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L.A. Unified Seeks to Reduce Waste via Pilot Programs
Addressing Milk Waste

LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education today approved a resolution that seeks to address wasting milk in schools.

Board Member Mónica Ratliff authored the resolution. This issue was highlighted during a presentation by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety at the Budget, Facilities and Audit Committee, which she chairs. The presentation cited a 2015 study, which determined that in any given week, the District throws out approximately 600 tons of organic waste, including liquid. The presentation included photographs, showing students pouring unwanted milk into large plastic garbage bags.

“I was appalled to learn that L.A. Unified was pouring so much milk down the drain and into large garbage bags and then sending those garbage bags filled with milk to landfills,” said Board Member Ratliff. “I hope that these pilot programs will help us devise a long-term solution for addressing this issue.”

“On behalf of our students and school site staff, I was happy to co-sponsor this resolution that will provide an opportunity for interested schools to participate in one of several nutritional pilot programs,” said Board Member Scott Schmerelson. “This program will restore low-fat, flavored milk as an incentive for children to drink milk instead of wasting literally tons of it every day.”

The District will establish four distinct pilot programs: one includes offering both white milk and flavored milk; two more enhances how milk will be displayed – one for white milk only and one for both white and flavored milk; and another pilot will be an educational campaign that encourage students to drink milk.

The programs will be implemented at select schools – three per Board District for a total of 21, and the superintendent will develop a report with potential districtwide, cost-neutral solutions to reduce waste.

"I applaud the Board of Education for approving this resolution," said Joseph Vaughn, director of the Food Services Division at L.A. Unified. "It is a huge step in helping to reduce food waste and it will provide us the data we need to determine if this is a long-term solution. I am excited to see how the pilot goes."
In accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s guidelines, school districts are required to offer milk with each meal in order to receive reimbursement. Since 2011, L.A. Unified has served only white milk as part of its meal programs. The impact of serving only white milk, as well as the impacts of the pilot programs, will be examined to determine the best options for reducing waste.

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