it wastes student talent” (Education Trust-West, 2005, p. 1). The district must be willing to examine its resources and realign personnel assignments with the needs of implementing a rigorous A–G curriculum.

With effective A–G implementation still in serious question, implementation must first focus on demonstrating success within smaller pilot efforts before large-scale replication of A–G can occur. Pilot programs occurring in the San Fernando Valley (Polytechnic, Kennedy, and Sylmar High Schools), Pico-Union (Belmont High School), East Los Angeles (Garfield and Roosevelt High Schools), and South Los Angeles (Crenshaw and Fremont High Schools) will attempt to align elementary, middle, and high school curricula in school feeder patterns as CEE’s regional collaboratives work “hands-on” with parents, students, teachers, and school administration to implement A–G. Such efforts will attempt to shift the campus culture of traditionally “failing” schools in order to promote the expectation that all students can attend and succeed in college. Retana stated, “If we can demonstrate that [A–G] can be adequately and effectively implemented in the worst schools, then there’s no excuse it can’t happen in other schools.” Former Board President Huizar stressed the importance of this strategy: “[Efforts] need to be dispersed so that some are focused on individual schools themselves. That’s where the accountability comes. We’re too focused on the central administration. I would urge CEE to focus on the school level, keep them accountable, work with them.”

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6 According to the Education Trust-West, “teacher under-utilization” occurs when teachers who are qualified to teach intermediate algebra and geometry are instead teaching pre-algebra and beginning algebra because higher level classes are not available in schools.

Engaging parents—the “x-factor” according to Maria Casillas—will also be crucial to the success of A–G implementation. According to several CEE members, parents have been “absent from the district table” for too long, resulting in a lack of urgency for the district to enact any real change. Such disenfranchisement of parents seems to continue with regard to A–G implementation, despite the presence of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) President Scott Folsom, a Caucasian, on the A–G Advisory Committee. Community stakeholders wonder when the 85 percent of non-White parents who are repeatedly excluded from district conversations will have adequate representation in decision-making related to A–G implementation. “Parents are only called upon when [the district] believes it is absolutely necessary, not because parents are believed to be key,” Goldie Buchanan criticized. Buchanan’s group, the African American Parent Community Coalition for Education Equity, as well as Families In Schools, continue their work to remedy this reality through the engagement and training of parents so that they become aware of the educational inequity facing their children and learn to utilize their voices to demand equity and hold the district accountable for providing it. Both organizations have training programs designed to inform parents of the A–G requirements and what their children must know and experience to go to college. “People must understand the importance of parent training,” Buchanan emphasized. “Community groups [like CEE] can be the push, but parents—who are knowledgeable and vocal—must be the pull.”

Beyond parental involvement, other accountability systems must be developed and implemented to pressure the district to adhere to its 2005 resolution. A skeptical high school senior, who was heavily involved with organizing students for the A–G campaign in South Los Angeles, referred to the district’s implementation of A–G: “They said they’ll do it; they have to keep their
word or we’ll protest again.” Yet community groups have repeatedly discovered that what the district says is not often what it does. Perhaps the presence of a community coalition dedicated to A–G is enough to hold the district accountable as CEE did last year, but Retana believes that the commitment of individual organizations is more important than the mere existence of CEE: “If individual organizations are committed and they want to [effect change] through CEE or outside of CEE, they can make a bigger difference because there’s that level of commitment. Is it in Community Coalition’s strategic plan over the next five years to ensure that A–G is implemented? Is it in United Way’s strategic plan? Is it in InnerCity Struggle’s? Where does A–G fit into each organization’s vision?”

Despite the truth of Retana’s statement, past efforts by individual organizations have not been able to achieve the impact made by the large CEE coalition in just ten short months, and perhaps this factor has contributed to the slow movement on A–G implementation thus far. In order to introduce maximum accountability into the A–G equation, CEE will most likely need to collectively develop strategies to hold the district to its word. CEE’s former Communications Committee has already reconvened informally to discuss what kind of media pressure it can use to hold the district accountable, a strategy that proved particularly successful during the ten-month A–G policy campaign and will likely work again. “Essentially, if the district is doing a great job we’ll highlight positive stories, and if the district is not doing a good job, we’ll highlight the signs of concern,” Melvin described. According to United Way’s Masen Davis, such media attention will be crucial to keeping A–G in the spotlight “so it doesn’t get lost among new, emerging issues.” The more visible an issue, the more attention the district will likely give to it and the more quickly it will respond. In addition, CEE has pressured the district to release a set of benchmarks to measure progress on A–G implementa-

The Future of Educational Reform in Los Angeles

Despite the passage of this unprecedented instructional reform in June 2005 and concerted efforts to implement A–G, what becomes obvious from the decades-long struggle for educational equity and progressive reform in the LAUSD is that Los Angeles is still far from the end of its journey. While countless opportunities—including the A–G resolution—have been presented for the district to progress toward providing a rigorous education, the LAUSD will inevitably continue to face distinct challenges that threaten its ability to equitably prepare its students for the 21st century.

Debate surrounding a recent reform effort illustrates an ongoing conflict that will likely plague the LAUSD for months to come. With the final outcome of Assembly Bill 1381 and “mayoral takeover” on the horizon, the
LAUSD continues to be a breeding ground for political battles between Mayor Villaraigosa and district leadership. Following initial passage of the bill by the California legislature in August 2006, litigation was threatened by opponents, including the LAUSD Board of Education, the California School Boards Association, and the California PTA. In December 2006, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Dzintra Janavs ruled the bill unconstitutional and later denied Villaraigosa’s request to implement portions of the legislation while the case went through the appeals process. If AB 1381 eventually experiences success in providing the mayor a more influential role in the district, the resulting shift in district governance introduces the opportunity for a cultural transformation within the district and the opportunity for another powerful voice to champion efforts for equity in education. Yet as Villaraigosa battles the district for control, the distraction of adult politics will most likely continue to detract from real change efforts. Reflecting on these heated political debates that unfortunately seem to be commonplace when it comes to education reform in Los Angeles, Sandy Mendoza asked her fellow Steering Committee members: “When will the voices of parents and students, the shareholders and the stakeholders of the district, start to weigh in?”

The truth in Mendoza’s statement is chilling, as district conversations surrounding most initiatives and reform efforts too often mistake adult priorities for the true needs of students and parents. Yet reformers have at least one reason to remain optimistic: Despite the possible setback of adult politicking, the A–G resolution in Los Angeles has set an important precedent for other districts in the county to begin raising the bar for its students. Following Los Angeles’ lead, community efforts demanding A–G have sprung up in districts across Los Angeles County, including the Long Beach Unified School District and the Montebello Unified School District, which successfully adopted an A–G policy in September 2006. These districts and other districts across the state and even nationwide now look to Los Angeles for guidance and to discover the lessons that allowed such a monumental reform to be successful in one of the largest school districts in the country. In fact, CEE spokespeople have repeatedly been asked to share their story and were able to present the A–G campaign during a 2006 national summit organized in Boston by the Education Trust. “They’re hungry to learn what happened in Los Angeles,” Russlynn Ali stated.

**LESSONS FROM THE PERFECT STORM**

The success of the A–G movement in the LAUSD demonstrates the “perfect storm” of characters, campaigning, climate, and context that if altered in any way could have produced significantly different results. Recalling the success of the A–G movement, Sanchez emphasized that reform movements rarely experience the effective integration of research, media, and mobilization like the CEE campaign. The synergy created by this fusion of factors led to an unprecedented movement and victory for instructional reform in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the lessons from which may hopefully provide guidance for reformers involved in future movements for social equity across the country.

**Historical Precedent**

“When we showed up at the board in 2004 with this demand [for A–G], it wasn’t the first time the board had heard it,” Retana recalled. “It wasn’t like [A–G] had come out of nowhere. There was some kind of precedent.” Indeed, the Education Trust-West and other research institutions like UCLA/IDEA and UC/ACCORD had previously presented A–G data to the LAUSD Board of
Education. The national and statewide movement for more rigor and college preparation in high schools was also beginning to catch on in Los Angeles. The spread of this movement became coupled with a growing dissatisfaction with the state of Los Angeles’ public educational system and the more visible presence of community-based organizations like Community Coalition, InnerCity Struggle, and AAP/CCEE fighting for educational equity on behalf their economically disadvantaged and ethnic-minority memberships. Education had become a front and center issue that could no longer be ignored in Los Angeles. “As a whole, the LAUSD was under the microscope and pretty vulnerable to attack at that time,” said Luis Sanchez of InnerCity Struggle. This historical precedent created a platform upon which CEE could balance its demands and opened the door for A–G to enter the district. Retana stressed the importance of historical precedent for any social movement: “I think as grassroots movements come together and address issues, they’ll be more successful with issues that have a history of recent organizing and intentions.”

**Political Landscape**

The political landscape in Los Angeles also provided a backdrop that was particularly receptive to an educational reform movement. Not only did the 2005 mayoral race between Antonio Villaraigosa and incumbent James K. Hahn bring increased attention to the state of education in Los Angeles, but the threat of mayoral takeover of the district following Villaraigosa’s election placed the Board of Education in a “hot seat.” The Board of Education was forced to combat its possible dissolution by demonstrating district progress and responsiveness to community needs. The dynamics of the Board of Education and other city offices also contributed to a particularly facilitating political landscape by forcing elected officials to take a stand for A–G. José Huizar, who had planned to run for the Los Angeles City Council, saw an opportunity for a strong victory to complete his term as president of the Board of Education and was able to garner enough community support to usher him into a city council seat. Remaining Board of Education members, like Marlene Canter and Jon Lauritzen, understood the president’s position would need to be filled upon Huizar’s departure and signed on to A–G when they saw the overwhelming community support for the change in policy. Canter eventually triumphed over Lauritzen with CEE’s endorsement that was promised upon Canter’s voicing of her support for the A–G resolution. Former Superintendent Romer, unbeknownst to the public, was in the midst of planning his retirement from the district and, similar to Huizar, was looking to close his career on a positive note. These political decisions combined with the support of political figures like Councilmember Alex Padilla and Senator Richard Alarcón created a landscape that made it difficult for the Board of Education to deny A–G to its constituents.

The importance of this political landscape was never taken for granted by CEE leaders. The coalition recognized that oftentimes it was walking on thin ice and that one wrong step could send its efforts crashing into the freezing water below. When Huizar left the Board of Education for the city council shortly following the passage of the A–G resolution, CEE worried that the coalition no longer had a crusader on the Board of Education who would continue to fight for effective implementation of the new A–G policy. Mónica García, still in a close battle with UTLA member Chris Arellano for Huizar’s empty seat, had not yet claimed her place on the board. “We had to be very careful,” recalls Dr. Mendoza. “If anything had gone wrong, how would CEE be able to work within the district? CEE couldn’t afford to alienate itself.”
CEE Composition and Interaction: Strength Lies in Numbers, But Not Numbers Alone

After years of working in isolation to no avail, education reformers finally joined forces to achieve a feat that no organization had been able to accomplish alone. While the success of CEE highlights the truth in the cliché that strength lies in numbers, what was particularly special about the coalition was not only its large membership, but also its diversity, focus, and cohesion. With respect to the group’s diversity, the organizations that became essential members of CEE represented both Black and Brown populations, had an assorted repertoire of experience in education, and spanned the vast geography of Los Angeles County. In addition to diversity in ethnicity, expertise, and geography, CEE “had representation from academia, community organizations, the school district, politicians, students, parents” and virtually every sector that held a stake in the education of Los Angeles youth, said Buchanan. Such diversity in membership allowed CEE to develop strategic relationships within diverse sectors. Luis Sanchez commented, “ABC had institutional relationships, like United Way, and then United Way brought in folks to support the campaign that never would have supported it if it was just Community Coalition and InnerCity Struggle…. On the other hand, [InnerCity Struggle’s] relationships with labor helped out too. We had a good relationship with the new leadership of UTLA, who was against the resolution, but we got them to back off and be silent opposition.” Partial responsibility for such strategic diversity in CEE falls to Melvin (ABC) and Retana (Community Coalition), who organized the initial HSHA meeting in June 2004. According to Melvin, “Anyone who wants to do [policy reform] has to be really thoughtful in identifying all the different people who have a stake in a policy and determining when and how to organize them.”

While CEE’s membership was diverse, its focus certainly was not. Garcia speculated, “There had been many organizations working on this kind of agenda for many, many years, but what made it different this time was that we had leadership in multiple agencies all looking in the same direction and willing to work on [the issue] right then. It was a priority for everyone at the table.” Indeed, CEE’s clear focus on a single issue of importance throughout the entire campaign allowed the coalition to avoid distraction by other issues. Many CEE members echoed Garcia’s sentiment and again credited the leadership of Retana and Melvin with keeping the coalition focused on A–G. “In a lot of ways, I think they held us together and kept the group on task during our meetings,” said one CEE member.

With so many diverse organizations focusing together on a single cause, CEE had to “figure out how to fit everyone together,” in Buchanan’s words. This task proved relatively easy as a unique cohesion began to develop among CEE members. Many of CEE’s members already had a track record of working together, which produced a foundation of trust upon which CEE could build. “Trust helped to move our work more quickly,” Garcia recalled. “It allowed us to create an honest and safe space for brainstorming, quality thinking, and a challenging of ideas….It was great to have that authenticity.” According to Melvin, the group was also able to avoid splintering due to the democratic processes that were used during the formation of CEE’s mission and goals. “I don’t think we have ever moved forward without total consensus from the group,” said Melvin. During such consensus-building, ABC, Community Coalition and other members of the Steering Committee never imposed their own focus, but rather provided full information, allowed for full discussion, and encouraged each organization to engage fully and to contribute in its own unique way.
Groups like InnerCity Struggle, AAP/CCEE, ABC, and Community Coalition contributed expertise in community mobilization and possessed legitimacy within the community. A nationally recognized organization, United Way brought political credibility and powerful stakeholders to the cause. Mónica García, from the office of Board of Education President José Huizar, provided a crucial link to the decision-making body and, as a former school counselor, brought knowledge of the internal environment of schools and the issues concerning access to college. As a former educator and superintendent, Maria Casillas from Families in Schools possessed knowledge and experience working within the education system. And institutions like UC/ACCORD and the Education Trust-West added research expertise to the group. “It was important for us to distribute the power and responsibilities within the coalition” to capitalize on all of these diverse strengths of CEE’s membership, recalled Melvin. The cohesion that resulted from this democratic and inclusive process, and the trust upon which CEE was built, seemed to fuel the work and contributed to the success of the coalition in its campaign.

An Armed Coalition

Dr. Jeannie Oakes (UCLA/IDEA), who provided invaluable research expertise to CEE, remarked that the coalition “became as credible as I’ve ever seen grassroots organizations to be because they were so armed with knowledge and evidence.” Without a doubt, CEE was able to capitalize on the involvement of research institutions like UCLA/IDEA and UC/ACCORD to gather some very compelling local statistics related to educational opportunity in district high schools. Previous studies by the Education Trust-West, as well as studies conducted in the San Jose Unified School District, helped expose many of the myths surrounding rigorous curricula and highly supported CEE’s argument that a rigorous curriculum enhances the achievement of all students. The strength of CEE’s research “arms” emanated from the coalition’s effective use and presentation of this data, whether through Dr. Mendoza’s undeniably potent GIS maps, Families In Schools’ The Schools We Deserve pamphlets that were disseminated as learning tools, or the multiple other innovative CEE creations.

Not only was such research effective in building a strong, countywide coalition through the education of parents and students, but it also had a noticeable effect on the outcome of the board vote in June 2005, at least from the perspective of Board Member Mike Lansing. “Having a bunch of people march around a room, does that really motivate me? Not so much. It was hearing the issues…and getting educated on what the motion was trying to deliver.” A large part of “hearing the issues” consisted of presentations by CEE-affiliated researchers who were able to connect A–G to vocational education, one of Lansing’s and fellow Board Member Jon Lauritzen’s priorities on the governing body. Without the research demonstrating that employers in skilled job sectors are increasingly hiring employees with higher levels of high school math and English, CEE may have lost these two critical votes.

A Community-Driven Approach

Perhaps most crucial to the success of CEE’s A–G campaign, the goals of the coalition never wavered from the community-driven purpose for which the group first came together. From the initial moment of the campaign, CEE leaders stood alongside community members, parents, and students and sought their feedback and input into CEE strategies and decisions. Retana described this unwavering dedication to the community:
“I don’t think [CEE is] the ‘voice’ for our membership. Our membership is the voice. Otherwise, what makes us different from policymakers advocating on the behalf of those who are directly affected? We’re not in the schools. We’re not taking the classes. It’s not our lives that are affected by this policy. The reason [our organizations] exist is because people brought [this issue] to our attention.”

