



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2007

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Kerry Blosten, 213.580.7548 (Chamber)
Dawn Wilcox, 310.745.1712 (UNITE-LA)
Angie Levine, 213.241.6766 (LAUSD)

Launch of 150 New Small Learning Communities Puts Education First For Students in Los Angeles

***LAUSD's Office of School Redesign, Office of Civic Engagement
and Partnership Councils Join Forces with UNITE-LA and the L.A. Area Chamber
to Support Small Learning Environments***

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles Unified School District recently approved more than 150 small learning communities, with an anticipated eventual total of 300, at campuses across the city. Local high schools such as San Fernando and Westchester join Jefferson, Santee, Roosevelt and many others in providing specialized, personalized learning environments for young people. In a joint announcement by the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce, UNITE-LA and LAUSD's Office of School Redesign, Office of Civic Engagement and Office of Business Partnerships, leaders from all sectors reaffirmed their commitment to providing the most effective, rigorous and relevant curriculum to students in L.A. high schools.

"The Chamber supports Los Angeles public schools in reshaping classroom instruction to meet the needs of today's demanding workforce," said Gary Toebben, president & CEO of the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce. "We encourage community members, particularly businesses, to take an active role in helping to transform L.A.'s schools into strong small learning communities that engage and motivate students."

A "small school" is the term used for the concept of restructuring schools – particularly high schools to allow for the most interaction on a regular basis between teacher and student. Small schools within LAUSD include the newly opened L.A. School for Global Studies on the campus of Miguel Contreras Learning Complex and the New Tech High School Student Empowerment Academy located on the campus of Jordan High School.

When a large high school cannot physically be broken into smaller units, small learning communities or SLCs are created, which focus on varied themes and curriculum. Students are offered multiple options including academic and career themed environments such as Visual Arts & Humanities, Business Leadership & Academic Excellence, Health Sciences, International Trade and Public Service & Social Justice.

“Research shows that small, personalized learning environments help foster academic achievement,” said Dr. Shelley Weston, LAUSD assistant superintendent. “Students in SLCs achieve improved test scores, increased school attendance and graduation rates, reduced discipline problems and are more likely to go to college and succeed in the workforce.”

“Learning comes to life for young people when they are able to personally interact with real world subject matter,” said David Rattray, president of UNITE-LA. “By partnering with one of the many SLCs within LAUSD, everyone can get involved and open a door to the future for young people who may not otherwise believe they can succeed in the world beyond high school.”

Business partners can play an integral role in providing contextualized learning experiences for students with internships, job shadowing and mentoring.

“Thomas Jefferson High School has created a more relevant and personalized environment for students and teachers with four SLCs, autonomous schools-within-schools, which encourage community involvement to provide every student with the best possible knowledge base and skill set to succeed in life,” said Juan Flecha, Jefferson High School principal. “As we continue our efforts through small learning communities, we will take students to the next level of excellence.”

For more information on how to get involved in the education of our young people, visit www.unitela.com. To partner with a specific LAUSD SLC, contact David Rattray of UNITE-LA at 241.482.3987 or drattray@unitela.com.

###

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information, visit www.lachamber.org.

An updated listing of approved small learning communities is available at http://www.lausd.net/SLC_Schools/index.htm.