



## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **2016 STATE OF SCHOOLS REMARKS**

**By Kim Kenne  
President, Board of Education**

**September 27, 2016**

Good evening and welcome. My name is Kim Kenne and I am the PUSD Board of Ed representative for District 1. Also here this evening are: (list of Board members in attendance). It is my honor, as Board President, to give you a State of the Schools address this evening. It is also my duty since this speech is required by our Pasadena City Charter which also spells out the content. Therefore, tonight I will be speaking about our progress in achieving last year's goals, the financial state of our district and our goals for the school year that has just begun. In my mind, this address is the board president's opportunity to update the citizens of our three communities on how well their tax dollars are being spent for the public education of our children. As such, my speech reflects my own views and not necessarily those of staff or other board members.

As many of you may know, California has moved to a new system of funding schools and a new system of accountability. The new funding system, the Local Control Funding Formula or LCFF, sets aside dollars for the students who need the most support. And it give districts and schools both flexibility and control in making the decisions on how to spend those targeted funds as well as our rest of our state funding. But our district has a responsibility to the stakeholders, which includes all of you, to be open and inclusive in our decision making process. It is our job to make sure all stakeholders – parents, students, staff, community, and taxpayers – have input into decisions, understand how money is being spent and have information about the results that are achieved for our students.

The centerpiece of the new accountability system is the Local Control and Accountability Plan, or LCAP. Our Pasadena Unified LCAP is aligned to our district's strategic plan and is focused on producing students who exemplify our PUSD graduate profile. This plan includes our district goals, the strategies we will implement as we work towards those goals and our expected outcomes. The LCAP also includes

information on funding so that there is transparency for the public and a sense of how our work is connected to our budget. Our LCAP for last year had 10 goals, which included academic goals, school climate goals, student and parent engagement goals along with goals for high quality staff and efficient systems. The report on what we accomplished, how much we spent and whether we met our outcome targets for 15-16 is called the Annual Update and is a section in our recently approved LCAP for 16-17. While this section of the report is approximately 70 pages long, a summary of our progress was presented at our 9/22 board meeting and is available on our website. I'll briefly touch on a few areas of the progress made during the 15-16 school year.

California has moved to a new state testing system, the CAASPP, and 15-16 was the second year of its implementation. This new system is aligned to our revised state standards based on the Common Core. The new tests are taken on computers rather than with paper and pencil and are no longer just multiple-choice. Instead, students are asked to use critical thinking and show how they arrived at their answers. So our first two years of scores reflect this change in the rigor of the tests as well as the move to using technology. As was expected, our scores dropped in the first year of this new system from our scores in the old system. Our second year scores showed growth, of 6 % points in English Language Arts to 42% meeting or exceeding standards and 2% point growth in Math to 31%. We are pleased with the growth in our English scores, especially our 11<sup>th</sup> grade scores but our lower scores and smaller growth in Math at all grades are a concern that we will be addressing. Another concern to be addressed is the achievement gap between our higher scoring subgroups and our lower scoring subgroups; especially between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students. Our middle income and above students are scoring well on the CAASPP, 68% and 58% for ELA and Math respectively. But our lower income students are scoring almost 40 % points lower in each subject, which must be an urgent focus for PUSD since approximately two thirds of our students are in this subgroup.

Another area where we have seen growth but still have room for improvement is our graduation rate. Almost 1 out of 5 of our students is not graduating within four years. With an 81.5% graduation rate in 14-15 (the latest data available at this time); PUSD's rate has dipped slightly from our high of 82.8% in 12-13. With the elimination of the high school exit exam, we might have expected to see a bump up in the rate but it did not materialize. Our dropout rate did decrease in 14-15 – from 11.1% in 13-14 to 8.6%. The change was due to students remaining in school for a fifth year of high school. Fifth year students are not reflected in our graduation or dropout rates so it is important that we capture and

evaluate their ultimate outcome. On the positive side, we are seeing more success in the choices for our students after graduation, with many students gaining admission to four year colleges.

One of the district's focus areas for 15-16 was to communicate better with our stakeholders, the community and especially prospective parents. As a result of this effort and growth in our signature programs, we saw a welcome slowing of our declining enrollment starting in 15-16 and continuing to the current year. While our enrollment has not started increasing yet, with the expansion of popular programs, such as Dual Immersion, magnet schools, and International Baccalaureate, and our attention to the quality of those programs, we look forward to continued growth.

Another focus area for 15-16 involved increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of our systems and processes. The district is making solid steps towards an encompassing system of continuous improvement and accountability. PUSD's planning and budget process was reviewed and made more robust in the 15-16 school year and the implementation of those changes continues this year. Improvements were made in foundational areas such as position control for staffing and spending controls. All of these changes allow the district to use its funding in a more cost effective and focused manner for the benefit of students.