Because CEE was so community-driven, its strategies revolved around direct involvement of community members in its campaign. Russlynn Ali, who has witnessed educational reform movements across the state, voiced that the community organizing that occurred for A–G in Los Angeles was “unlike any community organizing in the nation.” Had hundreds of community members not shown up at the district office—on three separate occasions—the policy might not have been given the attention it deserved from the Board of Education. “You never see thousands of parents and students outside the district office on the street...not since the equity battles of the sixties and seventies,” recalled Sanchez, who believes that the presence of the masses changed the dynamic of the final vote. “The Board had to vote knowing the public opinion and knowing there would be repercussions based on their votes.” Ali supplemented Sanchez’s point: “Board members really struggled with whether or not kids could do this, but when they heard from parents and kids themselves [they re-examined that belief]. This was the first time that so many people demanded rigor. [The demands weren’t about] anti-assessments or anti-accountability, but pro-accountability and pro-rigor.”

Despite CEE’s success in engaging community stakeholders, Retana voiced one criticism related to the coalition’s missed opportunity to create a space for community members to strategically discuss the issues of educational inequity together. He rhetorically asked, “What are the benefits to bringing South L.A. members together with our East L.A. members and our Pico-Union members to say, ‘Besides just showing up at an action together, we’re going to make some strategic decisions together?’ CEE should be the vehicle through which they can have that discussion. The city doesn’t create that space. The county doesn’t. Districts don’t.” Retana does not discount the value of what CEE did accomplish with respect to community involvement, however: “No matter how many tactics on the inside we used—having Mónica García there, having José Huizar pushing it—it wouldn’t have mattered if we didn’t have parents and students at the table mobilized to make an impact. You take that out and you don’t have anything.”

The future of A–G appears to also depend on this factor of community engagement, according to Dr. Linda Murray, who has already experienced the idiosyncrasies of implementation in the San Jose Unified School District. “Unless the community really becomes aware of what it means to be college ready,” she emphasized, “it can’t be done, it can’t be sustained, and it will get derailed.”

### EPILOGUE

So just how will the A–G Story end? Will disengagement lead to derailment and the status quo? Or will the Greater Los Angeles community build on the momentum generated by the CEE coalition and ensure every high school student graduates ready for college and prepared to enter the workforce?
To write the final chapter in which true educational equity is achieved, we must set aside politics and individual differences, and continue to work as one community toward improving our schools and the lives of students. We must maximize strategic partnerships, create spaces for honest dialogue, seize opportunities for positive change, and constantly call for accountability from those entrusted with educating our youth.

Already, the perfect storm of events that led the LAUSD to pass the A-G Resolution is helping to shape an environment that can facilitate the implementation of rigorous curriculum. In May 2007, AB 1381, which would have given Mayor Villaraigosa and other local mayors a larger voice in district governance, was declared unconstitutional by state courts. While controversial, the defeated bill had the positive effect of generating new levels of dialogue between civic leaders and the district, and in securing acknowledgements from both sides that better collaboration is needed to address school performance.

Following the retirement of Roy Romer, Admiral David L. Brewer III was named the 46th superintendent of the LAUSD in October 2006. In his first State of the Schools address, Superintendent Brewer stressed the importance of parent engagement, and proposed forming an Innovation Division for Educational Achievement that would empower parents, students, community groups, and teachers to design and implement reform at the individual school level.

Through recent elections, the Board of Education also gained three new members who have expressed a commitment to working with the community, the mayor’s office, and families to ensure students are prepared for college, work, and life. With the superintendent’s call for parent engagement, a receptive Board of Education, and a mayor focused on the quality of public education, conditions look favorable for ensuring that the promise of educational equity becomes a reality.

In the end, we all have a stake in seeing L.A.’s students graduate with the math, language, and analytical skills demanded by the 21st century, global marketplace. Whether it’s businesses that prosper from an educated workforce, future workers whose knowledge and skills can translate into higher-wage jobs, or communities that thrive from fewer dropouts and a more robust economy, everyone benefits when all youth finish high school primed for success.

As The A–G Story has shown, by working together as a community of parents, students, business leaders, elected officials, activists and educators, Greater Los Angeles can become a model for educational equity, and create a public school system where every student gains the 21st century skills to succeed and the chance to choose his or her own future.
REFERENCES  Note: Some links may no longer be active


### RELATED LINKS & WEBSITES

African American Parent Community
Coalition for Education Equity
[http://aapccee.org/home.htm](http://aapccee.org/home.htm)

Alliance for a Better Community
[http://www.afabc.org](http://www.afabc.org)

Community Coalition
[http://www.ccsapt.org](http://www.ccsapt.org)

Education Trust-West
[http://www.edtrustwest.org](http://www.edtrustwest.org)

Families in Schools
[http://www.familiesinschools.org](http://www.familiesinschools.org)

InnerCity Struggle
[http://www.innercitystruggle.org](http://www.innercitystruggle.org)

Hon. José Huizar Former President of the LAUSD Board of Education, current Member of the Los Angeles City Council
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UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access
[http://www.ucaccord.org](http://www.ucaccord.org)

United Way of Greater Los Angeles
[http://www.unitedwayla.org](http://www.unitedwayla.org)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to the Latino Scorecard Steering Committee for their vision in recognizing the importance of working together for education equity. We humbly thank Alliance for a Better Community, Community Coalition, Education Trust-West, Families In Schools, InnerCity Struggle, UCLA/IDEA, and the many individuals, families, and organizations who supported the work of CEE and the A–G Campaign – this is your story!

www.unitedwayla.org
APPENDIX A

HSHA Policy Agenda
High School for High Achievement Community Taskforce
Policy Agenda

I. Summary
The High School for High Achievement (HSHA) Community Taskforce asserts that the purpose of high school is to prepare all students to be engaged, responsible participants in our civic and social spaces. High schools achieve this purpose by ensuring that every student graduates prepared for entry and success in universities and the 21st century workforce. The HSHA Taskforce seeks to mobilize Los Angeles’ community and leaders toward ensuring that Los Angeles’ high schools meet this objective by establishing a policy agenda and coordinating collaborative action toward policy goals.

Because the A-G requirements serve as the minimum courses required for admission into a California four year university and provide a rigorous learning agenda that prepares students for any post-secondary education and workforce decision, the HSHA’s primary policy goal is to ensure that the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) School Board approves the A-G curriculum as part of its high school graduation requirement. In order for such a policy to be successful, LAUSD must adopt and promote a system-wide belief—evidenced through practice—that all students can learn and excel in a rigorous learning environment. To do so, LAUSD must appropriately assess the needs of students, teachers, parents and schools—as well as those of the community and business interests—as they relate to all students successfully completing the A-G graduation requirement so as to ensure that the District’s focus and resources are aligned to meet these needs.

HSHA seeks to work with the district to develop a plan and timeline for implementation that is inclusive of the multiple stakeholders involved in the adoption of the A-G curriculum as part of the District’s graduation requirement and the necessary shifting of secondary education focus and resources to ensure the policy’s successful implementation.

II. Background

Opportunity for Change

The LAUSD is in the midst of a rare and massive school construction campaign that in a few years, and for the first time in three decades, offers the opportunity for every student to attend a school in their neighborhood that operates on a traditional calendar. In particular, LAUSD seeks to create small learning environments within each of its comprehensive high schools given the proven the benefits of small leaning academies. The HSHA Taskforce recommends that we link this monumental school construction campaign with a quality education curriculum that sets and delivers the highest educational opportunities. The A-G curriculum is central to an outstanding high school curriculum.

A-G Definition

The A-G curriculum is the minimum coursework required to be eligible for admission to the University of California and the California State University systems. This represents only a portion of the entrance requirements for UC or CSU. California’s four year universities have determined that this combination of courses in Social Studies, English, Mathematics, Lab Science, Foreign Language, Visual and Performing Arts and other college preparatory Elective Courses provide the minimum academic breadth to succeed in a university setting. Attachment A provides the A-G course definition and years required.
A-G for Post-secondary Education and Workforce Preparation

Every student that graduates high school must be prepared for post-secondary education and the skill-driven technical workplace. Completion of the A-G courses is critical to properly educating our youth for future success as members of a 21st century workforce and engaged participants in Los Angeles’ civic society. Increasingly, students who enter directly into the labor market after high school must be prepared for the high level of skills required in today’s high-performance, high-growth jobs. In an economy in which living wage, entry-level jobs are increasingly demanding post-secondary experience, requiring the A-G coursework of every graduate seems a reasonable benchmark. For example, a machine operator must know algebra and geometry to calculate how much material is removed when one drills a hole with a diameter of 2 cm through a block of metal that is 3 cm thick? Bilingual speaking ability is critical to current sales and services industries: the A-G coursework requires two years of foreign language study. Completion of the A-G coursework serves as an indicator of a student’s preparation for success in the university setting and for success in the high skilled workplace.

LAUSD Graduation Requirements vs. A-G Requirements

LAUSD currently requires students to complete 230 credits (equivalent to 23 1-year courses) to graduate from one of its high schools. The A-G curriculum consists of 150 credits (equivalent to 15 1-year courses). Figure 1 highlights the type and number of classes that LAUSD and the A-G require and then details the difference between the two curriculums. Although LAUSD requires 80 credits more than the A-G requirement for its students to graduate high school, LAUSD falls 30 credits or three 1-year courses short of providing every student the full A-G curriculum. In adding an additional year of College Preparatory Mathematics and 2 years of a Foreign Language to its high school graduation requirement, LAUSD ensures that all of its high school graduates complete the requirements for entering into a California four year university as well as being prepared for the high-skill 21st century workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>LAUSD Graduation Requirement (years)</th>
<th>A-G Requirement (years)</th>
<th>Difference between LAUSD &amp; A-G Requirement (years)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A -- History/Social Science</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B -- English</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C -- Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D -- Laboratory Science</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E -- Foreign Language</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F -- Visual &amp; Performing Arts</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G -- College Prep Elective</strong></td>
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<td>-6</td>
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<td>Physical Education</td>
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<td>-2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: “A-G course Accessibility and Completion,” a report to the Alliance for Better Community, May 7, 2004
A-G Completion Rates by Ethnicity and Region

42% of LAUSD’s high school graduates completed the A-G curriculum in 2003/04. This compares to 37% for the County and 33% for the State of California. Figure 2 shows the A-G completion across racial and ethnic groups with LAUSD, the County and State.

**Figure 2: Percentage of High School Graduates Completing the A-G Requirements, by Race/Ethnicity, 2002-03**

As can be seen, Hispanic and African American high school graduates score lower than any other group by a significant margin.

Attachment B enumerates the number of graduates and percentage completing A-G by race and gender for each of LAUSD’s 53 comprehensive high schools. Examination of the chart reveals that even within a school, African American and Latino students do not complete the A-G courses at the same rates of their White and Asian counterparts.

**Challenges to A-G Completion**

While LAUSD asserts that all high school students have access to the A-G curriculum, a number of variables prevent students from enrolling in and successfully completing the entire curriculum. Some of the barriers that the HSHA Taskforce seeks to further explore and partner with LAUSD to address include:

- **Should Passing Be Determined By A Grade Of “C” Or “D”?** LAUSD passes students with a grade of “D” or better in each of the required high school graduation courses, including its college preparatory classes. The University of California and California
State University systems require students to complete every A-G requirement with a grade of “C” or better. An LAUSD student may erroneously be under the impression that he or she has satisfied an A-G requirement by taking a required course and passing with a “D” instead of a “C”. LAUSD must align it minimum grade requirement with that of the UC/CSUs to create a single standard passing grade and avoid student and parent confusion.

- **Does LAUSD Have Sufficient Qualified Teachers?** It is questionable as to whether LAUSD has sufficient qualified teachers in the areas of math, sciences, and foreign language to accommodate all students meeting the A-G requirements.

- **Does Every High School Have Sufficient Facilities To Ensure That All Students Can Access And Complete The A-G Courses?** It is uncertain whether or not LAUSD high schools have sufficient Lab Science facilities to accommodate all students meeting the “D” requirement of two lab sciences.

- **Multi-Track Calendars Don’t Equitably Offer Rigorous Courses To Every Student.** Two-thirds of LAUSD schools operate on multi-track calendars due to large student populations and insufficient campus facilities. LAUSD does not require that each track provide the same set of courses. In fact, schools tend to cluster qualified teachers and college preparatory classes, such as AP and Honors, on a single track. Therefore, students not on the college-preparatory track have limited access to rigorous college-preparatory courses.

- **ELL Students Aren’t Provided Equitable Access To College Preparatory Courses.** In LAUSD, English Language Learner (ELL) students are provided a schedule that hinders access to the entire A-G curriculum. ELL students comprise of 44% of LAUSD’s student population. LAUSD contends that many ELL students require additional year(s) to complete high school proficient in English and the other academic disciplines. LAUSD must assess how we can ensure that every student, despite language status, access and complete the A-G coursework within the four years of high school.

### III. State and San Jose Experience Implementing A-G as the Default Curriculum

There have been three unsuccessful attempts in the California legislature to pass legislation on including the A-G curriculum within California’s high school graduation requirement. Senator Richard Alarcon introduced SB1731 in 2002, SB383 in 2003 and SB1795 in 2004 which sought to establish A-G as part of the state’s high school graduation requirements or to set up a process for doing so. On each occasion, the Senate education committee did not support the full concept of requiring the A-G coursework for every high school graduate.

The San Jose Unified School District serves as a model for systemic transformation in implementing a curriculum that prepares all students for post-secondary education and workforce success. Nearly 10 years ago and under a federal consent decree to address its wide achievement gap that persisted across students by race, the San Jose Unified School District (SJUSD) began working to establish the A-G curriculum as part of its high school graduation requirement. In 2002, the first class of students graduated with the increased college preparatory coursework. SJUSD experienced significant increases in the number of students completing the coursework across all races. Between 1998 and 2001, the percent of high school graduates who satisfied the
A-G requirements was steady at about 40%. In 2002, nearly 65% of high school graduates completed the course requirements. In addition, Figure 3 demonstrates that A-G completion rose across all races, and the gap between races is being closed.

![Figure 3: SJUSD Graduates with A-G Completion, by Race/Ethnicity](image)

Source: California Department of Education, [http://data1.cde.ca.gov](http://data1.cde.ca.gov); retrieved 10-6-04.

Despite speculations that increasing the rigor of a coursework would cause overwhelmed students to drop-out of high school, SJUSD has experienced a steady drop-out rate over this period. In fact, its attendance rate has increased since implementing A-G to a remarkable 96%.

**IV. Parent Involvement**

Research demonstrates that parental involvement in children’s education is critical for increased student achievement. While most parents want their children to do well in school, poverty, low levels of education, immigrant status and cultural differences strongly influence the nature and levels of parent and school interaction (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001). The High School for High Achievement Community Taskforce seeks to outreach to parents to provide them education on how they can support their child’s academic success and advocate that local districts, schools and teachers provide each child equitable access to the rigorous A-G coursework that is a key element to their future success as members of our civic and social spaces.
APPENDIX B

CEE Power Analyses Capturing Changing Community & Political Landscapes Influencing A–G Campaign
APPENDIX B
POWER ANALYSIS SLIDES

To view this presentation as a PowerPoint Slideshow, click on the Microsoft PowerPoint file icon called “Power Analysis Slides.pps” at the start of this CD.
APPENDIX C

Huizar-Lauritzen-Tokofsky A–G Resolution
June 14, 2005
Revised Huizar AND Lauritzen – Resolution to Create Educational Equity in Los Angeles Through the Implementation of the A-G Course Sequence as Part of the High School Graduation Requirement

Whereas, The Board of Education has committed to become one of the best urban school districts in the nation and is committed to eliminating the Achievement Gap amongst all of its students; and

Whereas, all LAUSD students currently do not have a choice to pursue an array of options after high school since they are unable to enroll in a college preparatory coursework, commonly known as the A-G course sequence; and

Whereas, currently the LAUSD fails to properly educate a significant number of students and provide them with the skills necessary for success in life and the 21st Century workforce and successful implementation of the A-G graduation requirements will result in the improvement of educational outcomes at all levels of the K-12 system.

