School Board Approves Expanding Wellness Centers

LOS ANGELES – Students cannot focus in school if they experience infections, toothaches, vision problems, anxiety or trauma. The L.A. School Board recognizes the importance of good health so youngsters can attend school regularly, be attentive and learn. Toward that goal, the school board unanimously approved today a plan to develop or expand 11 school-based clinics and wellness centers.

School Board Vice President Dr. George J. McKenna III said, “We are pleased to support the expansion of school based clinics. Incorporating health services into the school environment serves as the catalyst for offering our students high-quality services, and makes our schools the health home of our communities.”

The projects consist of both new and expanded wellness centers and school based health clinics which, when complete, will provide access to free and low-cost comprehensive medical, mental health and dental services to students, families and communities.

The new or expanded sites will be located at or near the following schools: Balboa Complex (adjacent to Birmingham High School), Charles Drew Middle School, John C. Fremont Senior High, Holmes Avenue Elementary School, Thomas Jefferson Senior High School, Charles Maclay Middle School, Manual Arts Senior High School, Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez Senior High School, Santee Education Complex, Telfair Avenue Elementary School, and Young Empowered Scholars Academy.

Board Member Moníca Ratliff said, “The health and well-being of our youth is essential. As an attorney with Neighborhood Legal Services in Pacoima years ago, and as a teacher in downtown Los Angeles for 12 years, I have seen the significant negative impact that a lack of health care can have on families and students.”
She added, “I am thankful that the Board voted today to expand the school-based clinic at Telfair Elementary School and wellness center at Maclay Middle School. These health centers will both support and encourage student success and help students and families in Pacoima have access to the care they need.”

To date, there are over 50 school-based clinics and 14 wellness centers located throughout the District. The current wellness center initiative began in 2009, when the Facilities Services Division, Student Health and Human Services, and the Los Angeles Trust for Children’s Health presented to the Board of Education a Healthcare Master Plan, which identified high school complexes with the highest need as locations for wellness centers. These projects addressed barriers to health and learning by providing services to students (from the campus and surrounding schools), as well as family and members of the community.

In 2014, the School Board allocated $50 million of bond funds for the construction of school based-clinics and wellness centers. The new projects will be funded by bond program funds that have been earmarked for leveraging partnerships to provide afterschool activities, programming and community use of facilities.

"The investment L.A. Unified is making in student health and wellness is unprecedented in scale by school districts across the nation," said Maryjane Puffer, executive director of the L.A. Trust for Children’s Health. “Understanding the intersection between a student's health and their ability to learn is clear to the District. Through this investment, thousands more children and families will be able to access health care and wellness programs that are at school and part of L.A. Unified's culture of wellness. The L.A. Trust is a proud partner of L.A. Unified in this life-changing effort.”

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