And where are we financially? The last few years of education funding have been a relief after the long, depressing years of the recession. In 15-16 the district was able to reverse its 4 year trend of deficit spending and was able to start rebuilding our safety reserves. But the continuation of funding increases in future years is not assured. The income generated by Prop. 30 is about to start expiring. Prop 55, which is on the ballot in November, will help education from losing some of the funding received under Prop 30 by extending the income tax increase for high earners for an additional twelve years. Without this proposition passing, PUSD could be looking at unpleasant budget cuts in 18-19 and beyond.

Declining enrollment in the last decade or so has had an impact on PUSD's budget. Even as per pupil funding was increasing, our decline in enrollment meant fewer additional dollars for PUSD. And just as important is students' attendance at school each and every day, since our district is funded by the number of students who come to school on a daily basis, not on enrollment numbers. Of course, apart from the financial aspect of good attendance, it is a strong predictor of success in school – it is extremely difficult for students to learn if they are not in the classroom.

Our most important asset in public education is our employees, especially those teachers and staff in daily contract with students and families at our sites. We recognize that retaining our staff is a very high

priority, both by offering competitive compensation and by creating a working environment that is rewarding and meaningful.

Knowing that personnel costs will continue to increase, especially pension benefits, the district will be taking a hard look at rightsizing in the near future. But rightsizing should not be seen as synonymous with downsizing. Hopefully this will be a process that allows all stakeholders to reflect on where funds are being spent today and to consider how to align those funds with our strategic plan priorities and what we want for our students in the future.

The board recently approved the three district Focus Areas for 16-17. The first is to focus on core literacy instruction and interventions at all grade levels. We recognize that students must learn to read so that they can transition to reading to learn. We have also made a commitment to look long and hard at how to improve equity and access to learning for all students. One group that will be a focus is our English Learners. While our reclassification rate to English proficiency has grown over the last few years, we recognize that it could be higher. We still have too many students (over 700) in our secondary grades that have been learning English in our schools for 5 years or more but are still classified as English Learners. These students lose the opportunity to participate fully in electives and higher level, college prep classes. Another group we must focus on is our Special Education students. While the amount of funding we have spent on Special Education students has dramatically risen over the last several years, student achievement has not. We must focus not only on compliance for our students with special needs but on academic growth.

The second focus area for 16-17 is a continuation of our work around continuous improvement and planning, including ensuring fiscal stability for our district. We will also be building on our implementation of our Tiered Autonomy theory of change. This system allows the central office to provide support and focus for those schools that need extra support and to allow stronger schools to have more autonomy over their operation. Dr. McDonald has built an executive team of experienced leaders. We expect the stability of this team and their focused efforts to help PUSD move from good to great.

And lastly, our third focus area concerns improving our ongoing partnership with our parents. Parents and families are a crucial part of the team, along with the school, that supports and guides our students into the citizens and adults that we want them to become.

I want to recognize that there is a sense of optimism in our community about our school district, which has not always been true in the past. We do have many challenges to face but are also seeing more victories. I firmly believe that we can build a school district that provides opportunities for success for all our students and I believe in our students' ability to achieve. These beliefs are why I am involved in this work.

As a member of the public, you may ask, what is your role in this? The board and PUSD want to recognize that many individuals and organizations in our community already provide support and assistance for our programs and our students. Our own Pasadena Educational Foundation provides funding and grant-writing assistance as well as the popular summer enrichment program. The wide support for Collaborate Pasadena, a framework for allowing everyone in the community to work together to our common vision for students and families, proves that that our three communities of Pasadena, Altadena and Sierra Madre support their school district. I would also ask that each individual hold PUSD and the board accountable for building the kind of school district that we all want for our children (and that we need for our society). Stay informed about your school district - there are many ways now available due to technology. Ask the hard questions of your representatives on the board. Vote in the upcoming March school board election – even run for a school board seat! The role of the school board is to ensure that our school district is the one that our community wants. Our board's job consists of three things: setting direction and goals for the district, ensuring that staff has the resources and structure they need to achieve those goals and then holding the system accountable for meeting those goals. But we need your input so that our district reflects the desires and needs of the community. Let's all work together to build that district for our kids.

INTRODUCTION OF KIM BALDONADO BY KIMBERLY KENNE, PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT.

Thank you. The second half of tonight's program is a town hall on technology and parent engagement. It will be moderated by four-time Emmy Award-winning reporter Kim Baldonado from NBC4 Southern California. As a well-respected journalist, she is known for tackling complex issues in her news stories. She has been honored for such topics as the state of public education in Los Angeles, including the National Edward R. Murrow Award. Baldonado grew up in San Gabriel and is known for her community work. She volunteers countless hours speaking to students about the importance of pursuing a college degree. Please join me in welcoming Kim Baldonado.

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