

Los Angeles school district sends layoff notices to 1,600 administrators

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18 March 2017

About 1,600 Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Administrators received layoff notices last Wednesday, the 15th of March. The layoffs would go into effect immediately prior to the 2017-2018 academic year and are limited to contracted and non-school based administrators.

The layoffs may not possibly be implemented depending on the finalization of state and city budgets this coming June. The district had announced 1,700 administrator layoffs at the same time last year, which were rescinded after state revenues were found to be better than expected at the start of the current fiscal year.

Regardless of the immediate fate of the school administrators, however, the ground is being fully prepared for the wholesale privatization of public schools in the nation's second largest school district. The district serves 731,641, with 107,142 of those currently in independent private charter schools nominally part of the district but outside of most district regulations. The cutting of more than half of district administrative staff is meant to sharply accelerate that trend.

The announcement also arrives on the heels of President Trump's announcement to reduce the US Department of Education's budget by \$9 billion while increasing funding for pro-charter and private "school choice" programs by \$1.4 billion.

Under Trump's plan, California's \$113 million share of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program supporting before and after school programs will be entirely eliminated.

Other financial aid programs that California and Los Angeles college students depend on will be drastically cut as well, including the federal work-study program for college students and the Federal Supplementary

Educational Opportunity Grant program. The latter program, offering a grant of \$100 to \$4000 in tuition assistance per year to extremely impoverished students, will be eliminated entirely. California receives \$82 million from the program and the grants themselves normally do not have to be paid back by recipients except for a few exceptional cases.

Trump's budget has been embraced by his anti-public-school Education Secretary, Amway heiress Betsy DeVos. Endorsing the president's reactionary conclusions about the "ineffective" character of the programs up for funding cuts, DeVos stated, "Taxpayers deserve to know their dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively."

The attack on public education generally and LAUSD specifically is of course not the result of the Trump administration alone. In fact, the immediate trigger for the layoff announcement is the announcement by the California Department of Education under Democratic Governor Jerry Brown as to the unacceptability of the district's Local Control Accountability Plan or LCAP.

The LCAP mandates that local districts develop plans to meet testing provisions and other academic goals including compliance with the Obama administration's Common Core program. This mandates that state standards for math and science proficiency be written into curricula at the expense of arts and the humanities in order for these districts to be eligible for additional funding under the state's Local Control Funding Formula.

The funding formula provides additional funding to schools with a majority of impoverished and ethnic minority students under the guise of "educational equity." These schools, with an influx of funding under the formula, become eligible for takeover by private charter organizations should they fail to meet their

LCAP goals.

One mechanism that has been utilized in the past is the so-called Parent Trigger, initiated under the Brown administration. This allows an underperforming school to be transferred to charter ownership if certain academic goals are not met. Use of such reactionary measures, created under Brown and Obama, will certainly be accelerated under Trump and DeVos.

Job cuts and cuts generally have been accepted as inevitable by the LAUSD board. Board president Steve Zimmer all but announced this in a statement released after the layoff notice on Wednesday.

“It is always painful to issue notices of potential changes in positions to our LA Unified family. Our hope is that this student achievement-centered approach will better align support closer to the classroom--both accelerating academic outcomes and minimizing ultimate job loss,” he said. In other words, it is up to students and teachers to raise test scores with virtually no administrative support in the hopes of grabbing ever dwindling levels of school funding.

The Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, the union that represents the 1,600 administrators, is doing little to defend against the layoff measure, limiting itself to highlighting the emotional effects that the layoffs will have on workers.

The United Teachers of Los Angeles, representing 35,000 teachers and staff, has proven its political bankruptcy once again, not releasing a single word in support of the endangered administrators. This is largely due to that union’s ongoing campaign to shield the Democratic Party from blame for the attack on teachers. During every contract negotiation, the UTLA claims that the district has enough money to meet teachers’ demands but is prevented from doing so by its “bloated bureaucracy”. The reactionary essence of this position is now fully revealed in the administrator layoffs.

This once again highlights the fact that the capitalist system, whether at the national, state or local level, has no answer to the crisis of public education except for further attacks and greater privatization. What is needed is a movement of the working class and student youth to end the attacks on the basis of an international struggle for socialism, the only means by which public, high quality education for all can be realized.



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