Whereas, in order for small learning communities to reach their objective of increasing the level of student achievement it is necessary for all students to complete a rigorous A-G course sequence; and

Whereas, the gap in completion of a course sequence that satisfies the A-G requirements between Latino, African American and White and Asian counterparts is severe and reflects inequity in the educational services provided: Only 15% Latino students, 21% of African American students, 36% of White students and 50% of Asian 1999-00 9th grade students that graduate from LAUSD High Schools four years later successfully completed the course sequence that satisfied the A-G requirements; and

Whereas, The A-G course sequence is a rigorous life readiness curriculum that does not guarantee college admission but rather allows students the choice to pursue post-secondary education, vocation/career technical education, a career, and other career options and has been shown to close the Achievement Gap, increase high school graduation, and reduce drop out rates; and

Whereas, the completion of the A-G course sequence in conjunction with a rigorous and relevant career and technical education can provide students a full array of post-secondary options; and

Whereas, Students that graduate from the district are unable to access internships and apprenticeships due to lack of preparation for the high skill vocational occupations of today’s labor market; and

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1 California Department of Education: [http://data.cde.ca.gov](http://data.cde.ca.gov)
Whereas, A coalition of local community-based organizations, leading research institutions, and civic leaders have formed the Communities for Educational Equity (CEE), a coalition committed to high school reform and improving the academic achievement of all students so that they are fully prepared for success and entry into universities and the 21\textsuperscript{st} century workplace; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, \textit{That the Board of Education directs the Superintendent to provide access to A-G courses beginning in the 2005-2006 school year to every student who requests enrollment in the A-G course sequence, provided that the necessary course requirements have been met.}

\textit{Resolved Further, That beginning in 2010 every student entering the 9\textsuperscript{th} grade must enroll the A-G course sequences in order to graduate from the Los Angeles Unified School District.}

\textit{Resolved Further, That special education students with severe disabilities will be eligible for a waiver beginning in the student’s individual education plan (IEP). In addition, this waiver will be available to all ELL students who enter high school at the 11\textsuperscript{th} or 12\textsuperscript{th} grade and do not have transcripts, and students choosing to take a Career and Technical Education sequence, that incorporates the CTE standards as adopted by the California State Board of Education. Students exercising this waiver, will complete an individual learning plan, with participation of parents/guardian and school counselor/administrator for the purpose of identifying an alternative, meaningful and relevant learning experience, meeting the existing 2005 district graduation requirements. Parents and students will be included in the development of an agreed upon individual learning plan.}

\textit{Resolved Further, That the implementation of the A-G course sequence as a graduation requirement will include necessary learning supports, realignment and dedication of resources necessary beginning early in a student’s education so that they are prepared to successfully complete the A-G course sequence at all grade levels from k-12, specific attention will be made at the critical transition years of 5\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} grades. These resources can be used to hire additional teachers and guidance counselors, reduce class size, lower counselor caseloads and institute district-wide outreach to parents and communities. The District will seek additional funding through legislation for needed resources.}

\textit{Resolved Further, That the Superintendent align and dedicate resources to support professional development that ensures all teachers are supported in researching, developing, and sharing rigorous, engaging, and culturally relevant curriculum and effective methods for the successful implementation of the A-G curriculum.}
Resolved Further, That the Superintendent will strengthen the vocational and career technical education program so that it is more aligned with A-G requirements and will better prepare students to meet the demands of today’s skill intensive 21st century labor market.

Resolved Further, That the Superintendent establish an A-G implementation committee that collaborates with the Communities for Educational Equity, employee and employer organizations, post-secondary institutions, and other stakeholders to incorporate community involvement in the development and implementation of the District’s strategy, paying specific attention to matters such as facilities, finance, personnel, curriculum and career and technical education;

Finally Be It Resolved, That the Superintendent report on or before October 31, and bi-annually on the progress made of this implementation with respect to student outcomes and district resource allocation. This report will include demographic data on a school site basis for all students selecting the “opt-out” provision that will be disaggregated by socio-economic status, race, gender, English Learner status, and Special Education status.
APPENDIX D

Media Articles Related To The A–G Campaign
Community Coalition Gets Long-Awaited Victory in School Curriculum

By Dennis Freeman
OW Staff Writer

For six years, the Community Coalition has fought a battle against the inequity in the educational system when it comes to providing opportunities for all students to go to college. On Tuesday, they finally got the victory they’ve been looking for.

In a 6-to-1 vote, with board member Marguerite LaMotte dissenting, the Los Angeles Unified School District Board voted to make it mandatory that college preparatory courses—called the A-G courses—be made available to all students.

LaMotte is the only African-American board member.

Those courses will be available to students who requests them during the 2006-07 school year. But beginning 2008, every student in the district, once they enter their freshman year in high school, will have access to those courses that will prepare them for college.

Starting in 2012, the A-G coursework will be implemented as part of the high school graduation requirement, beginning with its freshman class.

More that 400 students, parents and educators made their way to the board meeting. When the voting dropped, elation took over for those who have fought in the trenches for the past six years to get the bill passed.

“All the parents of the Community Coalition and students and those who worked on this for the last six years are jubilant,” said Marqueece Harris-Dawson, executive director of the Community Coalition.

The bill was written by board president Jose Huizar and co-authored by board members David Tokofsky and John Lauritzen.

Huizar said the A-G bill is a step in the right direction to make available all opportunities of education to all students in the district.

“The A-G Initiative is a bold and aggressive instructional reform that will change the culture of this district and improve the quality of education that this district offers every one of our students,” Huizar said. “This effort will open the doors of
opportunity to thousands of students who would otherwise be denied a full array of choices for their lives after high school.”

Both Tokofsky and Lauritzen said the move makes the district more accountable.

“We set high expectations tonight for both LAUSD and our students,” said Tokofsky. “We equally have the high expectations that Sacramento will not lower our expectations or funding for the A-G goals.”

College preparatory courses are usually null and void in South Los Angeles schools. They’re either not offered, or students don’t get the whole spectrum of courses they can take.

In suburbia areas in Los Angeles County, these type of courses are the norm. With the passage of this bill, it will soon become routine for schools in low-income and high-crime areas to have the same type of courses.

“We are building a movement to create the schools we deserve,” said Maria Casillas, president of Families in Schools. “The successful implementation of this initiative requires that we increase awareness of the opportunities, options and requirements among our parents and families.”

For Alberto Retana, a member of the Community Coalition, it’s been a long time coming.

“Today’s vote marks the landmark decision to raise expectations and challenge racial and class inequities in LAUSD,” he said. “Latino and African-American students and parents emerge victorious.”
Los Angeles Daily News

College-bound or not, kids need tough classes

By Russlynn Ali
Guest Columnist

Tuesday, May 24, 2005 - Today, the Los Angeles Unified School District will consider adopting the so-called "A-G" or college-prep curriculum for all high school students. It may seem counterintuitive, given recent reports of the LAUSD's high dropout rates, to have every student take on an extra year of math and two years of a foreign language, as required by the University of California and California State University systems. But it's actually common sense, and it's the right thing to do.

Naysayers, pointing out that not every child is college-bound, like to say the A-G curriculum shoves square pegs into round, college-prep holes. Not so. Today's work force demands are such that the courses required to get into college are the same ones needed to prepare young people for skilled jobs. Ready-for-work and ready-for-college mean the same thing in the 21st century economy.

In fact, we should stop characterizing A-G as college preparation and start calling it what it really is: life preparation.

Ask any business professionals, whether they're in high-tech fields or plumbing, and they'll tell you that to succeed in today's demanding economy, you need to have the same level of preparation that you would have for college - the same skills, the same courses taught with the same rigor. Sheet-metal workers today need to have algebra and geometry under their belts. And to master hydraulics, friction and electrical circuits, auto technicians better have their physics down.

Right now, not even one-fourth of all ninth-graders in the LAUSD have successfully completed the A-G curriculum. This low rate is primarily a problem of access, not ability. Student demand for these courses is enormous, according to hundreds of testimonials from young people of all races and income levels.

When we raise the bar for underperforming students, they rise to the challenge. When given the chance, even students who started out far behind the pack pass college-prep classes at the same rate they passed remedial classes, studies show. Freed from the dead weight of dumbed-down curricula and lowered expectations, these students thrive.
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When we raise the bar for underperforming students, they rise to the challenge. When given the chance, even students who started out far behind the pack pass college-prep classes at the same rate they passed remedial classes, studies show. Freed from the dead weight of dumbed-down curricula and lowered expectations, these students thrive.
Take San Jose Unified School District.

Seven years ago, this district, which has high percentages of low-income and minority students, began requiring high-school students to complete the A-G curriculum to earn a diploma. The result: Students' reading and math scores improved at rates higher than the state average. The achievement gap between Latino and white students narrowed significantly. And the graduation rate actually went up - not down.

San Jose's success story is being replicated at schools throughout California, including right here in Los Angeles. King/Drew Medical Magnet High School and Locke Senior High School are perfect examples.

The schools share similar demographics, with poverty rates above 60 percent and with nearly universal African-American and Latino student populations. Even though King/Drew serves only half as many students as Locke Senior High, it offers many more intermediate algebra, trigonometry and chemistry classes. In 2003, 99 percent of King/Drew graduates successfully completed A-G requirements, compared with only percent of Locke graduates.

High-school students are taking their life-prep schooling and running with it. Seventy-five percent of African-American college freshmen who complete an A-G or similar sequence of courses go on to graduate, compared with 45 percent for African-Americans overall. Similar findings hold true for Latino students.

There's a large segment of our society that believes poverty and race are destiny in education. But, as these success stories show, low achievement is not inscribed on the DNA of poor and minority children. The A-G curriculum is the single-most powerful way to banish the cycle of lowered expectations as self-fulfilling prophecies for our kids.

Los Angeles Unified should adopt the A-G curriculum because we owe every child - not just the ones who live in white, affluent neighborhoods - the opportunity to meet a standard that will offer the most choices in life.

Russlynn Ali is the executive director of Education Trust-West.
College Prep Idea Approved in L.A.

School board votes to require students, with some exceptions, to take classes needed to enter state universities. Some teachers object.

By Erika Hayasaki
Times Staff Writer

June 15, 2005

Over the vigorous objections of some teachers and vocational education leaders, the Los Angeles Board of Education approved a bold academic reform plan Tuesday that will require high school students to complete a set of college prep courses.

Standing outside the Los Angeles Unified School District's downtown headquarters with several hundred cheering parents, students and community members after the 6-1 vote, board President Jose Huizar called it a victory.

"Thousands upon thousands of children will now have the opportunity to attend college, and that is an opportunity that wasn't there for them for many years," said Huizar, who introduced the plan, which was co-sponsored by board members Jon Lauritzen and David Tokofsky.

Board member Marguerite LaMotte, who represents many of the schools that serve parents and students who support the plan, cast the lone dissenting vote.

LaMotte said she was skeptical of how the district would implement the plan, including whether it could hire enough teachers for the additional courses when many schools were already relying on substitutes to instruct classes.

"Too many of my students in my district will be negatively and adversely affected by this mandate," she told the crowd, which was filled with students wearing red and blue T-shirts that read "Let Me Choose My Future."

"In their best interest, and in the best interest of some of your siblings, I cast a 'no' vote," she said as the crowd booed.

LaMotte's concerns echoed those of teachers and other board members who worried that the plan would hurt students who were already struggling with coursework.

Board member Julie Korenstein said: "I think about all of the students who may not get
through high school because of this vote. I think about the students who may not get a diploma because of this vote."

Before voting "yes," Korenstein said she hoped "a mistake has not been made."

Beginning with the class of 2008, high school students will be required to complete the 15 courses needed for admission to the University of California or California State University systems unless they opt out.

They will be required to take four years of English, three years of math, two years of history, science and foreign language, and a year of visual and performing arts and advanced electives.

Under the plan, beginning with the class of 2012, all high school students will be required to complete those courses for graduation, except for some special education students, English learners and those who enroll in a career preparation program approved under state standards.

During a public hearing, Bell High School teacher Daniel Somoano asked the board to reject the plan, saying extra classes would not boost achievement.

"We need help. We don't need more classes," Somoano said. "Students are failing classes because they come in unprepared."

Vocational education supporters say the proposal will take away from their programs, which are designed mainly as an option for students who are not on the college track. They say because vocational programs have been reduced over the last decade, this plan will siphon resources from those courses.

Though a cost estimate has not been determined, board member Mike Lansing estimated that it could cost up to $100 million to implement.

"If this is going to be a true mandate, we have to put funding" with it, said Lansing, who asked the district to reevaluate the program's progress every three months. "Otherwise, it's just another un-funded mandate."

As the board deliberated, several hundred students and community members danced and rallied outside, chanting "Give us life prep, not a life sentence!"

Many were members of Communities For Educational Equity, a grass-roots organization that brought the idea to Huizar and schools Supt. Roy Romer a year ago.

Huizar said he pushed the proposal after hearing from students who complained about being tracked into "dead end" courses because more rigorous classes were full. They said overburdened counselors often did not have time to map out a college plan for them.

Luiz Sanchez, an organizer of the group, said by supporting the plan, the board accepted a challenge.
"Six months ago, the district wasn't even touching" the college prep issue, he said. "Now it is front and center."

Sanchez said that after months of rallies, church meetings and petitioning, the district has listened to community concerns. "Students," he said, "fought to make this possible."
Los Angeles Daily News

LAUSD adopts new standards
College-prep classes to be required

By Naush Boghossian
Staff Writer

Wednesday, June 15, 2005 - The Los Angeles Unified School District board on Tuesday approved a controversial plan to toughen graduation requirements -- a plan which requires all students to complete college-prep curriculum in order to get a diploma.

Amid hundreds of students wearing T-shirts that read "Let me choose my future," and chanting "Give us life prep, not a life sentence," outside the building, the board voted 6 to 1 to approve instituting the so-called "A-G" curriculum -- a series of 15 classes in English, math, science, foreign language and social studies.

Board member Marguerite LaMotte was the sole dissenter.

Jose Huizar, who championed the curriculum requirement, called it a profound high school reform that would have implications throughout the district, lifting it out of "perpetual mediocrity."

"This is one of the most significant reforms this district is embarking on in the last 20 years. The payoffs will be huge, the impacts will be huge," Huizar said after the vote. "Really what this is about is providing thousands of students an opportunity to attend college -- an opportunity denied to them with the current policies and practices."

The passage of the reform is a political win for Huizar, who announced his plans on May 25 to run for the Los Angeles City Council.

The A-G curriculum will be available to all students who request it in the 2006-07 school year, and it will be implemented slowly after that. By 2012, it will be mandatory for all students.

The University of California and the California State University systems require applicants to complete two years each of history/social studies, laboratory science, foreign language; three years of math; four years of English; one year of visual or performing arts; and one year of a college-preparatory elective.

LAUSD already requires most of these A-G courses to graduate with the exception of Algebra II and two years of foreign language.

Board members approved the policy after hours of discussion and expressing great reservation about whether the district has the resources to execute the requirement.
"I hope we don't create a greater dropout rate for L.A. Unified. I would strongly advise the board that if we find that students are being harmed, that there will be some means of taking corrective action," board member Julie Korenstein said. "For all of your sake and our sake here, I hope that a mistake has not been made."

The district has not yet determined the cost of implementing the requirement or how many additional teachers would need to be hired.

LaMotte urged her colleagues not to rush into a decision and questioned whether the district had the infrastructure in place to meet the basic academic needs.

"I think we need access to these higher-level courses, but I don't think we need to put any more barriers in the way of these students," said LaMotte, who represents south Los Angeles schools.

Some teachers urged the board not to approve the plan, as many LAUSD students are not meeting basic academic requirements. From LAUSD's class of 2003, only 36 percent of Latinos, 45 percent of African-Americans, and 52 percent of white students completed the college-prep A-G classes. The district has a high school dropout rate of 50 percent.

"Students are failing classes. Students are dropping out. We need help. We don't need more classes," said Daniel Somoano, a teacher at Bell High School.
Wednesday, June 15, 2005

LAUSD opts for tougher standards for graduation

Program requires a college prep focus but lets some students off the hook with parental approval. Students parade before board in support of plan, which takes effect in 2012.

By Melissa Milios

The Los Angeles Unified School Board on Tuesday threw its weight behind a plan to require all high school graduates, starting with the freshman class of 2012, to complete a 15-class sequence needed for entry into the state's four-year universities.

Board members voted 6-1 in favor of the resolution, which also promises that all students who want to take the college-preparatory classes, known as the "A-G track," will have access to those courses starting in the 2006-07 school year.

During hours of wrangling for the needed votes before the meeting and at the table, a number of amendments were made to Board President Jose Huizar’s original plan, which would have implemented the graduation requirement changes by 2008.

The amended resolution allows some English language learners and students with disabilities to opt out of the college-prep plan with parent permission, signaling the board's commitment to protect the diverse needs of district students.

"I assume that our public school systems are designed not just to have options, but to drive students to the best learning possibilities," said David Tokofsky, one of the swing voters.

Students with clear aspirations to pursue a vocational program after high school can also opt into that pathway after their freshman year with parent permission. Opponents of the A-G plan have warned that implementing it could squeeze out career-focused classes and cause more students to drop out.

Superintendent Roy Romer encouraged board members to vote in favor of the resolution, though he felt "like the person who is in command of the troops ordered to land on Normandy Beach."

