L.A. Unified bracing for uncertain fiscal future

Board of Education directs Superintendent to outline possibilities for decentralizing district operations and budgeting

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles Unified Board of Education approved today a resolution calling on the Superintendent to develop a report on the feasibility of further decentralizing district operations by reallocating resources from the central office to local district offices and school sites. Board Member Mónica Ratliff introduced the motion, which was co-sponsored by Board Member Dr. Ref Rodríguez. The resolution was approved by a 4-2 vote, with one abstention.

“Academic achievement and student success happens in the classroom as a result of the daily work of teachers, administrators, staff, students and parents,” said Board Member Ratliff. “It is essential that we are devoting as many of our resources as possible to the school site versus the central office.”

The resolution cites the findings of the Independent Financial Review Panel, which paints a bleak picture of the district’s financial future. The panel found that, “If it is determined that the trend [of declining enrollment] cannot be reversed, the District’s future planning will be characterized by constant down-sizing and loss of revenue until the District reaches a new equilibrium at a lower, but sustainable, level.”

“This resolution is important because it supports our commitment to decentralization and to ensuring that we are allocating resources in a way that is most beneficial to our schools and local districts,” said Board Member Dr. Rodríguez.

Superintendent Michelle King is already taking steps to stabilize the budget and decentralize resources to continue L.A. Unified’s movement toward 100 percent graduation.

The Superintendent or her designee will present the report at the April 4, 2017, meeting of the Board’s Budget, Facilities and Audit Committee. The report will cover information such as the number of employees housed at the district’s administrative headquarters; the feasibility of reallocating staff positions and budgets to local district offices and school sites; and the feasibility of leasing or selling the district’s administrative headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

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