

**INFORMATIVE**

**INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE**

**To:** Members, Board of Education **Date:** November 17, 2005  
**From:** Roy Romer, Superintendent  
**Subject:** Board Motion on Ethics

I am opposed to the reassignment of the Ethics Office to the Office of the Inspector General/Office of the Special Counsel. The Ethics Office was created to be a proactive force in creating a culture of high ethical standards for all employees. I have taken the responsibility for creating the Ethics Office very seriously. In opposing this resolution, I want to caution the Board that the proposed realignment of reporting for the office will change the perception and function of the Ethics Office.

The office is currently placed within the District's structure in alignment with best practice. According to the Ethics Officer Association, 70% of Ethics Officers report to top management, either directly to the Chief Executive, General Counsel, or an Executive Vice President. Best practices dictate that an ethics officer and inspector general need to play complementary, yet distinct roles – it's an industry standard for these roles to be discrete. For these reason, I caution the Board against a realignment because this will change the perception of the office as a resource that employees can contact for advice, guidance, and counsel.

I look forward to updating the Board in full on the progress we have been making on LAUSD's ethics initiative when staff presents the update at the upcoming Audit, Business & Technology committee this November. With my full support, staff has using the "Moving Ethics Forward" strategic plan as our roadmap since the plan was presented at ABT last October, so that we can realize the Board's vision for a successful ethics initiative throughout LAUSD. In particular, I have made it a priority to address all five of the key resolve statements included in Mr. Huizar's motion from March 8, 2005 as described below:

**1. Ethics is a priority**

I have directed my staff to be active participants in supporting the ethics initiative. Thus far, all senior staff have participated in an ethics briefing. Senior staff who are newly promoted or welcomed to LAUSD will each participate in a new employee ethics orientation before they assume their responsibilities.

In addition, we are also coordinating to integrate ethics into the organizational, management and cultural fabric of LAUSD by working to develop a robust "Local Ethics Liaison" framework and preparing the structure and tools that will allow for annual ethics training of all employees by 2007.

**2. Resources have been allocated**

I have committed and secured a stable level of funding (\$600,000 for each fiscal year) for this office in accordance with the strategic plan. In my budget proposal to the Board, I included full funding for the Ethics Office and the Board of Education approved the funding. Continuation of the funding is at the discretion of the Board but I intend to continue to request an appropriate level of funding for the Ethics Office in subsequent years.

**3. Staffing is complete**

Under the leadership of our Ethics Officer, we have successfully restructured the Ethics Office and as of September have the full team we envisioned with four new Ethics Advisors.

**4. Ethics and lobbying are a focus**

A model ethics website with rich tools and interactive training has been developed and launched as a critical first step of supporting our employees and contractors in demonstrating ethical conduct.

A new cutting-edge lobbying policy has been presented and is on target for implementation in 2006, ahead of what is called for in our plan. The companion update of our Contractor's Code is also in the works.

I have directed the Ethics Office to bring both these policies for board approval before year's end.

**5. We are ready to share our progress**

As specified in the Board motion, I have been ready and eager to share our successes in achieving these major milestones by the requested October 31<sup>st</sup> date.

I think you will be very pleased to learn of all the progress we have achieved in realizing the Board's vision. We are on our way to creating a model ethics program, built on best practices and shared responsibility. Creating a truly successful ethics initiative is no easy task, but the commitment and attention of senior managers is allowing us to build great momentum. Coupled with your support, we are well positioned for infusing ethics into LAUSD's policies, practices and most importantly – culture.

Given the operational requirements and integration necessary for creating a successful ethics program, the current placement of the Ethics Office has been both strategic and beneficial. I am greatly concerned that any proposals to reposition the office would not only deviate from best practices, but also jeopardize our ability to make great strides together. I look forward to the continued success of this initiative and your support of our continued progress in creating a culture of high ethical standards in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

C: Dan Isaacs  
Jim Morris  
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