Romer's staff is currently overseeing three other districtwide initiatives: a $14 billion school construction campaign, the conversion of all secondary campuses to small learning communities, and No Child Left Behind-mandated reform at the district's lowest-performing campuses.

"It is a kind of a reach that has some unreality to it, given the present resources," Romer said. "I
feel, however, that it is the right goal."

In effect, the A-G resolution adds only three classes to the district's current graduation requirements. But those classes -- algebra II and two years of a foreign language -- will represent major hurdles in terms of qualified teacher recruitment, counselor load and additional funding.

In return for his vote, Mike Lansing, who represents schools in the South Bay, pushed for and got amendments to monitor the district's progress as it gets up to capacity, and to push back its deadline. Huizar had wanted to promise students access by the 2005-06 school year, which starts at year-round campuses in about two weeks.

Lansing also warned it will take oversight to make sure all counselors are trained to treat all students as college-bound.

"It's going to take a mandate, it's going to take a much smaller workload, and it's going to take money," Lansing said.

Marguerite LaMotte, who represents schools in South Los Angeles, expressed similar concerns and cast the lone dissenting vote.

"I am too passionate about this to politicize it," LaMotte said. "I know we're going on emotion now ... but I don't think we need to rush into anything that's not going to be in the best interest of our students."

Prior to the debate, a group of elementary, middle and high school students paraded through the board room to voice their support for the resolution. Board Vice President Marlene Canter called the vote "a historic moment for LAUSD."

"We don't have all the answers today, we don't have all the funding," Huizar said. "But the choice we have to make is do we continue on this path ... or do we challenge ourselves and say, 'We can do better.' "


Aprueban reforma en LAUSD

La Junta Directiva respaldó por amplia mayoría una reforma educativa que brindará más oportunidad para acudir a la universidad

'Ha sido una votación histórica en un día histórico para el distrito', dijo José Huizar, presidente de la Junta Directiva.
(Chiquilín García/La Opinión)

Jorge Luis Macías Reportero de La Opinión

15 de junio de 2005

La Junta Directiva del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Los Ángeles (LAUSD) aprobó ayer por votación de 6-1 una profunda reforma en el currículo que se imparte en todas sus escuelas secundarias con el propósito de adecuarlo a los requerimientos de los sistemas de educación universitaria y del exigente mercado laboral del siglo XXI.

Los cambios operarán a partir del año 2012 en relación con los requisitos del sistema A-G, una rigurosa secuencia de 15 clases necesarias para estar en posibilidad de ser aceptados en cualquiera de los recintos de la Universidad de California (UC) y de la Universidad Estatal de California (CSU).

El resultado, considerado “histórico” causó algarabía entre cientos de estudiantes, padres de familia, líderes comunitarios y partidarios de la resolución impulsada por José Huizar, presidente de la mesa directiva y sus homólogos Jon Lauritzen y David Tokofsky.

La medida recibió, además, el respaldo de otros miembros de la Junta de Educación como Julie Korenstein, Marlene Canter y Mike Lansing, además del superintendente Roy Romer. El único voto en contra fue de Margueritte LaMotte.

Así quedó resuelto que la Junta Directiva pedirá al superintendente Romer que proporcione acceso a los cursos A-G, a partir del ciclo escolar 2005-2006 a quienes soliciten matricularse en la secuencia de estos cursos.

“Ha sido una votación histórica en un día histórico para el distrito”, dijo Huizar. “Los verdaderos ganadores son los estudiantes latinos y afroamericanos”.

United Way of Greater Los Angeles
En una de las enmiendas de última hora, se determinó que Romer deberá presentar informes trimestrales a partir de octubre sobre el progreso alcanzado en cuanto al número de estudiantes que han solicitado acceso a los cursos A-G y cumplen los requerimientos de esas clases.

El superintendente deberá planificar la implementación de la resolución en torno a los resultados de cada alumno y la asignación de recursos por parte del LAUSD.

Dichos reportes incluirán los datos demográficos de cada escuela para conocer los alumnos que decidieron ser omitidos por razones socioeconómicas, de raza, género, estatus de Aprendizaje del Inglés (ELL) o estudiante de Educación Especial.


Los detalles

La reforma educativa indica que cada estudiante que ingrese al noveno grado, a partir de 2008 deberá matricularse en las clases A-G, aunque en el segundo semestre del décimo grado, cualquier estudiante y sus padres o guardianes podrán requerir estar exentos de los requisitos para su graduación.

Sin embargo, cada escuela informará a ambos de todos los factores asociados con la admisión a un colegio comunitario, escuelas de comercio, los sistemas universitarios CSU O UC, y otras oportunidades de educación postsecundaria.

“Trabajando juntos hemos podido sentar las bases de una misión importantísima”, dijo Marlene Canter, mientras que Tokofsky consideró que “la verdad es que el trabajo apenas ha comenzado”.

“Lo importante será cumplir a estos jóvenes que tienen ideales de éxito, aunque los resultados actuales indiquen otra realidad”, dijo Tokofsky. Ahora deberemos pelear porque no se aprueben los recortes a la educación propuestos por la elección especial que llamó [para noviembre 8] el gobernador, porque un estado no se construye con recortes”.

La resolución establecerá un plan de estudios para que cada estudiante cumpla con los rigurosos cursos y su preparación será de común acuerdo con los padres y un consejero escolar.

“Esto es histórico, un hito para el LAUSD, porque los miembros de la Junta Escolar han reconocido que han negado acceso para los estudiantes [a la educación superior] y a los recursos para que triunfen”, dijo Russlynn Alí, directora ejecutiva de The Education Trust-West.

La organización de Oakland que reportó que apenas 22% de todos los estudiantes latinos y afroamericanos de noveno grado se gradúan cuatro años después de haber completado
exitosamente el currículum A-G.

“Parte de la democracia se refiere a darle amplias oportunidades de educación a todos”, consideró María Casillas, presidenta de Familias en Escuelas. “La votación de hoy [anoche] fue el resultado de una resolución moral”.

De hecho, se reconoció que el LAUSD ha fallado en proporcionar educación apropiada a un número significativo de estudiantes, a quienes les hacen falta las habilidades necesarias para el éxito en la vida.

Asimismo, se afirmó que para el logro de comunidades de aprendizaje más pequeñas es necesario alcanzar el objetivo de aumentar el nivel del rendimiento académico y que todos los estudiantes completen las rigurosas clases.

La resolución reconoce que la brecha en la terminación de la sucesión de cursos que satisfacen los requisitos A-G muestra que los estudiantes latinos del noveno grado y sus contrapartes afroamericanos, blancos y asiáticos es severa y refleja injusticias en los servicios educativos proporcionados.

Sólo 15% de estudiantes latinos, 21% afroamericanos, 36% blancos y 50% asiáticos que se graduaron de las preparatorias del LAUSD completaron exitosamente los cursos A-G, cuatro años después.

El plan incluye la disponibilidad de dispensar del cumplimiento de los requisitos a estudiantes de educación especial con discapacidades sólo si así lo indica un Plan de Educación Individualizada (IEP).

Además, una exención estará disponible para todos los Estudiantes Aprendices de Inglés (ELL) que entren a la secundaria en los grados 11 y 12 que no tienen un expediente en el LAUSD.

“Los resultados de la votación traerán mucha negatividad en mi distrito”, expresó Marlene Canter, única miembro de la Junta que votó contra la reforma educativa. “No todos los niños aprenden a un mismo ritmo y con este mandato se les pide que todos sean iguales”.
Organizations Mobilize to Combat Minority Dropout Numbers

Educational inequities in A-G courses to be addressed

By Gary Walker
Bulletin Staff Writer

As the troubling statistics regarding the dropout rates of Latino and African-American students in the Los Angeles Unified School District continues to reverberate among parents, educators and concerned community leaders, over 20 social justice, educational and community action groups have joined forces to seek solutions to what many call an educational crisis.

A Harvard study that published last month in the Los Angeles Times spotlighted the woeful graduation figures in the Los Angeles Unified School District in 2002. The graduation rate for African-American students was 47%, and 39% for Latino students. A number of scholastic observers believe that there is a direct correlation between the high percentage of students of color leaving school without their diplomas and the district’s failure to provide their young scholars with the courses that are necessary to prepare them for college life or the transition to other vocations.

Communities For Educational Equity, a new organization consisting of the abovementioned groups, was recently formed with the purpose of mobilizing parents, educators, students and other concerned individuals around the issue of brown and black students who are being systematically denied access to what is known commonly as the A-G curriculum.

A-G is a sequence of high school classes that includes social studies, foreign languages, advanced mathematics and college preparation courses, such as Advanced Placement classes, or AP. According to the latest statistics, only 24% of African American students and 22% of Latino students graduate successfully completing the A–G requirement, often leaving them without the requisite preparation to enter the workplace. In South Los Angeles, few schools actually take it upon themselves to enroll all students in these classes. Additionally, many of
these students drop out of school prior to completing their high school careers, in turn denying them the earning opportunities that students who attend college often obtain.

“It is vitally important for minority students to have the proper access to these courses,” says Dr. Julie Mendoza, a UCLA Accord researcher who contributed to the Times story. She believes that the A–G requirement should be the “default curriculum for any school district that serves predominantly minority students.” Goldie Buchanan has been involved in the campaign to spotlight the dearth of A-G component to all high schools in South Los Angeles for more than a decade, and she feels that by working in conjunction with so many like-minded groups, their chances for success will increase greatly. “It’s like the old adage; there is strength in numbers,” she said via telephone from her home last week.

Buchanan, who has three sons who have graduated from LAUSD, was appalled when she and other parents became of aware that the district was not informing primarily African-American and Latino students about the A-G and Advanced Placement courses. “I was absolutely devastated when I found out,” she recalled. During the time that she has spent lobbying the school district with other parents about the importance of A-G, Buchanan, who is involved with an organization called African-American Parent/Community Coalition For Education Equality, Inc. says that to date, and there has been very little progress. “There has been some improvement, but not enough.”

Schools in the Compton Unified School District find themselves in similar conditions. Compton School Board President Leslie Irving feels that it is essential to instill the importance of what higher education can mean to youngsters at the elementary school level, so that when they arrive at the upper levels they might have an appreciation for academics and are able to make the transition to AP classes, if they are offered.

“(The high dropout rate) is a multifaceted issue,” Irving opined last week in an interview. “It is largely the end result of so many other things.” Poverty and unemployed parents are two of those factors, in addition to gang violence and in many instances the lack of proper nutrition, says the school board president. “These
are things that we cannot ignore. It’s really hard to ignore those issues and be able to set high standards in the classroom,” Irving, who is a teacher in the Lynwood School District, added. Separate And Unequal

The statistics comparing South Los Angeles schools versus Westside and nearby institutions that make these significant courses available to aspiring students underscores the inequities that some inner city schools face. According to CEE, South Los Angeles high schools offer less than 66% access to A-G requirements. The surrounding area schools provide more than 83% to these classes.

“Often students and parents do not know how critical these milestones (in AP and A-G courses) that are prerequisites to courses that they will see at the university level,” Dr. Mendoza explained. The quality of the courses being taught is another important factor, says Mendoza. “In terms of content, students in lower-economic areas require competent instructors, rigorous instruction and in addition, quality instructional support, such as after-school tutoring,” the doctor pointed out.

The dearth of A-G courses in lower-income neighborhoods does not happen in a vacuum, Mendoza and other researchers believe. “There is compelling evidence that suggests that LAUSD and other school districts across the nation operate school districts that are separate and unequal,” the doctor declared. Much of this phenomenon has to do with access to the political system, Mendoza says, as many parents in underprivileged areas are often not registered to vote, and are unable to fully participate in electing school board members, and to influence educational policies as are their wealthier counterparts.

Irving, the school board president, touched upon another factor that can deprive certain schools of this vital curriculum. “We are having a very difficult time recruiting teachers in the math and science fields,” she acknowledged. “This is a problem that is occurring statewide.”
The school board president noted that Compton high schools do offer some A-G curricula and AP classes, but the shortage of teachers for these subjects makes it difficult to maintain high attendance among students in inner city schools.

“In more affluent areas, they are having similar problems, but in places like Compton, it’s much more prevalent, so it’s difficult for us to maintain that stability in those areas,” she explained.

CEE plans to stage an event later this month highlighting the A-G requirement.

“It has been the dream of our group to have the access and equity to these classes, and to bring to the forefront this important issue,” Buchanan concluded.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HISTORICAL INSTRUCTIONAL REFORM
APPROVED AT LAUSD

IN A SIX TO ONE VOTE, THE BOARD APPROVED HUIZAR-LAURITZEN-TOKOFSKY RESOLUTION TO CREATE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN LOS ANGELES THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE A-G COURSE SEQUENCE AS PART OF THE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT BY 2012

Los Angeles, Ca. (Tuesday, June 14, 2005) – Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education approved a Resolution presented by President Jose Huizar and co-sponsored by Board Member Jon Lauritzen and David Tokofsky that will institute access to college preparatory curriculum beginning in the 2006-2007 school year. In addition, the Resolution calls on the Superintendent to create an implementation plan that will institute the A-G curriculum as the default curriculum for the freshman class of 2008 and require the A-G course sequence as part of the high school graduation requirements beginning with the freshman class of 2012.

“The A-G Initiative is a bold and aggressive instructional reform that will change the culture of this district and improve the quality of education that this district offers every one of our students,” explained Board President Jose Huizar. “This effort will open the doors of opportunity to thousands of students who would otherwise be denied a full array of choices for their lives after high school.”

“Today’s vote marks the landmark decision to raise expectations and challenge racial and class inequities in LAUSD,” said Alberto Retana of Community Coalition. “Latino and African-American students and parents emerge victorious!” Hundreds of students, parents and community organizations, members of Communities for Educational Equity, gathered to urge approval of the Resolution and to witness the historical vote. “We are building a movement to create the schools we deserve,” said Maria Casillas, President of Families In Schools. “The successful implementation of this
initiative requires that we increase awareness of the opportunities, options and requirements among our parents and families.”

“I am eager to work with the community to ensure a successful implementation of this Resolution,” said Board Member Jon Lauritzen. “I am pleased that we were able to work out a compromise and get a substantial vote. I look forward to implementing the A-G requirement as well as the Career and Technical Education component.” The Board heard testimony and discussed the issue for three hours. “We set high expectations tonight for both LAUSD and our students,” said Board Member David Tokofsky. “We equally have the high expectations that Sacramento will not lower our expectations or funding for the A-G goals.”
LAUSD vota por reforma educativa

Sólo 60% de las escuelas ofrecen clases A-G para ir a la universidad; ‘hay miedo al cambio’, dicen defensores de la resolución de Huizar

Jorge Luis Macías  La resolución cuenta con mi apoyo, dijo David Tokofsky, representante del Distrito 5. (La Opinión)
Reportero de La Opinión

13 de junio de 2005

La moción de resolución propuesta por José Huizar, presidente de la Junta Directiva del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Los Ángeles (LAUSD) para ofrecer más cursos académicos —denominados “de la A a la G” o brevemente, A-G— en todas las secundarias de los 80 distritos será sometida a votación este martes.

A pesar de las reservas de algunos miembros de la junta, es probable que Huizar y su homólogo Jon Lauritzen consigan los votos necesarios para la aprobación de la resolución.

Los requerimientos A-G son indispensables para que los estudiantes puedan graduarse de la secundaria y estar a disposición de ser admitidos en los sistemas de educación de la Universidad de California (UC) y la Universidad Estatal de California (CSU). Sin embargo, muchas escuelas secundarias no ofrecen este programa.

Bajo la propuesta, los estudiantes necesitarían completar cuatro años de inglés, tres de matemáticas y al menos dos de historia, ciencias e idiomas extranjeros, respectivamente. Para alcanzar ese nivel de enseñanza, el LAUSD tendría que incrementar los requisitos de graduación existentes para incluir los dos años de lengua extranjera y un segundo año de álgebra.

“La resolución cuenta con mi apoyo”, aseguró David Tokofsky, representante del Distrito 5, a La Opinión. “Esta política se ha aceptado hace mucho; el problema es que la seguimos sólo en teoría, no en la práctica”.

Defensores de la iniciativa dicen que las expectativas del rendimiento de los estudiantes latinos y afroamericanos en el LAUSD son bajas y sus indicadores de graduación son “alarmantes”. “Creo que algunos tienen miedo al cambio, aun cuando la evidencia está frente a sus ojos”, dijo Sheilagh Polk, consejera de Comunidades para la Igualdad Educativa. “Hemos demostrado con hechos que aumentar el rigor de las clases aumenta los niveles de graduación”.

**DIFERENCIA**

Ante la inexistencia de clases que les permitan postular a estudios universitarios, muchos jóvenes latinos y afroamericanos ven como única salida el enrolamiento a las Fuerzas Armadas. Esto queda demostrado por datos comparativos de secundarias localizadas en diferentes zonas económicas de Los Ángeles.

