

**ERIC GARCETTI**



The Education Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire:

This questionnaire for Mayoral Candidates is to be submitted and collected by United Way and made public.

Questionnaire

**1. What is your vision for education in Los Angeles?**

As a parent of a one-year-old daughter, I want her to be able to attend a local public school and get a great education and be ready to succeed in a college and a career. As Mayor, I will be a passionate advocate for L.A.'s students because kids failing to learn and graduate are the most serious problems we face as a City. I do not think we can fix the LAUSD without funding our schools and this will be a priority for me as Mayor. Sacramento has let our kids take the brunt of the financial crisis. We have lost arts education in most schools; we have drastically cut back adult education (which is critical for our economic recovery); too many parents are still not involved in their school; and teachers feel under siege. Several years of layoffs have resulted in a climate of instability and upheaval. The passage of Prop 30 means more funding for our schools as does potentially the Governor's Proposed funding reform, but we will have to continue to fight for full funding to turn around our schools.

It's also important to note that while more funding for education is necessary, it's not sufficient to ensure a great education for all our students. As the District rebuilds, it must do so with a focus on empowering local schools, accountability, the right priorities, and right practice - high quality teaching, support services and programs in our classrooms so that our students graduate on time, college and career ready. My vision for education is also that it isn't constrained to what happens during a regular school day. As a city, we need to recognize that the things that go on after school have a tremendous impact on whether a child is going to show up at school, ready to learn, and work as a community to support our kids and our schools. My vision is that we move past the finger pointing and start talking about everyone's part in solutions.

I am proud of my work as Councilmember to nearly triple the number of parks, to create joint-use agreements with schools in order to create new fields used by students and the community, to ensure that there is an after-school program accessible to every school in my district, and to have reduced violent crime in my district by 66% to keep our neighborhoods safe. I will build on this work as Mayor.

**2. What lessons have you learned from Mayor Villaraigosa's work in education? What has worked and what would you do differently?**

Mayor Villaraigosa has also proved there is a constructive path for real, on the ground engagement in the Partnership for LA Schools. These schools offer a tremendous opportunity to pilot new ways for the Mayor to connect directly and collaboratively to some of the lowest performing schools in LAUSD and the central District, and see what really can work. It's important for the Mayor to have "skin in the game", and to show passion for kids and for education and I think that's yielded some real benefits to the whole district, such as the School Report Card and Parent College.

**3. As you know, low student performance significantly impacts a city's well-being. What are the 3 most important things you would do as mayor to improve our schools?**

As Mayor, I will break down the walls that have turned our schools into isolated islands in our community and recast each school at the heart of our neighborhood. Every Angeleno has a direct interest in our local public schools succeeding in order to build our economy and support successful kids and families in our community. With this approach, I will focus on these top three priorities to improve our school system as mayor:

Full funding for local schools:

1) I support the Governor's proposed local control funding changes to increase funding for higher need schools. We will benefit, but it will take leadership to get this change approved. But this does not solve the overall issue that Los Angeles has the nation's second largest school district and yet California is 47th in the nation in per pupil spending. We have to get our per pupil spending in competition with Districts like those in Massachusetts and New York and not vie for last with Mississippi. We need to increase per pupil spending and stop being paid in IOUs and deferrals. We have shortchanged our kids and we need to provide our students with the services and programs they need.

Career and College Readiness:

2) I will align education with the needs of the economy. I will forge connections between LA-based businesses and local schools so that students gain access to skills needed for the workplace of the future. I will implement a system of one-stop job training at WorkSource Centers and increase investment in career training that works. I will ensure that our children are being taught the languages of the current and future economy – both foreign languages and computer programming languages and protect vocational training and adult education programs that lead to jobs. I will fight against the massive cuts to adult education to protect successful programs like Van Nuys Aviation Mechanics School.

The key to educating career and college ready kids is science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM skills, and I want LA to be a leader in educating our kids in science and math. The President has issued a call to support schools through his Educate to Innovate initiative and I want LA to be a leader in this effort. As Mayor, I will establish a technology and Education Council to assist in this effort.

