

Statement from U.S. Secretary Arne Duncan on the LAUSD resolution agreement

Good afternoon everybody, and thanks so much for joining us.

I'm proud to stand here today with Mayor Villaraigosa, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) School Superintendent Dr. John Deasy, and Russlynn Ali, the Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

We're here to announce an important agreement the Obama Administration has reached with LAUSD. It will help ensure that equal educational opportunities are available to every student in the District, regardless of their race or their national origin. This voluntary agreement is the result of close cooperation over the last 19 months between the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and LAUSD.

Los Angeles has a long and proud history as a magnet for immigrants to the United States. This city's capacity to absorb and assimilate immigrants from every corner of the world is nothing short of remarkable.

But the profound demographic changes that this city has seen over the last 40 years have not come without challenges. In education, too few public school students who are not native English speakers learn English well enough, or fast enough, to prepare them for other core academic coursework, or for life after the school age years.

Last year, our Office for Civil Rights launched a compliance review of LAUSD to determine whether English Learner students were being denied the equal educational opportunities guaranteed by law and to examine the comparability of resources for the District's African-American students.

It goes without saying that both of these issues are incredibly complex and politically charged issues of enormous consequence, not just for Los Angeles, but for the nation. That's why I'm so pleased to be here today to announce this agreement with Superintendent Deasy. Though we still have a long way to go before we see that English Learner students and African-American students are consistently getting what they need to perform up to their fullest potential, I'm confident today's agreement will help address the causes of concern that prompted our review.

Our presence here today is the product of a lot of hard work and good-faith cooperation between the Department of Education and the LAUSD. In particular, my Office for Civil Rights led by Assistant Secretary Russlynn Ali, and Superintendent Deasy and his team here at LAUSD, have worked tirelessly, over many months, to craft this agreement. I couldn't be more proud with how this process has transpired—it is the best way to deal with known problems, without blame, and focused on solutions about what's right for kids.

The remedies it contains are intended to address some challenges that are unique to Los Angeles and others that we are seeing play out in many different places across the country. But the process that got us here; the cooperation, the commitment to crafting effective

solutions; and the fundamental agreement that every student deserves an equal shot at a world-class education is a model that I hope to see repeated again and again. Thank you.