La secundaria Granada Hills en el valle de San Fernando, de cuyos 3,285 alumnos 26.5% son latinos y 6.5% afroamericanos, no ofrece ni una clase de ciencias militares a los estudiantes, mientras que en la Garfield en el Este de Los Ángeles, con 99.1% de sus 4,800 alumnos latinos, se ofrecen 14 clases que conllevan al servicio militar.

El sistema educativo de California precisa que un estudiante debe aprobar 15 cursos específicos para ser admisible para estudios universitarios. Estos cursos son referidos con las letras A-G. Según datos de Comunidades para la Igualdad Educativa (CEO) sólo el 60% de las escuelas secundarias ofrecen esas clases A-G. El 40% restante, en lugar de enseñar química o álgebra ofrecen clases de cosmetología o de ROTC (Cuerpos de Entrenamiento de Oficiales de Reserva).

Además, sólo un 20% de los alumnos de secundaria del LAUSD han completado los cursos A-G. En las escuelas de barrios pobres en el este y sur de Los Ángeles, el porcentaje baja aún más, al 10%.

Partidarios de la resolución consideran en consecuencia que a los jóvenes no se les brinda la opción de decidir por sí mismos su futuro, y se les obliga a aceptar tácitamente ser parte de una fuerza laboral no calificada como futura mano de obra barata.

“Esta resolución ayudará a reformar la educación primaria, intermedia y secundaria”, consideró Agustín Urgiles, coordinador de Políticas de Educación de la Alianza para una Mejor Comunidad (ABC). “Son reformas que el LAUSD debe implementar para elevar su índice de éxito”.

**OPOSICION**

En contraste, Julie Korenstein, miembro de la Junta Escolar indicó que, en base a un reciente estudio sobre las tasas de graduación del LAUSD, los requisitos académicos ya son rigurosos. Ya en la actualidad, antes de hacer los requisitos más rigurosos, la mitad de los estudiantes, explica, fracasan en álgebra. Cifras del Departamento de Educación de California indican que en 2004, un 50% de los estudiantes del LAUSD recibieron
calificaciones de “F” o “D” en los cursos de matemáticas en escuelas intermedias.

Además, el 49.7% de todos los alumnos del octavo grado de segundo distrito escolar más grande del país que presentaron el Examen General de Matemáticas tuvieron que repetir Algebra I, y sólo un 10% de ellos se mostraron muy competentes o por encima del promedio de rendimiento.

“¿Tiende sentido elevar más la barrera?”, cuestionó esta representante del Distrito 6. “Yo tengo que ser cuidadosa a la hora de adoptar una posición”.

Chris Walker, analista legislativo para la Coalición de Reparación Automotriz criticó la resolución de Huizar y Lauritzen, calificándola como no idónea, “porque discrimina a la mayoría de estudiantes que no son buenos con los libros de texto”.

Citó como ejemplo que al científico e inventor Thomas Alva Edison, que no fue un alumno brillante, aunque era un genio.

“En Los Ángeles, decirle [a los estudiantes] que si no cumplen con los requisitos A-G están fuera de la escuela y no podrán graduarse es un error”, indicó.

Walker, también representante de la Asociación de Tecnología Industrial de California, expresó que el Departamento de Empleo estatal tiene en su base de datos más de 10 mil plazas en la industria metalúrgica, con salarios de hasta 94 mil dólares anuales, que están vacantes porque los estudiantes no están en la actualidad capacitados para ocuparlas.

“No hay duda que los cursos A-G deben ofrecerse, pero decir que son obligatorios es un crimen contra la mayoría de los niños, que no deberían ser forzados”, dijo el experto. “Esta resolución no es la panacea que resolverá el problema”.

Sin embargo, consideró que el LAUSD debe preparar a los estudiantes para acudir al colegio y responder a las necesidades de la economía y la sociedad.

“Hay miles de trabajos vacantes porque las escuelas del LAUSD no están haciendo un trabajo adecuado. No les dan a los niños las armas para triunfar”, dijo.

**Una comunidad en riesgo**

Ante las bajas tasas de graduación y bajos logros académicos, un reciente informe de la organización Familias en Escuelas señala que:

* Más del 80% del total de estudiantes inscritos en el LAUSD son de origen latino y afroamericano.

* Sólo el 56% de los afroamericanos y 44% de estudiantes latinos que inician la escuela secundaria se gradúan cuatro años después.
* Para el 2020, el 70% de la fuerza laboral en California será no blanca, y en su mayoría latinos de segunda y tercera generaciones.

* Aproximadamente el 83% de las ocupaciones de mayor crecimiento en Estados Unidos requerirán una licenciatura o maestría en la próxima década.

* En Los Ángeles, entre los años 1989 y 2001, los salarios han aumentado sólo para empleados con título universitario, mientras que los sueldos para quienes sólo poseían estudios de secundaria bajaron, contribuyendo al aumento de la pobreza en la ciudad.

* Los estudiantes que no se graduaron de secundaria representan el 68% de todos los presos en las cárceles de California.

* Entre los jóvenes de 16 a 24 años de edad, las tasas de empleo basadas en sus logros educativos fueron: 50% para quienes abandonaron estudios secundarios, 70% a los graduados y 84% a quienes obtuvieron una licenciatura o más.

Fuente: Familias en Escuelas.

**Tasas de graduación**

Estudiantes de Noveno Grado. Clase 2003:

Afroamericanos: 56%

Asiáticos: 87%

Filipinos: 71%

Hispanos: 44%

Blancos: 77%

Todos los estudiantes: 51%.

Fuente: The Education West-Trust, en su reporte: “¿Están preparadas las Secundarias de California para el Siglo 21?”.

**Salarios promedio por nivel educativo**

Sin diploma de secundaria: 20,072 por año.

Graduado de secundaria: 27,872

Estudios postsecundarios parciales: 39,216
Licenciado universitario: 45,708

Maestría o doctorado: $55,380

Fuente: The Education West-Trust, usando datos de un análisis nacional del Departamento de Trabajo de Estados Unidos.

**Requisitos A-G exigidos para entrar a UC/CSU**

A-G Clases Requisitos/Años de estudio

A Historia/Ciencias Sociales (Historia de Estados Unidos o Civismo, Historia Mundial, Culturas o Geografía) 2

B Inglés (incluye estudio de Literatura Clásica y Moderna y Obras Escritas) 4

C Matemáticas (Mínimo: Algebra I y II y Geometría Dimensional) 3

D Ciencias de Laboratorio (incluye Biología, Química y Conocimientos de Física) 2

E Lenguas Extranjeras (No inglés) 2

F Artes Visuales y de Actuación (Baile, Drama, Música y/o otras Artes Visuales) 1

G Cursos elegidos 1
Los Angeles Daily News

College not for all

Re: "LAUSD adopts new standards" (June 15):

What right does the Los Angeles Unified School District have to presume that all student learners need or want to attend college? The A-G curriculum will only further the dropout rate. It will only increase the frustration of those students who are truly not active participants in the ownership of their own education.

The LAUSD has its head in the sand. It should bring back vocational training courses for those who are not inclined to follow the path to college.

These students would come to school every day if they had something to look forward to that might interest them. I know that I need a plumber or carpenter more than I'll ever have use for a rocket scientist!

Linda Faherty, Simi Valley

Give what they need

Re: "LAUSD adopts new standards" (June 15):

If we require all students to take a college course to graduate, we will have more dropouts. Not all people are college material or can afford college. Instead of college requirements, the LAUSD should make available the vocational and business studies students need to work.

Prepare students for life in the real world. Some people need to work with their hands, not study books. Give them the tools to work with. Give them classes in mechanics, agriculture, culinary arts, wood shop, bookkeeping, etc. Teach the kids what they need to learn to fit their ability and desire, not what the academia wants.

Betty Jenkins, Chatsworth

Thinking caps

Re: "LAUSD adopts new standards" (June 15):

I would like to commend the LAUSD board for toughening graduation requirements for all students and requiring them to take college-prep courses. We want as many high
school graduates to continue their education as possible. Going to college will certainly help give them a good profession and good pay.

So let's see, a two-year college, such as Pierce, costs approximately $640 per semester, including the cost of books. CSUN costs approximately $1,840 per semester, including books. That is a total of $12,320. Since our intuitive board members know that all students want to go to college, then they know that this is affordable.

Why can't the board offer some life classes such as balancing a checkbook, cooking, shop classes and auto repair? What's wrong with learning a trade? Cooks, nurses, plumbers and these types of professions pay well without having a college degree. Let's start thinking, LAUSD!

Barbara Evans, Canoga Park

**One size doesn't fit all**

Re "LAUSD adopts new standards" (June 15):

Prior to the 1970s, Hispanic students were channeled into shop classes because it was assumed we were not college material. Now the Los Angeles Unified School District assumes we are all potential Caltech or University of California, Los Angeles, graduates. Both approaches ignore the unique gifts each student has the potential to develop.

I learned I was not going to be a rocket scientist after struggling with physics. The humanities were my forte. For others, the availability of shop classes led to successful careers in honorable trades.

Yes, we must have the most rigorous academic classes available. However, technical vocation programs must be resurrected and given equal prestige.

Harry Nieves, Sylmar

**Making decisions**

Re "LAUSD adopts new standards" (June 15):

Here we go again: people who have never been inside a classroom - maybe one or two have, a long time ago - making decisions for students. To allow "access" to all students is very acceptable, but to "mandate" to all is poor judgment.

Did any of these eight brilliant people look in particular at the geometry grades most students are earning? To mandate another year of math is unreasonable. After almost 37 years of teaching, this is nothing new. Cycles come and cycles go. Academics are pushed and electives are closed.
Julie Korenstein is correct and, mind you, she is the only one who has been on the board for 18 years. This will seriously affect the dropout rate, and not in a good way.

Stephanie Schwartz, Canyon Country

Good Intentions and Broken Dishwashers

June 19, 2005

Re "College Prep Idea Approved in L.A.,” June 15: Now that every Los Angeles Unified School District graduate will be taking college-level courses and going to college, who will be available to repair your automobile, fix your dishwasher, install your 50-inch plasma TV, unplug your kitchen sink, etc.?

Students who recognize this oversight are going to make a lot of money taking care of the people who went to college but can't find anything more than entry-level jobs and internships in this rotten economy. Way to go, LAUSD!

Abe Hoffiman, Canoga Park

* "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" most aptly applies to the LAUSD's approval of mandatory college preparation classes for all students. All students should have the opportunity to enroll in these classes, but all students should not be required to take them.

Because more emphasis is placed on students taking these classes, many schools have cut back or eliminated fine arts and vocational classes. The approval of mandatory college prep classes will hurt the very students the district is trying to help. Students who do not want to go to college should have other options that we are no longer offering.

When California was a model for other states, high schools offered college prep, commercial and vocational courses for students with different abilities. The community college was and still is there for students to get whatever they need to pursue a different goal.

Estelle Waslosky, Brea
EDITORIAL

Passing but Not Learning

May 23, 2005

A rigorous curriculum isn't just about which courses students take. It's about whether they learn the subject matter.

This is an idea Los Angeles school activists don't seem to be taking into account as they press the school board to require that all students take the full range of college preparatory classes to graduate from high school. And it's part of the reason the school board should turn them down after it hears arguments at its meeting Tuesday.

At the same time, the board should be careful not to dismiss its critics out of hand.

The coalition of activists, calling itself Communities for Educational Equality, seeks to make the so-called A-G courses — 15 courses needed for entry to the state's four-year colleges and universities — a graduation requirement. About 60% of the district's graduates now opt out of the A-G sequence. The numbers are worse statewide.

The activists are correct that the district has low expectations for poor children and children of color. Parents often don't understand the course options. Fourteen-year-olds, meanwhile, shouldn't have to make their own life-changing decisions about schooling; when prodded into tougher courses, they often surprise themselves.

Moreover, Los Angeles schools already require most of the A-G courses for graduation. All the coalition is asking for is two years of a foreign language, and one extra year of math.

It sounds reasonable. But the plan's proponents fail to realize that passing college-prep courses is very different from understanding college-prep material. The district already requires two years of college-prep math — algebra and usually geometry. Yet more than 40% of L.A.'s 10th-graders last year flunked the math portion of the high school exit exam, which doesn't even require full knowledge of basic algebra. They're clearly not prepared for two years of higher math.

To bolster its point that even manual labor jobs require more math, the group has the backing of the State Building and Construction Trades Council, which reports that many L.A. graduates flunk its apprenticeship test, which requires first-year algebra and some geometry. But this only proves the point: The students already are taking those courses
and don't comprehend the material.

There will always be jobs for which knowledge of Algebra II is not necessary. The students who choose those jobs shouldn't be denied a diploma.

The district can and should take meaningful steps to address the concerns of the activists' group. Instead of passing a showy requirement, however, it should expect more from teachers, parents and students.

It already is preparing packets for parents that explain the high school curriculum fully. To those packets, it should add a sheet for parents to sign and return, indicating they've read the materials and understand the choices. And the district should make A-G the default curriculum — putting students in those courses automatically unless they choose otherwise.

Then the district needs to require that all students take algebra by the ninth grade. When the vast majority of 10th-graders can pass the exit exam, it will be time to talk about adding higher math to the sequence.

The last thing we need is a new cadre of supposedly college-ready kids who flunk apprenticeship tests and enter Cal State only to enroll in remedial classes.
Estudiantes de LA reclaman equidad

_Piden más igualdad en clases preuniversitarias; esta semana se discutirá propuesta al respecto en la Junta Escolar de Los Ángeles_

Jorge Luis Macías, Reportero de La Opinión

Domingo, 29 de mayo de 2005

Julio Daniel quiere decidir por sí mismo su propio futuro. Se siente afortunado porque ha sido sólo uno entre miles de estudiantes que tuvo acceso a consejeros escolares que le informaron sobre las clases necesarias que debía cursar para ir al colegio.

Al igual que centenares de estudiantes latinos y afroamericanos, Julio, de 18 años de edad, está a punto de graduarse en la secundaria Manual Arts, ubicada en el centrosur de Los Ángeles.

Sin embargo, Julio se ha convertido en un activista social que desea para quienes vienen detrás de él, tengan la opción de conocer con certeza los requerimientos "A-G" para inscribirse en los sistemas estatales de educación superior.

El hijo de inmigrantes guatemaltecos y cientos más, marcharon en protesta frente al edificio del Distrito Escolar Unificado de Los Ángeles (LAUSD) la semana recién concluida.

Exigía, como parte de la caravana, que los miembros de la junta directiva respalden la resolución que abriría las puertas a los rigurosos cursos de aprendizaje.

Las clases "A-G" son vitales para incrementar las posibilidades de ser aceptados en la Universidad de California (UC) o la Universidad Estatal de California (CSU).

"Muchos dicen que la universidad no es para todos, pero ellos [los miembros de la junta] son los que deben trabajar más y reconocer que necesitamos ser mejor educados para sobrevivir", dijo Julio.

"De nada nos sirve un diploma de secundaria. No vale si tan sólo para ser plomero se requiere un nivel educativo de colegio", agregó el joven.

El próximo martes, integrantes del Comité de Plan de Estudios e Instrucción discutirán si requerirán o no que los estudiantes completen un currículo de preparación colegial antes de graduarse.
Decidido

Sin embargo, no hay nada ni nadie que detenga a Julio Daniel en sus anhelos por encumbrarse como ciudadano de bien y de provecho para sí mismo y la sociedad.

Tiene planes de estudiar psicología, y anhela ser consejero familiar. A la larga, desea convertirse en maestro de historia.

"Todos tenemos la capacidad de aprender, de obtener excelentes calificaciones, aunque muchos dicen que la universidad no es para todos", dijo el joven.

De acuerdo a la resolución introducida por el presidente del LAUSD, José Huizar, y el miembro de la junta, Jon Lauritzen, "en la actualidad, todos los estudiantes del distrito no tienen la oportunidad de seguir una serie de opciones después de la secundaria, a causa de su incapacidad para matricularse en la secuencia de cursos A-G".

Las clases A-G representan las necesidades mínimas para ir a UC o CSU, e incluyen cuatro años de inglés, cuatro años de matemáticas y al menos dos años de historia, ciencias e idiomas extranjeros.

"Las escuelas de Los Ángeles no proporcionan estas clases ni dan la información a los estudiantes", criticó Julio. "Yo me graduare pronto, pero quiero luchar porque mis semejantes no se queden atrás".

Los críticos de la resolución dicen que, si de por sí las tasas de graduación son bajas en el LAUSD, un plan de estudios más estricto alentaría la deserción de más alumnos.

