

## **First and long**

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This past week the teachers and parents of Crenshaw High voted in favor of the school entering the Innovation Division of Los Angeles Unified School District - LAUSD's effort to place select schools on a pathway toward localized governance and control.

The chorus for change was overwhelming: More than 80 percent of all the teachers and faculty at Crenshaw High voted for change, and more than 94 percent of the voting parents did so as well.

The students of Crenshaw High School held a symbolic vote regarding the move to the Innovation Division. Ninety percent voted in favor of the move.

In spite of this powerful showing of stakeholder support, there are some who are firmly entrenched in the status quo and are vigorously resisting forces of positive change. They do so without the articulation of clear alternatives and fail to recognize that their participation in improving our schools is welcomed and necessary.

The South Los Angeles community, and the entire city of Los Angeles, must ensure that nay-sayers cannot sabotage the iDivision process in its early stages. We can best do that by vigilantly upholding the collective mandate for change at Crenshaw now.

Crenshaw High School has languished for years at the bottom rung of performance in LAUSD. Fewer than 20% of the students perform at grade level in English and Math. Approximately 50 percent of them drop-out before senior year. And the school has had four principals in the last five years.

Although there are many great teachers and a many talented students at Crenshaw, there has been little to unite the pockets of greatness or to facilitate a rigorous pursuit of promising systemic approaches. As a result, there is a rapidly diminishing sense of hope across the campus. And that is just not acceptable.

Within the iDivision, there are three Network Partners proposed to assist Crenshaw with reform and to establish a localized model of control and oversight. Two established community-based organizations and a major university will work in concert with parents, teachers and students.

The Los Angeles Urban League has raised more than \$13 million in funding and coordinated partners to holistically impact both Crenshaw and the 70-block area surrounding the school. The Tom & Ethel Bradley Foundation has been working with parents, faculty and community members, laying the foundation of change. And the University of Southern California is poised to become a powerful and accountable force on behalf of the school through research projects and a variety of initiatives designed to change the school's declining outcomes.

We must acknowledge that the stakes are incredibly high. The future of our children is on the line and the economic future of our great city. Perhaps for the first time, all the corrective pieces are in place - an alignment between the Superintendent, UTLA, the majority of the School Board, community-based organizations, higher educational institutions, businesses, elected officials - and now parents, teachers and students. There simply has never been a better time to pursue true and meaningful reform.

It is time for us to pursue sensible education reform that can serve as a national model. And it's time for any and all who are truly serious about that to find a way to get involved. We do not even have time to bask in the positive message of the votes. We must instead acknowledge that we remain squarely at the five-yard line of a 100

yard run.

As daunting as the open field remains, for our children, we simply must succeed. We must begin that work together right now.