

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION ♦ OFFICE OF SCHOOL CHOICE
Charter Schools Division

333 South Beaudry Avenue, 20th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90017
Office: (213) 241-0399 ♦ Prop. 39: (213) 241-5130 ♦ Fax: (213) 241-2054

RAMON C. CORTINES
Superintendent of Schools

DR. RUTH PEREZ
Deputy Superintendent of Instruction



GEORGE BARTLESON
Chief of School Choice

JOSÉ COLE-GUTIÉRREZ
Director, Charter Schools Division

December 15, 2014

RE: PARENT VOLUNTEERING REQUIREMENTS

Dear Charter School Board Chairs and Charter Leaders:

As you may be aware, a recently released report on mandatory parent volunteer requirements at California charter schools identified 168 schools statewide, including schools authorized by the LAUSD, that purportedly require parents to provide volunteer hours as a condition of their child/ren's admission, continued enrollment, and/or participation in school educational activities. Regardless of whether the report accurately captured current policy and/or practice at our charter schools, it nonetheless provides a useful reminder of the importance of ensuring full compliance with all applicable laws and charter terms. The Charter Schools Division (CSD) therefore takes this opportunity to recap our expectations regarding parent volunteering requirements.

As educators, we know that greater parental involvement in school yields higher levels of student academic achievement, better attendance, and other educational benefits. The inclusion of parental involvement as one of the eight state priorities adopted last year in the Local Control Funding Formula legislation (AB 97) reflects the significance of this factor in student academic success. All public schools, whether traditional, pilot, charter, or some other model, therefore continually seek effective ways to increase and support parent engagement at school. Schools employ various tools and approaches such as parent compacts, centers, conferences, special events, awards assemblies, classes, workshops, and volunteer opportunities to achieve this laudable goal.

Charter public schools are prohibited, however, from requiring a parent or guardian to perform volunteer service as a condition of his/her child's admission, continued enrollment, and/or participation in the school's educational activities, or otherwise discriminating against a student because his/her parent cannot, has not, or will not provide voluntary service to the school. See, e.g., Ed. Code § 49011.¹ Simply put, students must not be held accountable for, or denied their educational rights based on, the actions or inactions of their parents. As also observed on the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) website, "[w]hile parental involvement is a critical key to student success, no student would ever be punished or lose their place at a school

¹ It is important to distinguish denial of a student's right to admission, continued enrollment, and/or participation in a school's educational activities by virtue of his/her parent's failure to meet a parent volunteering requirement from the inclusion of a minimum number of parent volunteer hours as part of a school's eligibility criteria for a Founding Parent preference in accordance with the Board's "Founding Parents/Founders Preference" policy. The latter volunteer service occurs prior to the opening of the school and the preference does not deny a student any protected right; rather, it recognizes the family for its volunteer service in aid of the process of founding the school.

based on a parent's volunteer hours.” (CCSA *Frequently Asked Questions* <<http://www.calcharters.org/understanding/faqs>> [as of December 3, 2014].)

Moving forward, the CSD will continue to address and monitor compliance regarding mandatory parent volunteering requirements as part of its charter school authorization and oversight functions. CSD staff will be following up with individual schools on this issue as appropriate. We further encourage each charter school to undertake a review of the school's current policies and procedures, including the provisions of its parent-student handbook and other stakeholder communications, to ensure that parent volunteering at the school is and remains truly voluntary.

In addition, the CSD requests each school to share this letter, or an equivalent communication, with its parents and other stakeholders as soon as possible and in any event no later than January 23, 2015. This important communication will serve as an additional precaution to avoid any misunderstandings about the nature and impact of parent volunteer service at the school. Please submit a copy of the school's parent/stakeholder communication to the CSD at charterschools@lausd.net by Friday, January 30, 2015.

We appreciate your collaboration and cooperation in this matter and look forward to continuing to work with you in the best interests of the students and families of Los Angeles.

Sincerely,



José Cole-Gutiérrez, Director
Charter Schools Division