Un estudio de la Universidad de Harvard dado a conocer en marzo pasado, encontró que menos de la mitad de estudiantes del LAUSD se gradúan a tiempo.

"Depende de la mesa directiva aumentar las expectativas tan bajas que tiene sobre los alumnos. Es necesario un currículo vigoroso para llegar al colegio", dijo Huizar. "El éxito académico no depende de la raza ni de bajos recursos económicos, sino de la oportunidad real que le brindemos a los estudiantes".

Huizar y Lauritzen argumentan que requiriendo el plan de estudios A-G, comenzando en 2008 a todos los estudiantes de primer año, estos comenzarían a reducir la brecha de logros académicos, a diferencia de estudiantes de otras razas.
Hasta ahora, ambos representan son los únicos dos votos seguros en favor de la reforma educativa que será sometida a votación el 14 de junio.

"No hemos tenido mucho tiempo de discutir el asunto y necesitamos tiempo para entender las consecuencias de una nueva política educativa", dijo Marlene Canter, integrante de la mesa directiva del LAUSD, por el distrito 4. "Pero si la gente insinúa que algunos estamos en contra no es justo. No me malinterpreten, sólo necesitamos tiempo para discutir una moción de suma importancia".

Interpretando el sentir de Julio Daniel, el senador estatal demócrata Richard Alarcón testificó la semana pasada ante la junta directiva del LAUSD y les conminó a sólo una meta: "Denles la oportunidad a los jóvenes de que les comprueben a ustedes que pueden tener éxito".

**A-G en resumen**

A-G es la secuencia de 15 clases de secundaria, incluida Ciencias Sociales, Ciencias de Laboratorio, Matemáticas, Inglés, Lengua Extranjera, Artes Visuales e Interpretativas, y Clases Optativas de Colegio.

Sin las clases A-G, cualquier estudiante tendrá una barrera casi infranqueable para atender directamente cualquiera de los sistemas de la Universidad de California (UC) o la Universidad Estatal de California (CSU). No hacerlo condena a los estudiantes a obtener sólo trabajos en la industria de servicios, no empleos bien remunerados.

Debido a que las secundarias del LAUSD no se les exige que ofrezcan las clases A-G a todos los estudiantes, miles de graduados carecen de la preparación académica suficiente para ser, inclusive, un plomero.

Las escuelas del Este de Los Ángeles proporcionan 67% menos acceso a clases A-G (Garfield, Wilson Senior High y Roosevelt Senior High).

Otras secundarias alrededor del condado de Los Ángeles proveen 83% más de cursos A-G a sus estudiantes. Por ejemplo, la escuela Santa Mónica High ofrece 80% de estos cursos; San Marino High 85%; Palisades Charter High, 76% o Calabasas High, 88%.

Partidarios de la organización Comunidades para la Igualdad Educativa señalan que miles de estudiantes latinos y afroamericanos están siendo preparados para ser parte de una fuerza laboral de bajos ingresos.

Sólo 24% de estudiantes afroamericanos y 22% latinos que se graduaron con éxito de la secundaria cumplieron con los requisitos A-G.
Menos de 2 de cada 10 estudiantes afroamericanos y latinos de California acuden a los colegios comunitarios de 4 años de estudio.

Entre siete y ocho de cada 10 estudiantes afroamericanos y latinos de California deben buscar empleos que ofrecen bajos salarios porque no cumplen con habilidades adecuadas de lectura en inglés ni destrezas en Matemáticas para incorporarse a una fuerza productiva que pague mejores salarios.

**Fuente: Communities for Educational Equity.**

Nota de La Opinión
The New Math of High School Graduation
School board passes A–G requirement

by ERIN AUBRY KAPLAN

The problems associated with big-city public schools run the gamut from A to Z, but A through G has quite a different connotation: It’s shorthand for the minimal coursework in seven disciplines, ranging from English and math to lab science and arts, that students must complete in order to qualify for the prestigious University of California. Activists who have argued for years that students at inner-city schools are systematically denied access to higher education, either because they are not tracked into A–G classes or because their schools don’t offer enough of them, got some rare good news last week when the Los Angeles Board of Education voted almost unanimously for a resolution that will make A–G a requirement for graduation. Barring any delays, the new requirement will go into effect for the freshman class of ’08, and the first graduating class expected to have completed A–G will be 2012. The coursework includes four years of English, two years of history, three years of math starting with algebra, two years of laboratory science, two years of a foreign language and one year of an advanced elective. Daunting as that may sound, it’s in fact only a total of three more classes than what the district requires for graduation now. But proponents say that kicking requirements up to the A–G level is more than adding classes; it’s a paradigm shift, one that’s long overdue.

“This moves a very old conversation about high expectations for all students into real policy,” says organizer Luis Sanchez of InnerCity Struggle in East L.A., one of many community groups that united behind the resolution. “The argument has always been, ‘I’m for access, but I don’t want to make a requirement.’ That doesn’t work. This is really a civil rights resolution.”

Marqueece Harris-Dawson, executive director of the Community Coalition in South-Central, agrees. “We can’t just keep trying harder at what we’re doing and figure things will get better,” he says. “Now we’ve got A–G, and the school district as service provider has to deliver.”

Ensuring that the district will do that over the long haul is the devilish detail that already has some folks worried, beginning with board member Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte. LaMotte, an African-American, cast the lone vote against the resolution last week; her district includes some of the most troubled and lowest-performing high schools in the city, including Washington Prep, Manual Arts and Fremont. A former principal at Washington, LaMotte says that she agrees with the A–G
measure philosophically but fears the reality of having to enforce yet another ambitious but poorly thought-out requirement — à la the No Child Left Behind Act — that will end up discouraging the very population it’s meant to help. She fears that black and Latino students, who are already failing in great numbers, who are struggling with other district requirements such as algebra, who are failing standardized tests, and who come to high school ill-prepared by their elementary and middle schools, are simply in no shape to take on the demands of A–G. LaMotte adds that students of color, disproportionately represented in special education, especially black males, are particularly vulnerable. Underscoring the increasingly complicated dynamics of reform is the fact that LaMotte voted against A–G but was a key supporter of the African-American Learner’s Initiative, a 2-year-old board effort to address the academic failures of black students in the LAUSD. “We want to give students access, but we don’t want to just add another layer of accountability for them,” says LaMotte. “We’ve got to have a master plan, and stop piecemealing the problem.”

The Coalition for Educational Justice, a progressive reformist group that is usually in sync with InnerCity Struggle and Community Coalition, has been notably absent from the A–G movement. CEJ parent Bill Gallegos says that while his group is dedicated to closing the achievement gap and changing the status quo for black and Latino students, there are some hard truths to face before that can happen. “Some of our best student leaders in CEJ admitted they couldn’t pass algebra,” he says. Like LaMotte, Gallegos also wonders whether the A–G measure, which will require additional qualified staff and classroom space, will get the funding and resources it will need at overcrowded campuses that already have chronic shortages of everything from textbooks to counselors (the measure has no cost estimate yet, though board member Mike Lansing says it’ll probably be somewhere in the neighborhood of $100 million). Now that A–G has passed, Gallegos is quick to add that the CEJ will be part of the effort to enforce it — the resolution actually calls for an implementation committee that will include representation from Communities for Educational Equity, the umbrella group of activist groups that championed the measure.

But the corks on champagne bottles aren’t popping just yet. Harris-Dawson of the Community Coalition and other A–G supporters are the first to acknowledge the validity of LaMotte’s and CEJ’s concerns — they know the depth of the problems firsthand and have heard plenty of empty promises from the likes of the LAUSD and the federal government. But they say this measure has the potential to be different, for several reasons. It is a hard policy measure, not a declaration of intent to do good or a call for another study; unlike standardized tests and exit exams — which CEE has opposed — it is a long-term requirement that will actually benefit students, whether they go to college or not; and it will create a real seat at the education table for community groups. And last, but hardly least, it will help foster a budding alliance between grassroots activists and UTLA, the powerful teachers union that historically has operated in a sphere of its own. Though UTLA was officially opposed to the A–G measure, citing concerns about the impact on vocational-
ed teachers, it didn’t stand in its way. Such was the agreement it worked out with CEE, one that Sanchez, Harris-Dawson and other activists hope will be the first of many more.

But the key for everyone involved will be follow-up. Gallegos of the CEJ challenges school-board President José Huizar and Mayor-elect Antonio Villaraigosa, who is making more and more noise about mayoral control of the board, to get behind A–G. “Whatever it’s going to take for this to happen, it’s got to be done,” says Gallegos. “If it doesn’t, our worst fears about a measure like this will come true.”
School Reform Desired

Poll finds most people in the state and nationwide want tougher classes and better teachers.

By Jean Merl
Times Staff Writer

June 23, 2005

Fifty-five percent of Californians — and almost half of Americans as a whole — think the nation's public high schools need reforming, and almost one-third of Californians believe students arriving in ninth grade are ill-prepared for high school and struggle to keep up, a poll released Wednesday found.

Only 10% of Californians and 9% of Americans in general said high school students are being significantly challenged by their courses, according to a poll conducted for the nonprofit Educational Testing Service.

"Most Americans feel the high school experience is a broken experience," said Kurt Landgraf, the service's president and CEO.

The nationwide survey, which included additional attention to California, New Jersey and Ohio, found strong majorities of Americans want teachers who are proven experts in their subject fields (91%) and favor paying more for qualified teachers even if that requires raising taxes (80%). They also support requiring students to pass a test on core subjects to graduate (80%).

In addition, 77% of Americans surveyed called for more academically rigorous courses for all students, while 71% said there should be wider choices of types of high schools, and 72% called for an individualized course of study for each student. Survey results in California generally mirrored those nationwide; however, a larger percentage of Californians saw a need for substantial high school reforms (55% to 48% nationwide).

The survey, dubbed "Ready for the Real World? Americans Speak on High School Reform," was conducted in April by Democratic pollster Peter Hart and Republican pollster David Winston. It was the fifth annual survey commissioned by the Educational Testing Service to tap views on education issues.

The poll findings come as educators and political leaders nationwide are debating how to improve public education and lamenting high dropout rates and slow or stagnant improvements in secondary school. In California, there are efforts in the Legislature to further delay, or even scuttle, the state's high school exit exam for graduation. The
governor and a coalition of education groups are also battling over school funding in the state, which trails much of the nation in per-pupil spending.

Under pressure from community activists who feel disadvantaged minorities are being shortchanged, the Los Angeles Unified School District recently agreed to require every high school student to take a college-prep curriculum. And the district also is attempting to transform all of its high schools — some numbering 5,000 students — into "small learning communities," the latest popular idea for jump-starting improvements at secondary campuses.

Americans care deeply about the quality of their schools and are concerned that, without improvements, the nation will not be able to compete in today's global economy, Landgraf said.

"Americans view our public education system as central to our country's success in the world," he said, but are frustrated by the slow pace of reforms after some two decades of improvement attempts.

The survey found that about half of Americans believe elementary schools should get top priority for new reform efforts.
LAUSD Strategic Action Plan
For A–G Implementation
September 29, 2005
Los Angeles Unified School District  
Division of Secondary Instruction  

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE A-G BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION  

Blue type represents most recent updates – November 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Step</th>
<th>Specific Actions and Initiatives</th>
<th>Development Time Frame</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ensure collaboration</td>
<td>a. Established an A-G implementation committee</td>
<td>September 2006</td>
<td>Ongoing monthly meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extensive meetings have been held with stakeholder district-wide</td>
<td>b. Established a collaborative relationship with UTLA on the development of periodic assessments and instructional units</td>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. 31st District and 10th District PTA</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d. Middle and High School A-G/curriculum committees</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d. Parent Collaborative meetings</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Focus on Achievement Council meetings</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>g. Directors of School Services meetings</td>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>h. Middle school accountability task force</td>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>i. Institute for Higher Learning meetings</td>
<td>August 2006</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>j. Updates to the Board of Education</td>
<td>June 2005-2006</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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</table>

2. Identify specific measurements of accountability

k. Identified metrics to provide baseline data for the implementation of the A-G initiative. The following metrics have been established as baseline data for the implementation of the A-G initiative (April-May):
   - California Standards Test*
   - CAHSEE* (Disaggregate)
   - Academic Performance Index
   - Adequate Yearly Progress
   - Number/percent of students enrolled in A-G courses*
   - Percent of A-G courses offered**
   - Percent of Career-Tech courses that meet the A-G requirement
   - Advanced Placement enrollment
   - Dropout rate*
   - Graduation rate*
   - Class size
   - Teacher staffing
   - Stakeholder surveys (to be designed and administered (PCSB Branch)

*Provided April 4, 2006 (Data needs to be disaggregated)
**Provided May 8, 2006 (Data need to be disaggregated)
***To be provided

Data being provided on an ongoing basis at A-G implementation committee meetings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A-G targets</th>
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<th>One-page data report by school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Establish strong management practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>n. Provided workshops to local district and school staffs regarding the management of attendance, counseling and discipline office procedures. <strong>Continue to schedule Organizational Excellence staff to train attendance office personnel in the 17 high schools with the highest dropout rates (funds transferred for this purpose for 2006-07).</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>November 2005 - present Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-G counselor in-service</td>
<td>o. Provided extensive counseling in-service programs to address the implementation of the A-G initiative in preparation for spring programming. <strong>Multiple training programs scheduled throughout the school year for each local district to address A-G Handbook and career tech counseling, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Throughout 2006-07</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-G master program conference</td>
<td>p. Provided joint principal and AP, SCS programs to address the development of the master program to meet A-G requirements and to address spring programming, as well as registration and enrollment procedures <strong>Master programs available and are currently being audited to address A-G compliance issues.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>November/ December 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGP in-service</td>
<td>q. Provided professional development programs with local districts and principals and site staff regarding the implementation of parent orientations and Individual Graduation Plans. <strong>Counseling in-services planned for January/February 2007 to address IGP.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>January-February 2007</td>
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</table>
| Differentiated assistance | r. Provided differentiated assistance to low performing schools to address overall management and organizational structures to be able to implement an A-G program (Crenshaw, Locke, Jordan, Manual Arts, Fremont, Jefferson, Los Angeles, Belmont, Santee and Dorsey). This engaged a task-force of central staff to work with local district and school site staff to address barriers, resources and additional assistance necessary to address A-G (January-June). **Meetings have been held with WASC leadership teams from each of the high schools and additional meetings will be held with teams at school sites to determine $15M expenditure of funds targeted for instructional issues.**  
- **$11M allocated for furniture replacement at each school**  
- **$8M allocated for complete refurbishment of science labs**  
- Additional funds have been allocated to bring all libraries up to scale including complete technology centers  
- **$16M allocated for meeting instructional needs** |   | Fall 2006 |   |
<p>| In-service and policy bulletin regarding enrolling students in A-G July 2006 | l. Provided specific policy direction to counseling staffs on the enrollment of students into A-G courses for fall 2006 in compliance with the Board directive that any student requesting an A-G course will be enrolled <strong>Bulletin reissued to address concerns that continue to be raised as to whether students are to be enrolled in A-G.</strong> |   | February-April 2006 September 2006 |   |
| <strong>High priority teacher recruitment and retention program</strong> | m. Developed and funded a high-priority teacher recruitment and retention program to ensure that courses are staffed by highly qualified teachers and that current highly qualified teachers are retained. This is a major issue in terms of access and equity in schools. The program will be in place to ensure staffing issues are addressed (Program funded and in place – provide vacancy report for year-round schools at the August 2007 A-G implementation meeting.) This is a critical aspect of A-G implementation – to ensure that every student has a teacher in their A-G course. Need to review retention components. | April-May 2006 | May 2006 - Ongoing |
| <strong>Identification of sheltered A-G courses for 2006-07 master programs</strong> | n. Principal and AP, SCS professional development programs have directed staff to identify appropriate sheltered courses (all sheltered courses are A-G) for the 2006-07 school-year to ensure that PRP students are appropriately programmed ensuring their access to the A-G curriculum. <strong>We are proposing as part of Middle School Reform (November 2006) that we implement a new English Learner Initiative in grade 6-8. This initiative would target the 35K ESL students and 20K+ PRP students in grades 6-8 beginning in September 2006. Need to address plan for high school PRP teachers.</strong> | October 2005-July 2006 November/December 2006 |
| <strong>Counseling and attendance office training and certification</strong> | o. Provide school-by-school intensive counseling and attendance office training and office reviews/certification to ensure procedures and records are in place to support A-G implementation. <strong>Funding has been provided to continue this effort for 2006-07.</strong> | Ongoing |
| <strong>4. Strong parent involvement in school and counseling programs</strong> | p. All middle schools were provided with and implemented the College Ed Program of the College Board. The program provided all students and their families with 16 lessons on A-G, career-tech, and preparing for college. The program will be continued next year. <strong>College Ed program is funded for 2006-07.</strong> | September 2005-June 2006 Funded for 2006-07 |
| <strong>College CD</strong> | q. All middle and high school students and their families were provided with a comprehensive College and Career CD developed by LAUSD. The CD will be again provided in the coming school year. | August-October 2005 Distributed for 2006-07 |
| <strong>Individual Graduation Plan (IGP)</strong> | r. Counselors will be implementing this year an Individual Graduation Plan that requires all parents to have the opportunity to participate in the spring programming of their child and to sign off on the selected courses. This provides also the opportunity for parents to understand A-G requirements and monitor their child's progress towards completing the A-G sequence. <strong>Full implementation will be in place for Spring 2007.</strong> | April-June 2006 Spring 2007 |
| <strong>Mandatory parent orientations</strong> | s. Schools will hold mandatory parent orientations for matriculating students. These orientations will take place in Spring 2006 in preparation for matriculation to middle and high school. Principals have been provided with a wide range of materials to help parents understand the A-G and career-tech curriculum in LAUSD and how they can assist and be involved in their child's education. <strong>Prepare Parent Orientation packets no later than December 2006</strong> | March-June 2006 December 2006 |
| <strong>College and career information nights</strong> | t. High schools have been given specific direction to hold parent and student college and career information nights along with materials that can be utilized for those meetings. | September-December 2005 October 2006 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-home communication</td>
<td>Require as part of the Diploma Project that all teachers send home the first two weeks of the school year a letter describing their course, marking practices, classroom procedures and how parents can be engaged in their child’s education. Reissued operational bulletin – met with UTLA Secondary Committee – will publish secondary subject brochures to be distributed beginning July 2007.</td>
<td>June-September 2006 November 2006 July 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent notification</td>
<td>We are providing to all teachers and school staff a set of procedures to notify parents whenever their child is not meeting standards or when behavior or attendance is affecting a student’s achievement marks. New parent notification system is being put into place for Spring 2007 – RFPs to be out in December 2006.</td>
<td>June 2006 Spring 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period by period attendance monitoring</td>
<td>We will have in place a system of monitoring all secondary students’ attendance period by period at each grade level through the ISIS system. We are also providing schools with clerical support to ensure the effective operation of the system. Notification system will be in place in Spring 2007.</td>
<td>February-June 2006 Spring 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dropout prevention advisor</td>
<td>We are funding a Dropout Prevention Advisor at each secondary school to address dropout prevention in the 8th and 9th grades and dropout recovery in high school. The advisor will coordinate school and local resources in addressing students and families at risk. 79 positions authorized – 37 to middle and 42 to high schools based on current dropout rates. Positions will start August 21, 2006.</td>
<td>June 2006 Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent quarterly conferences</td>
<td>Quarterly meetings with students “at-risk” and parents will be conducted by the Dropout Prevention Coordinator. Ensure that this effort is part of Diploma Project Advisor training. Maintain appropriate logs.</td>
<td>June 2006 Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory 10th grade PSAT</td>
<td>Provided funding and required all students to take the PSAT test in the 10th grade during regular school hours. This effort resulted in over 100,000 students taking the PSAT. We are currently using the results to inform parents, students and teachers and provide resources to students and families. Funding is in place and test administered in Fall 2006.</td>
<td>July 2005-September 2005 October 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updating college and career offices</td>
<td>Reviewed all college and career advisement offices and provided new computer hardware, software, internet connectivity and updated reference guides. Develop a rubric for model career offices and will survey all high school career offices (Fall 2006). Completed all surveys of career offices and will prepare budget for ensuring quality career counseling service are available to all students.</td>
<td>September 2006-January 2007 Fall 2006</td>
</tr>
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</table>

