

For More Information

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**PARENT ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION CALLS SCHOOLS REOPENING PIVOTAL MOMENT IN EDUCATION**

***PON Report: Training of Administrators in School Districts is Critical to Parent-Teacher Collaboration***

(Los Angeles - August 18, 2021) The Parent Organization Network (PON), a Los Angeles-based parent advocacy organization, says the return to school in August can be a “make or break” moment for parents of school children and their teachers. Both are returning to an academic setting divided over the coronavirus and how to best teach children in the new environment.

PON today released its second report on a practice that exists in some school districts that prevent some parents from fully engaging in the education of their children. PON Project Director Araceli Simeón says when parents and teachers come together again after so much time without personal face-to-face interaction, school district officials need to make sure the environment is welcoming and respectful between both parents and teachers. “It’s essential to improving our schools, particularly at this time, when many of our parents have been literally and figuratively disconnected from the schools,” Simeón says.

Supporting principals to build relationships and mediate conflict is key to establishing effective family-school partnerships, a key ingredient to the success of schools to reach academic and learning goals. “The current reopening of schools, where many families have endured traumatic experiences, may predispose some situations to escalate to conflict,” Simeón says. Ultimately, these disputes end up penalizing parents by barring them from their child’s school for a year, preventing any meaningful engagement in their child’s education.

PON knows first-hand the results of poor communication and misuse of punitive measures against parents in the past which hurts efforts to establish a strong working relationship between parents and administrators, or with teachers in the classroom. In 2016, PON issued a report on the use of Disruptive Person Letters (DPLs) in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The report found there was an arbitrary misuse of the DPLs by a small number of principals towards parents who were described as “disruptive,” actions based solely at the discretion of the principal. In fact, parents who received DPLs often were the most engaged in the education of their children wanting to make sure their child’s needs were being met, such as parents of English learners or students with special needs.

PON’s 2016 DPL report was instrumental in leading to some changes in LAUSD and state policy in 2017:

* LAUSD staff revised its guidance to principals and added an appeals process.
* LAUSD board members approved the *Increasing Communication and Strengthening Relationships between Schools and Parents Resolution* requiring the development of a pilot training program on relationship building and conflict mediation for administrators.

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**PON Report: Schools Reopening Pivotal Moment in Education**

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The Commission on Teachers Credentialing (CTC) also updated credentialing requirements for administrators to include the use of positive behavior interventions, conflict resolution, and restorative justice as a performance expectation.

In its latest progress report on LAUSD’s use of DPLs, the top five findings show:

1. The number of DPLs issued declined 67.8% from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018.

2. The number of principals issuing a high number of DPLs (5 or more letters) declined from 11% to 4.6%. No principal issued more than 5 letters; previously some principals issued 6 to 11 letters.

3. Warnings (instead of issuing a DPL) increased by 8%.

4. Parents did not use the appeal process although one was established.

5. LAUSD training outcomes are promising in providing principals with alternative strategies to working with parents instead of using DPLs.

“LAUSD reported that administrators responded favorably to the training. Principals appreciate being supported and better equipped to use more collaborative approaches to work with parents and develop positive relationships, which is critical for student success,” Simeón says.

For more information on the findings and the LAUSD training program, download the report here: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e7ce800a65f6b4998972009/t/611c1de8a33e6a6fb6a276ad/1629232619709/2021_PON_Progress+Report_FINAL.pdf>

Many variables outside the school setting also are constantly changing and will impact how going ‘back to school’ will look this school year. Simeón emphasizes that best practices for family engagement should be a fundamental component of education reform as we emerge from the pandemic world, especially as “the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the critical role of family-school partnerships in the academic achievement and overall well-being of students,” Simeón says.

The jury is still out on the long-term impact of the coronavirus on education and learning, but Simeón says family engagement is part of an equity strategy to make sure that all students are getting the education their children need and deserve. “Supporting administrators with training leads to situations where everyone wins, especially the students.”

***About PON****: PON’s mission is to unite the power of underserved parents to break through barriers in public education, so parents and educators can effectively partner to ensure equity and excellence for all students.*

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