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Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education Passes Resolution to Promote Healthy Relationships and Prevent Teen Dating Violence

Resolution Lauded By Peace Over Violence, Start Strong Los Angeles



Patti Giggans, Executive Director of Peace Over Violence, speaks at a news conference before the LAUSD meeting where the Board passed a landmark resolution to prevent teen dating violence.

LOS ANGELES (October 12, 2011)— The Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education yesterday passed a teen dating violence prevention resolution, firmly establishing the District as a leader in responding to and preventing adolescent relationship abuse. The resolution provides for district coordination of teen dating violence intervention and prevention strategies at all LAUSD schools, training of school staff, faculty and administrators, as well as prevention education for students and parents/caregivers, and ongoing monitoring of teen dating violence incident reports and prevention activities.

Patricia Giggans, Executive Director at Peace Over Violence, remarked: “We commend the Board of Education for recognizing the importance of building healthy relationship skills with our teens and children. With this resolution, LAUSD yet again becomes a champion for ending violence in our relationships, families and communities.”

Trina Greene, Program Manager for Start Strong Los Angeles, an anti-violence program aimed at middle-schoolers, said the resolution is an important step in empowering students and schools to identify the warning signs of relationship violence.

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[metro headquarters](#)

1015 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 200
Los Angeles, California 90017

213.955.9090 office

213.955.9093 fax

[west san gabriel valley center](#)

892 North Fair Oaks Avenue, Suite D
Pasadena, California 91103

626.584.6191 office

626.584.6193 fax

[24-hour hotlines](#)

626.793.3385

310.392.8381

213.626.3393

[video phones](#)

213.955.9249

866.947.8684

866.824.9907

peaceoverviolence.org

info@peaceoverviolence.org



Passage of the resolution, which was in development by LAUSD and Peace Over Violence for years, came in the wake of the stabbing death of 17-year old Cindi Santana at South East High School in South Gate by her ex-boyfriend. "We don't want to lose one more young person to relationship violence," Greene said.

Steve Zimmer, Board member for District 4, sponsored the resolution. He said "In my experience I have seen the power of positive relationships working in the lives of youth. Teen dating violence prevention not only influences the actions of those directly affected, but influences the lives and actions of parents as they see their children breaking the cycle of violence. That is why it is so important that LAUSD continue to be at the forefront of teen dating violence prevention." Mr. Zimmer is a 16-year veteran teacher and community activist. He has been working on issues of teen dating and sexual violence for years at John Marshall High School, and now in his capacity as a board member.

The resolution contains provisions for District coordination of teen dating and sexual violence response and education, professional development topics for school employees, prevention education for students, parent engagement and education strategies, notice of the policy to students and parents/caregivers, and data collection and reporting requirements.

The resolution is based on the model teen dating violence prevention policy developed through *Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships*, an initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with Blue Shield of California Foundation to target 11- to 14-year-olds and rally entire communities to promote healthy relationships as the way to prevent teen dating violence and abuse. Peace Over Violence is one of eleven *Start Strong* sites and helped to develop the model policy with other experts and stakeholders.

"The passage of this resolution is a tribute to the paradigm shift that is occurring in Los Angeles, California, and the nation," said Emily Austin, Director of Policy, Peace Over Violence. Promoting healthy relationships and responding to teen dating violence is not an option—it is a necessity for creating safe schools and positive school climates."

The resolution is the result of a dedicated partnership between LAUSD, Peace Over Violence, violence prevention organizations, local schoolteachers, counselors, and administrators, and youth leaders. In the following months, LAUSD will develop an implementation strategy in partnership with administrators, community organizations, law enforcement, and other key stakeholders.

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Peace Over Violence is a social service/social change agency dedicated to building healthy relationships, families and communities free from sexual, domestic and interpersonal violence. peaceoverviolence.org

[metro headquarters](#)

1015 wilshire boulevard, suite 200
los angeles, california 90017

213 . 955 . 9090 office

213 . 955 . 9093 fax

[west san gabriel valley center](#)

892 north fair oaks avenue, suite D
pasadena, california 91103

626 . 584 . 6191 office

626 . 584 . 6193 fax

[24-hour hotlines](#)

626 . 793 . 3385

310 . 392 . 8381

213 . 626 . 3393

[video phones](#)

213 . 955 . 9249

866 . 947 . 8684

866 . 824 . 9907