5. **Ensure implementation of a quality curriculum**

   - Redesign the current LAUSD core secondary curriculum. This curriculum will address rigorous instructional units with model lessons, periodic assessments, benchmark standards and strategies for addressing skill gaps. These instructional units are also designed to be flexible in addressing the needs of small schools and teacher creativity controlling for rigor and quality. (September 2005-June 2008). July 2006 – ongoing)

   - Redesigned the secondary periodic assessment program in collaboration with UTLA. He assessments will be streamlined and provide user-friendly, ongoing data regarding student performance. Periodic assessment program has been funded and is taking into account all recommendations from teachers/administrators. Ongoing meetings are being held to address implementation concerns. February 2006 – RFP with decision May 2006 July 2006-ongoing) Fall 2006
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date/Status</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Online learning support</strong></td>
<td>kk. We have provided two laptop computer carts from Title One carryover funds to each high school library in order to initiate an online learning program. LAUSD currently has an online learning program that only addresses Algebra and Advanced Placement courses. We are currently in discussions with a range of vendors regarding online programs. The District has contracted with UC Online and is investigating other online resources to provide instructional services. Spring 2007 – develop guidelines for principals and establish inservice programs for counselors and assigned teachers. Contract has been approved, but is inadequate to address all students – New committee is reviewing the entire online system to have a complete program in place no later than 2008.</td>
<td>July-December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to A-G for special education students</strong></td>
<td>ll. We are continuing to develop collaborative models to ensure access to the curriculum for special education students. We will be beginning the first in a series of professional development programs with general education and special education teachers to ensure strong implementation of these models. Preparing collaborative model professional development for special education and general education teachers.</td>
<td>May-June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8th grade Algebra Readiness</strong></td>
<td>mm. We have identified, funded and instituted a new Algebra Readiness program to address the needs of students not ready for algebra in the 8th grade. Training for teachers is currently taking place. The Algebra Readiness program is critical to ensure that all students have a successful experience in Algebra no later than 9th grade. Program is being implemented.</td>
<td>November 2005-March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce class size</strong></td>
<td>oo. We have identified funding to reduce class size in algebra 1AB in 8th and 9th grades beginning July 2006 (November 2005-July 2006) New norm tables have been sent to schools reducing class-size in 8th and 9th grade algebra and algebra readiness. In place.</td>
<td>November 2005-July 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRP and EL students</strong></td>
<td>pp. Ensure that teachers of PRP/EL students are appropriately qualified. Need to review entire professional development program beginning with an identification of number of students and current programs.</td>
<td>September-June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science facilities</strong></td>
<td>qq. Develop a plan to address science facilities in high priority schools. Completed science facilities needs for 17 high priority high schools. New lab facilities being funded including rehab - $10M.</td>
<td>September 2005-November 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Science Plan</strong></td>
<td>rr. Develop a comprehensive science facilities plan. Plan and funding lines will be presented to the facilities committee November/December 2007.</td>
<td>October 2005-November 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7th Grade Science</strong></td>
<td>ss. Provide for an expanded 7th grade science program. Presented to the Board of Education a new model for 7th grade science that maintains the essential health curriculum while expanding the science curriculum from 20 weeks to 32 weeks. Pilots will be in place for Fall 2006 with implementation for fall 2007.</td>
<td>October 2005-April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced placement programs</td>
<td>tt. Implement new advanced placement training for all AP teachers to include recruiting and supporting teachers in high impact schools. <strong>Develop winter/spring 2007 program for AP teacher inservices.</strong> We have expanded the AP Readiness Program for Summer 2006 with UCLA.</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced course offerings</td>
<td>uu. Provide additional advanced course offerings to support advanced placement programs. <strong>The current allocation and resources for advanced course offerings will be reviewed for Fall 2007 – Budget issue.</strong></td>
<td>April-May 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validation through testing/transcript review process</td>
<td>vv. We are providing to schools direction on validating students meeting the A-G &quot;E&quot; requirement criteria. <strong>Procedural bulletins are being developed for counselors in validating cumulative records – credit clerks etc. will be in-serviced in August Tests will be developed for 9th grade administration to determine if a student is bilingual – these are being developed in coordination with the UC Office of the President. District has reviewed all foreign language offerings and teachers and is preparing a comprehensive and expanded foreign language instructional program to ensure all students can meet the &quot;E&quot; requirement.</strong></td>
<td>March-June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Promote career-tech and multiple pathways to graduation</td>
<td>wv. Reorganized the Career-Tech unit to refocus on the development of a quality Career-Tech curriculum. <strong>Reorganization to reflect Division of Instruction career-tech focus. New budget has restored 4 instructional advisers in industry sectors to develop both CTE curriculum, academies and pathways. New CTE program will be presented to the Board of Education in October 2006 with a larger presentation being made to a Committee of the Whole in the Spring. Review entire program with Santiago in November.</strong></td>
<td>January-April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xx. Complete a survey of what CTE courses are currently offered and how many of them meet A-G guidelines. <strong>This survey has been completed. In addition, 58 Courses of Study will be available to CTE teachers beginning November 2006.</strong></td>
<td>February-April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTE course catalog</td>
<td>yy. We have completed a full list of courses that are CTE and meet A-G. <strong>This includes assembling courses of studies for identified courses.</strong></td>
<td>February-April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce development</td>
<td>zz. Design a new workforce development unit to provide greater support to students in terms of job creation and the development of an expanded &quot;Learn to Earn&quot; program.</td>
<td>February-April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expanded work experience program</td>
<td>aaa. Expand work experience resources at high impacted schools. <strong>Design a new Work-Based Learning Program summer 2007 to connect current work-experience program to career academies. Have plan in place for Spring 2007. Address legislature for support of the plan.</strong></td>
<td>May-June 2006</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academy inventory</td>
<td>ccc. Complete academy inventory for all high schools. <strong>Academy inventory completed and meetings being held with Local District Superintendents regarding location and development of Career Academies during the month of August.</strong></td>
<td>May 2006-July 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zones of Choice for industry clusters</td>
<td>ddd. Develop a Zones of Choice plan that identifies high school academies based on Perkins industry clusters and aligned to community college and California State college programs</td>
<td>June 2006-June 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Provide for a new professional development model for secondary schools</td>
<td>eee. Redesign the current professional development and coaching model to more effectively address the learning modes and needs of teachers and school staff. The model utilizes the new curricular model as the focal point of professional development and recognizes the importance of lesson study and the use of periodic assessment data in informing instruction. The new model is currently being discussed with United Teachers of Los Angeles. <strong>New “site-based” professional development model presented to LDS and Board Members/UTLA/Professional Development Committee (PDAC). Recommending an expanded professional development program at the start of the school year (budget and plan to be ready for February 2007).</strong></td>
<td>July 2006-present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Establishing a middle school accountability policy</td>
<td>fff. Providing a mathematics and ELA intervention program beginning July 2006. This program will require students not meeting standards in 6, 7 or 8 grade English or mathematics to be required to enroll in after-school and/or Saturday school intervention programs. The intervention programs are Compass Learning for mathematics and Voyager for ELA.</td>
<td>July-June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention program training</td>
<td>ggg. Provide appropriate intervention training for Compass Learning and Voyager. <strong>In-service provided for principals and AP,SCSs/ELA/RLAs in July, August and September.</strong></td>
<td>January-June 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Middle school accountability task-force | hhh. A middle school task force has provided recommendations to redesign the middle school instructional program. **Presented to the Committee of the Whole in November 2006 with a follow up in February 2007.**
**Recommendations include:**
- Extended school day
- Extended professional development time
- Coring and Teaming
- English Learner initiative
- Middle School options program
- Exploratory Career-Tech program
- Parent engagement
- Small schools at middle schools | January 2006-ongoing | October-November 2006 February 2007 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intramural programs</th>
<th>iii.  We have provided the structure to enhance, develop and implement a middle school intra-mural program. The Board expressed their concern that we keep students engaged in the school program through after school activities. This engagement has an important effect on student success in A-G. <strong>Funding has been identified and a middle school intramural program is in place for fall 2006 involving 6 different sports at lunch and coordinated with after-school programs and Youth Services tournament programs.</strong></th>
<th>March 2006-ongoing</th>
<th>July 2006 and phased to full implementation between July 2006-July 2008 Ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Implement “Summer Transitions” program</td>
<td>kkk. The Board directed staff to provide for a transitional program for students and families from elementary to middle and from middle to high school. We have developed a Summer Transitions program for the summer. The program needs to address the all students in making the transition. <strong>Need to provide an evaluation for the past Summer Bridge Program and the plan for total Summer Transitions program for 2007.</strong></td>
<td>July 2006-June 2006</td>
<td>July 2006 with expanded phase in through July 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Develop parent component for Summer Bridge – <strong>There is a need to significantly strengthen the current parent component of the Summer Transitions program to have it ongoing and in greater depth (Spring 2007)</strong></td>
<td>July 2006-June 2006</td>
<td>July 2006 with expanded phase in through July 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>mmm. Develop curriculum for Summer Bridge <strong>Provide for a connection to small schools work</strong></td>
<td>July 2006-June 2006</td>
<td>July 2006 with expanded phase in through July 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Provide for rigorous options school programs</td>
<td>nnn. Establish task-force to review all current programs and provide recommendations to enhancing the options school programs. <strong>Constructed a District-wide map of all options programs including continuation, CDS, opportunity and alternative school programs. Beginning in January 2007 recommendations will be developed collaboratively with stakeholders regarding the expansion and development of new options/alternative school models. Presentation of a comprehensive options reform program to the Board in February 2007.</strong></td>
<td>January 2006-ongoing</td>
<td>February 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ooo. Provide iat top computers to continuation school programs to permit access to the A-G curriculum</td>
<td>July-December 2006</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ppp. Provided software including Kaplan, Vantage, Cognitive Tutor and access to online learning</td>
<td>July-December 2006</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qqq. Provided portable labs to continuation schools to ensure access to A-G science curriculum</td>
<td>July-December 2006</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Establish a briefing program for key legislators</td>
<td>sss. We need to establish a program to begin ongoing briefings of L.A. legislators to ensure support at the State level for the LAUSD effort. Business partners will be briefed on an ongoing basis through the Career Tech Program/Business Partnerships. Prepare legislator, community and business A-G packets for distribution in October.</td>
<td>Development during Fall/Winter 2006</td>
<td>Implement beginning Spring 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Develop a campaign (home/school, media and print to inform, engage and to create a culture of A-G)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>rrr. Develop a communications plan for A-G that permeates the total school community with additional attention to the incoming 7th grade class. Need to prepare for all 7th grade parents and students an “A-G” packet of materials that address 7th grade issues, preparation for 8th grade and A-G requirements/high school. Can be distributed as part of Back to School Night and special 7th grade parent nights in the fall. The would include home/school communications; media pieces; assembly/home room communication programs; Back to School night communications; college night programs; newsletter pieces. The plan should be reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure there is a continual flow of information saturating our communities.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>We need to identify personnel with primary responsibility for managing the communications on a monthly basis. We also need to prepare an interface with key personnel in the community, principals’ organizations, parent organizations, etc. to ensure both quality input into communications and dissemination of materials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development during Fall/Winter 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement beginning Spring 2007</td>
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The A–G Story

Preparation by Communities for Educational Equity (CEE) - Working Draft

DRAFT

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

A–G For All In LAUSD:
A Blueprint For Implementation

I. Inventory of the District's Capacity to Offer A–G for ALL

A. Curriculum Inventory

1. A–G course inventory in every high school

   a) Conduct and report a gap analysis between full A–G course availability and current status, course by course, school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools. "Full A–G course availability" should be defined as, given the vagaries of scheduling, a reasonable number of sections of courses in each of the A–G categories to enable all students to enroll in the appropriate set of courses each semester, grades 9-12.

   b) Develop and report a set of targets/benchmarks for each A–G category, school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools, to guide the addition of necessary courses for 2008-09, 2008-09, and 2012.

2. Elective course inventory in every high school, including CTE

   a) Identify courses that contain enough rigor to qualify as A–G electives (and, therefore, be maintained) and those that should be eliminated between 2007-2011.

   b) Identify CTE courses that are candidates for integration with academics and approval as A–G courses? What would this require? What actions must the District take to better align existing courses with the A–G and CTE course curriculum?

3. Pre-A–G school course inventory in every middle and high school

   a) Inventory middle school algebra course offering availability school by school and track by track.

   b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for middle schools school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools, to guide the addition of necessary courses.
4. Bilingual Education course inventory in every middle and high school
   a) Conduct inventory of middle and high school courses offered for English learners (CLS-17), school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools. Report redesignation rates by school, track, racial/ethnic group and gender and grade level.
   b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for redesignation rates school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools to ready students for A-G courses in high school.

5. Special Education course inventory in every middle and high school
   a) Conduct inventory of middle and high school courses offered for Special Ed students by school, track, racial/ethnic group and gender.
   b) Develop and report a set of targets/benchmarks school by school to make Special Education students ready for A-G courses in high school.

6. Online Course Inventory
   a) Conduct inventory of online middle and high school courses offered in district.
   b) Develop a technology plan for high schools to provide online A-G course offerings to fill curriculum gaps with high quality, standards-based curriculum.
   c) Develop a plan to provide access to online UC approved A-G courses by 2006-07.
   d) Develop and report a set of targets/benchmarks school by school to ensure access to online A-G courses.

