Los Angeles County Office of Education to Launch Improvement Plan

Reform Effort Spurred by New Review Conducted by FCMAT

DOWNY, Calif. (Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2011) — The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) announced today that it will begin developing a comprehensive administrative plan to improve its efficiency and effectiveness as an educational services agency for local public school districts.

L.A. County Superintendent of Schools Arturo Delgado, who took over as CEO of LACOE earlier this year, announced that the plan for reform, when completed, will present a course of action on how changes will be undertaken at the agency. The reforms will center on three areas at LACOE: governance structure, staffing and organization; fiscal management and financial analysis; and management of juvenile court school and other educational programs.

The effort is prompted by the results of a detailed management review of LACOE by the Fiscal Crisis & Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), an independent agency based in Bakersfield that provides advice and training to school systems statewide. LACOE had requested and paid for the review by FCMAT to obtain an impartial, professional analysis of possible deficiencies in select policies, practices and procedures.

“We at LACOE fully accept the review’s findings and recommendations,” Delgado said about the study, which was not an audit. “We care deeply about how we can be of better service to children, educators and communities. This agency already has made some key changes, and we will dedicate ourselves to responsibly prioritizing and implementing many more. We are committed to smart improvements and cost savings that I know will make us much more efficient and effective in helping students achieve and succeed.”

The 379-page review was presented yesterday by FCMAT officials during a meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Education, the seven-member panel that governs LACOE. The Board helped initiate the review.

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The review, which began in April, involved a FCMAT study team of more than two dozen education consultants and experts who conducted site visits and interviews with LACOE administrators and staff members. The review, which cost $380,000, listed a total of 401 recommendations for changes or improvements, some of which cannot be immediately implemented and will involve long-term planning.

The review's executive summary and the section summarizing the changes LACOE has made since the review's fieldwork was completed, along with other materials, are posted on LACOE's website at: www.lacoe.edu/fcmatreview. The full report may be viewed and downloaded at: wwwStatic.kern.org/gems/fcmat/LACOEfinalreport12611.pdf.

Delgado, who was appointed to the superintendent's post in July, said that with his recent naming of two new top administrators — a deputy superintendent and an assistant superintendent of Educational Programs — LACOE will be putting an even higher priority on practicing cost containment and increasing productivity.

"This is the ideal time to show how we are capable of rebuilding ourselves into a more responsive and responsible public agency," he said. "Together with our Board of Education, we will be champions of meaningful reform. The review's analysis was extensive, thorough and thoughtful. And that will be our approach as we bring forward many changes and improvements for LACOE."

Although the timelines for implementing the improvements are still being developed, LACOE officials note they have already made several important staffing and operational changes in the areas of business services, educational programs, educational services, technology services and human resource services.

LACOE, based in Downey, provides a variety of programs and services to support and advance Los Angeles County's 80 school districts and 13 community college districts. LACOE has a workforce of 3,200 full-time employees, including teachers and paraeducators, and is operating this fiscal year on a $697 million budget.

LACOE's court schools program supports the nation's largest juvenile justice system, educating some 11,000 young offenders each year. In addition, LACOE operates two award-winning specialized high schools, the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts at Cal State L.A. and International Polytechnic High School at Cal Poly Pomona. LACOE also administers the nation's largest Head Start preschool grantee program, which serves 24,000 children through 26 delegate agencies.

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