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News Release

August 8, 2007

LAUSD KICKS OFF DISTRICT-WIDE ETHICS TRAINING WITH NEW FILM

"The Gray Zone" Debuts at Special Premiere

Los Angeles – The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) showcased its innovative approach of raising the ethics bar among school districts at the premiere screening last night of "The Gray Zone," the film that is the centerpiece of the district-wide ethics training effort which is poised to launch at the Superintendent's Opening Meeting on August 24 at the Convention Center.

Held as a recognition event for the volunteer actors who made the project possible, the limited screening was attended by key ethics champions including parent and community stakeholders, senior LAUSD leaders and Superintendent David L. Brewer III.

"Children learn about ethics from their role models and those lessons last a lifetime," said Superintendent Brewer at the event. "As an educational institution, our staff members have the special opportunity and responsibility to serve as character role models for our students."

Written and developed internally by LAUSD staff, the film features four vignettes illustrating ethical dilemmas encountered by school officials and was created with the dual goals of supporting ethical-decision making in the workplace and raising awareness of the impact that adults have on the behavior and character of children.

More than 30 volunteer actors participated in the making of the film, including LAUSD teachers, administrators and students. There are also special cameos by Superintendent Brewer, Board Member Yolie Flores Aguilar and LAUSD alumna Denise Nakano, a television anchor for Philadelphia's channel 10 who appears throughout the film with breaking news alerts.

The film adopts the format of a television program to explore weighty concepts like conflicts of interest, nepotism, proper use of resources and revolving door considerations and utilizes mock commercials to provide counterbalance and humor while reinforcing key ethics messages.

One pointed commercial features LAUSD student Madison Gray as "Jenny", a young girl speaking before her class who says of her future: "In eight years, I will be highly unethical. It will start with some white lies. Maybe I'll copy an assignment then cheat on a test. Then maybe I'll lie on my resume to get my first job. You gotta start small and build your way up." The satirical segment ends with little Jenny asking rhetorically, "Look out for number one, right?"

School Board President Mónica Garcia says the film underscores the purpose behind the district's ethics initiative – strengthening public trust and confidence in LAUSD in support of student success.

"Every single staff member at LAUSD has the opportunity to make a positive difference in students' lives through the decisions we make each and every day. We have to ensure that our decisions are always made from a strong ethical foundation which builds on our public's trust," said Garcia.

Along with the larger school districts in the nation, LAUSD is a leader in promoting ethics in the K-12 environment. The district-wide ethics training initiative is being launched in accordance with the 2004-2007 "Moving Ethics Forward" Strategic Plan which was presented by Ethics Officer Yea-Lan Chiang in October 2004.

A two-minute and thirty second preview clip of "The Gray Zone" film is available for viewing on the Ethics Office website. To see the clip or learn more about LAUSD's other ethics initiatives, please visit: www.lausd.net/ethics.

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