7. Science course inventory in every elementary school
   a) Conduct inventory of science courses offered at elementary school, school by school, track by track and by grade level.
   b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for science courses offered school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools to ready students for immersion units grades K-5.

B. Human Resources Inventory

1. Credentialed teachers
   a) Conduct and report a gap analysis of teacher capacity for full A-G implementation and current status at all schooling levels (elementary, middle, and high school), subject by subject, school by school, and track by track
within multi-track schools. Full implementation teacher capacity should be defined as teachers assigned to all classes who are both fully credentialed and are certified to teach in the content of the subject/s which they are teaching.

b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for each subject, school by school, track by track within multi-track schools to guide the recruitment/redistribution of teachers to ensure all schools have the necessary teacher complement for full A-G implementation.

2) Counselors

a) Conduct and report a gap analysis of counselor capacity for full A-G implementation and current status at middle and high schools. Counselor capacity should be defined as the number of counselors needed to lower the student-counselor ratio to a "manageable" caseload. Note that the American School Counselor Association recommends a maximum ratio of 1:250.

b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for the recruitment/redistribution of counselors to ensure all elementary, middle, and high schools have the necessary counselor complement for full A-G implementation.

c) Develop a plan to offer UC's Transcript Evaluation Service (TES) in every high school site by 2012 to increase academic planning capacity and the accuracy of transcript evaluation for the benefit of all stakeholders. Evaluate the implementation of TES currently offered in five LAUSD high schools. Create a plan to improve student and parent TES reports.

C. Facilities and Equipment Inventory

1. Facilities

a) Conduct and report a gap analysis of facilities needs for full A-G implementation and current status, subject by subject, school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools. Anticipate rooms/facilities that are needed to deliver the proposed curriculum without overcrowding, and without assuming that the current high levels of attrition (dropouts) will continue in the future. Report should include an inventory of technology.

b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for each subject, school by school, track by track within multi-track schools to guide the provision of facilities necessary to ensure all schools have full A-G implementation.
2. Equipment

a) Conduct and report a gap analysis of equipment needs for full A-G implementation and current status, subject by subject, school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools. Of particular importance will be the gaps in science equipment needed to meet the laboratory requirements to qualify classes for the "d" requirement, but anticipate the needs in other subject areas as well, including the arts and electives.

b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for each subject, school by school, track by track within multi-track schools to guide the provision of equipment necessary to ensure all schools have full A-G implementation.

D. Instructional Materials Inventory

a) Conduct and report a gap analysis of instructional materials needed for full A-G implementation and current status, subject by subject, school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools. Assume that full A-G implementation will require appropriate instructional materials for A-G classes in sufficient quantities that students can use them at school and take them home for study. Report should include analysis of instructional materials as it relates to technologies.

b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for each subject, school by school, track by track within multi-track schools to guide the provision of instructional materials necessary to ensure all schools have full A-G implementation.

c) Develop an interagency (District/City) plan that leverages available resources through City departments to provide value-added activities and extend district instructional material support systems.

d) Develop intersegmental partnerships with local colleges and universities to increase the quantity of instructional materials.

E. Supplemental Supports Inventory

a) Conduct and report a gap analysis of supplemental support programs required for full A-G implementation and current status, subject by subject, school by school, and track by track within multi-track schools. Supplemental support programs shall include extended instructional time, specialized programs, counseling, mentoring, interventions such as AVID, Puente, GEAR UP, Talent Development High School Model, Twilight Programs, etc., including programs administered by outside agencies.
b) Develop and report a set of 2007-2011 targets/benchmarks for each subject, school by school, track by track within multi-track schools to guide the provision of supplemental supports necessary to ensure all schools have full A-G implementation.

e) Create a comprehensive district-wide safety net plan that includes extended time, specialized programs, counseling, mentoring, etc.

f) Develop an interagency (District/City) plan that leverages available resources through City departments and agencies to provide value-added activities and extend district safety net and student support systems.

II. Quarterly Reporting by the District on A-G Implementation Activities

Establish timelines and specify the kind of information that should be reported regularly by the district to the Advisory Committee to document and monitor progress and accomplishments in each of the 14 Steps outlined in Bob Collin's memo (including any modifications made by the A-G Advisory Committee and the District).

Quarterly reports should include:
1. A narrative describing what has been done toward each step.
2. Any documents developed in conjunction with each step.
3. A calendar of meetings (with list of attendees) related to each step.
4. Evidence at the school level of the presence and/or impact of the activities related to each step.

III. Annual Analysis and Reporting of LAUSD Progress Toward "A-G" For All and Academic Outcomes

Develop and report indicators of the long- and short-term outcomes and the critical conditions and resources necessary to give students a meaningful chance to succeed. Educational outcomes should be reported by school, racial/ethnic group, gender, grade-level, language and special education classification using districts longitudinal student database.

Outcome indicators should include:
1. Percent of students enrolled in "A-G" courses.
2. Percent of students passing "A-G" courses with a C+ or better.
3. Percent of students failing "A-G" courses (all or partial course).
4. Percent of students meeting minimum UC and CSU GPA requirements.
5. Percent of students making adequate progress toward fulfilling the "A-G" requirements, if they completed 15 of the "A-G" courses by the end of the 12th grade and have earned a minimum 2.0 GPA in these courses.
6. Grades in "A-G" courses (average or % of students earning C or better), overall and by subject, by school.
7. Percent of students completing Algebra I with C or better in grade 8, by overall, by school, by racial/ethnic groups, language and special education classification within school.
8. Percent of students having completed Algebra I with C or better by the end of grade 8, by school.
9. Rates of redesignation of English Language Learners (ELLs) by grade level.
11. Percent of middle school students attending mandatory intervention as a result of failing to pass the core curriculum with a "C" or better.

Note: UC’s Transcript Evaluation Service (TES) would be an appropriate analytic tool in this regard.

Conditions/resources indicators should include:
1. Percent of class sections authorized as "A-G" at each school (overall and by subject).
2. Percent of CTE classes authorized as "A-G" at each school.
3. Percent of "A-G" courses each school taught by fully credentialed teachers, certified in the subject matter of the course (overall and by subject).
4. Average class size/enrollment of "A-G" authorized courses (overall and by subject).
5. Percent of middle school courses each school taught by fully credentialed teachers, certified in the subject matter of the course (overall and by subject). This should include teachers instructing ELL students.
6. Counselor to student ratio in high schools and middle schools.

IV. Annual surveys of students, parents, teachers, and staff (developed by the advisory committee, administered by the district, and reported by the advisory committee) that assess progress toward implementation of necessary conditions and supports for "A-G" for all

1. Teacher surveys (elementary, middle, and high school) could be administered online and focus on the extent to which they have been provided:
   a) Instructional materials, supplies and equipment to teach "A-G" classes or "A-G" readiness curriculum (e.g., sufficient copies of novels for students to use at school and take home; science laboratories and supplies; etc.).
   b) Professional development in teaching rigorous content to "non-traditional" college preparatory students.
   c) Supplemental opportunities to provide more time on instruction to students in "A-G" subjects—e.g. after school tutoring, "back up" classes, Saturday classes, summer bridge programs, etc.

2. Student surveys (elementary, middle, and high school) could focus on the extent to which they have been provided:
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a) An individual learning plan and/or high school course plan.
b) Guidance and encouragement to take “A-G” courses.
c) Information for their parents regarding “A-G” courses and their implications for post-secondary choices.
d) Opportunities for supplemental instruction to help them succeed.

3. Parent surveys (elementary, middle, and high school) could be administered online and focus on the extent to which they have been provided:

   a) With information on A-G requirements and availability of CTE courses.
   b) Information on availability of supplemental supports.
   c)
   d)

4. Staff surveys (elementary, middle, and high school) could focus on the extent to which they have been provided:

   a) Professional development.
   b) Professional development for algebra and science (where appropriate).
   c) Information on A-G requirements and their implications for post-secondary choices.
   d) Professional development for transition between 5th and 6th grade curriculum.

V. Develop a Plan to Identify and Monitor A-G Best Practices

VI. Develop Plans for Authentic Student, Parent, and Community Engagement
1. Develop a comprehensive plan for parent and community engagement. The plan should include outreach, organizing, and communication strategies for ongoing activities.
2. Develop a comprehensive plan to outreach and engage the business and higher education community.
3. Develop an A-G Implementation website that provides information to the public about progress made toward implementation and solicits feedback from the public about necessary conditions and supports.
4. Create a process for students/parents to provide feedback to central administration about issues of equity and access to A-G curriculum.
5. Develop an interagency (District/City) plan to leverage available City resources through departments and agencies to make learning supports for students take hold to develop value-added programs or activities.
6. Develop a vision for how the District and City can work more effectively together to improve educational outcomes for all students.
VII. Other Issues and Concerns to Consider

1. How will district provide access to the A-G curriculum will be provided to Options students?
2. How will SLC’s implement the A-G curriculum?
3. How will A-G curriculum co-exist with magnet programs, AP and Honors courses?
4. How will counselors schedule students in a SLC that offers the A-G curriculum?
   What if the student is part of a magnet/gifted program?
5. How will the district offer A-G curriculum by 2006-07 in year-round schools?
6. How will the A-G curriculum prepare students to pass the CAHSEE exit exam?
7. How will the District align resources to serve students not mastering core material in the A-G course sequence?
8. How can the District assist schools, specifically Program Improvement schools, and mandate a more rigorous curriculum?
9. How will the District serve students who decide to pursue an A-G course curriculum after receiving a waiver (i.e. an 11th grader)? What if the student decided to opt for the CTE curriculum after several years into the A-G course sequence? How can both paths be followed to avoid institutionalizing a two-track educational system: college-prep or career prep?
10. How will students be academically prepared to take Algebra II? (District should monitor students grades and state standards exam test scores)
11. What will a 5th to 6th and 8th to 9th summer bridge program look like?
APPENDIX G

20 Year Timeline On A–G Movement And CEE A–G Campaign
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>AAP/CEE begins to organize parents for educational equity in West Los Angeles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>L.A. Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAMP) is created.</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>UCLA/ACCORD develops College Opportunity Ratio (COR).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Community Coalition launches Equal Access to College Preparatory Classes campaign in South L.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>United Way of Greater Los Angeles releases American Dream Makers, a report acknowledging the emergence of Latinos as the county’s largest ethnic group with enormous potential for defining the future of L.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Senate Bills 1731 (2002), 383 (2003), and 1795 (2004) are introduced by Senator Richard Alarcón in an attempt to include A-G within CA state high school graduation requirements. All three are defeated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>November 2005 – LAUSD School Board member José Huizar is elected to the Los Angeles City Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>July 2006 – Mónica García elected to LAUSD Board, becoming the third Latina to serve on the Board in its 155 year history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>October 2006 – David L. Brewer III becomes the 46th superintendent of LAUSD.</td>
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</table>

**2000**
- Community Coalition launches Equal Access to College Preparatory Classes campaign in South L.A.
- Inner City Struggle begins organizing for educational equity in East L.A.
- United Way of Greater Los Angeles releases American Dream Makers, a report acknowledging the emergence of Latinos as the county’s largest ethnic group with enormous potential for defining the future of L.A.

**2002 – 2004**
- Senate Bills 1731 (2002), 383 (2003), and 1795 (2004) are introduced by Senator Richard Alarcón in an attempt to include A-G within CA state high school graduation requirements. All three are defeated.

**2003**
- United Way of Greater Los Angeles releases Latino Scorecard, exposing the fact that in tracking L.A. County high school enrollment (1998-2000), about 30,000 Latino students “disappeared.”

**2005 – 2007**
- November 2005 – LAUSD School Board member José Huizar is elected to the Los Angeles City Council.

**2008 – 2012**
- November 2005 – LAUSD School Board member José Huizar is elected to the Los Angeles City Council.
- February 2006 – LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer announces retirement.
- July 2006 – Mónica García elected to LAUSD Board, becoming the third Latina to serve on the Board in its 155 year history.
- October 2006 – David L. Brewer III becomes the 46th superintendent of LAUSD.
June 24 - 2004
Alliance for a Better Community and Community Coalition convene first A–G coalition meeting under the name: High School for High Achievement (HSHA).

July – September 2004
HSHA attempts to gather information from LAUSD.

September 2004
HSHA develops Policy Agenda; establishes four committees to divide campaign work.

October – December 2004
HSHA uses talking points in attempt to gather support for coalition’s cause.

January 2005
HSHA holds planning retreat. HSHA adopts new name: Communities for Educational Equity (CEE) CEE begins effort to gather 25,000 petitions from students and parents.

April 26 - 2005
CEE holds press event to publicly launch campaign. CEE presents 25,000 signed petitions to Board of Education at press conference.

June 14 - 2005
Final CEE demonstration at LAUSD district offices is successful.

A–G RESOLUTION PASSES WITH 6-1 VOTE

July 1 - 2005
Antonio Villaraigosa becomes 41st mayor of Los Angeles.
APPENDIX H

Latino Scorecard 2003: Education Area
Education

Overall Education Grade: D

From cradle to college and beyond, Los Angeles County’s education system is not serving Latino students well. As the four indicators of academic success show, L.A. County’s Latino students—who account for 60% of public school enrollment—are less likely to participate in pre-kindergarten, less likely to do well on standardized tests, less likely to stay in high school, and less likely to be eligible for UC or CSU systems. Unless major change occurs, it is likely that many Latino youngsters of today will face limited career prospects and lower wages when they enter the labor market.

Baseline Indicators

1. PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT Grade: C
Some of the most important learning of early literacy and language skills happens before children ever enter kindergarten, yet only 42% of Latino three and four year-olds are enrolled in preschool, compared to 74% of Whites and 63% of African Americans and Asians.

Recommendation:
• Develop a comprehensive vision and follow through with a practical plan that will dramatically increase the number of spaces available—and the quality of—preschool education for Latino children, including family literacy programs.

2. MATH, LANGUAGE, AND READING ACHIEVEMENT Grade: D
About 36% of L.A. County fourth grade Latino students scored at or above the national average on the CAT/6 math test, while 67% of Whites scored at that level. Only 29% of Latino students scored above the national average in language, compared to 64% of Whites, and a mere 19% of Latino students were above the national average in reading compared to 55% of White students.

Recommendation:
• Encourage parents, community, and school leadership to work together for the common goal of school improvement; initiate an effective practical plan of action that is research-based to target issues of literacy and academic achievement.

3. HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION Grade: D
Tracking L.A. County high school enrollment from 1998-2002 shows that by 12th grade, 40% fewer Latino students are enrolled than in 9th grade, compared to an 18% dropoff for Whites. Approximately 30,000 young Hispanics disappeared from school over these four years of high school.
**Recommendation:**
- Promote more aggressive action in the school system by adopting effective dropout intervention strategies. Demand that school districts keep better track of high school students and reliably report the outcome of their high school academic experience.

4. **UC/CSU ELIGIBILITY**  
   Grade: C

Only 26% of Latino high school graduates complete the required coursework for admission to the California State University or University of California systems, compared to 44% for Whites, 69% of Asian American students, and 31% of African Americans in the county. This effectively shuts many Latinos off from a low-cost, high-quality four-year education.

**Recommendations:**
- Increase access to quality college preparation classes, including advanced placement courses.
- Ensure that parents and students are better informed about how to prepare for a college education, and increase awareness about financial resources that are available.

**SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS**

Despite dismal aggregate statistics, researchers found many schools in L.A. County that showed promising results for Latino students.

- **Math:** 61 schools had 45% or more scoring above the national average
- **Language:** 52 schools had 38% or more with scores above national average
- **Reading:** 46 schools had 27% or more scoring above national average

These schools have shown that success is possible for Latino students – a lesson that more schools need to study if we’re going to build a brighter future for L.A. County.

**Recommendation:**
- Research best practices of L.A. County schools with strong records of Latino achievement, and replicate these practices in schools throughout the county.

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**The foundation** for future success is laid in a child’s first years. Kids who have good early educational experiences are more likely to stay in school. This basic fact contains deep implications, which ripple outward and influence every aspect of our community: higher levels of education are strongly associated with better health, enhanced job prospects, and larger incomes. Since each individual’s opportunity for success helps determine the success of our community as a whole, Latinos’ educational attainment will become more and more important as this growing population becomes the workforce, the emerging leadership, and the parents of future generations in Los Angeles County, one of the largest and most important regions of the U.S.

"There is hope for the schooling of Latino children … if we can learn to pay more attention to those districts and schools that are doing a better job… and if we can focus the attention of parents and the community on the need for academic excellence." – Harry Pachon, Ph.D. Tomás Rivera Policy Institute at USC