Focus on kids AND community:

3) As Mayor, I will use city funds and resources to help our schools as I have in my district where we have built community centers, athletic fields, and parent centers to help our schools improve. This means linking our local businesses and employers with students for internships and summer jobs. This means providing ways for all Angelenos to help with lending a hand at a neighborhood school--to build a school garden, to tutor in an after-school program, or to help a high school student complete a college application. I have seen first hand the difference schools can make when they are able to help shape the educational life of a child starting in preschool.

I am proud to have helped bring Promise Neighborhoods to Los Angeles, just announced two months ago. Promise Neighborhoods is President Obama's signature education initiative, modeled on the Harlem Children's Zone. Los Angeles is now the largest city in America with a Promise Neighborhoods implementation grant. One of our great nonprofits the Youth Policy Institute received the largest grant in the nation, \$30 million, to transform the communities of Hollywood and Pacoima with a cradle-to-career pipeline - yes cradle to career -

and at the same time create a zone of choice for families in these communities with an array of high-quality public school options. There were only seven awards by the U.S. Department of Education, and the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood application got the highest score of any city in the country. This is a testament to how my team, and Mayor Villaraigosa's team, worked closely with the County, and the School District, and corporate and philanthropic partners, to pull everyone together and go at this opportunity in a revolutionary way – strategic, collaborative, breaking down silos, blending funding streams. This type of effective collaboration is exactly how I hope to lead our city as Mayor.

**4. As mayor, would you support John Deasy remaining Superintendent? Would you use your position to champion Deasy's push for reform – and if so, how?**

Yes. Superintendent Deasy has made progress in important areas, improving test scores and cutting waste at the administrative level. I will support his contract renewal and help in every way possible to bring more resources to our local schools. As Mayor I will work with the Superintendent to see even stronger results to move quickly to improve our local schools and help our kids succeed.

**5. As mayor, would you support charter school expansion in Los Angeles? Do you see a need to limit charter school expansion or charter school funding?**

I would support additional charter schools that can show results. I don't see a need for limits. I see a need for clear accountability. Every school, charter or traditional needs to be held to the same standards - where there are centers of excellence, we should look at what those schools are doing well and support and encourage sharing of these best practices and where there is failure, we need to act.

**6. Some would consider UTLA resistant to many of the recent reform policies that have been implemented to improve school performance. What is your opinion on this?**

UTLA, and all LAUSD labor partners bring an important voice to the debate. If we all agree that the single most important factor in the success of a student is the teacher at the front of the classroom, then we better find a way to work with classroom teachers and put the interests of our kids first. I think it's also important to note that UTLA is filled with diverse opinions and that these policy debates are very multi-dimensional.

**7. It is essential to include student achievement data when evaluating our teachers.**

I agree. Data does have a place in evaluating teachers. The teachers and the District have agreed to include data and this is a great first step. I believe that this agreement can help all sides get past this threshold discussion and reframe our thinking of using data as a tool to collaboratively fix problems and really support our students and teachers. As a former educator myself, I loved getting a number of inputs for my teacher evaluations that focused not just on numbers but on specific ways that I could improve. Together with my fellow educators, we could sit down and learn how to become even better at our jobs. We cannot lose the human element in teaching our children or assessing our teachers.

**8. If you had a child entering middle school, to which school would you send your child? Explain your answer.**

When my child is ready for middle school, I will evaluate schools looking at test scores, diversity, curriculum, accessibility, safety, and parent engagement, among other criteria. But ultimately, I will put the needs of my child and educational environment that I think she will do best ahead of everything.

Middle school can be tough on many students as they grow up, so we need to pay special attention in how we support middle schools. There are many great examples of success at the elementary level where the communities are smaller and parents are more engaged, but our middle schools face many challenges. I've been impressed by recent API gains at Leconte Middle School, which is one of my neighborhood's middle schools, which has seen greater community involvement, and King which has now gained 236 points, but is a magnet school. I have partnered with both of these schools to improve pedestrian safety near King Middle School and support a joint use project at Irving Middle School to add a soccer field for both the kids and the community.