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Insight School Offers Online Public Education as Option for Addressing Critical Challenges Facing California Parents and Students

LOS ANGELES – May 5, 2008 – Public education in California is facing one of its most challenging periods in many years, with significant issues confronting educators, parents and students in all areas of the state, including southern California. These issues include looming state budget cuts, high dropout rates, and possible restrictions on homeschooling.

Innovations in online public high school education are providing a powerful option for helping to address many of these challenges. Leveraging state-of-the-art online learning technology, Insight School of California – Los Angeles (ISCA-LA) offers a unique example of this trend for parents and students seeking the best educational approach for their needs. ISCA-LA serves students who are California residents in Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Ventura counties.

“Online education is a logical and imperative step in the evolving effort to provide an experience that addresses challenges ranging from public funding and student engagement to quality and results,” said Bill Roden, executive director of Insight School of California-Los Angeles. “It is an environment that offers flexibility and individual attention while requiring personal responsibility, which we believe are the keys to student success.”

According to the Los Angeles Times, the multi-billion-dollar California budget shortfall is expected to result in an education cutback of some \$4.8 billion statewide, with potential layoff notices already sent to 20,000 teachers, librarians, nurses and others.¹ For Los Angeles Unified, one of 14 Los Angeles area districts facing possible red ink next year, that translates into a projected deficit of \$460 million.² The Orange County Register has reported nearly 1,900 anticipated teacher layoffs and terminations in that county.³ Many schools are appealing to parent groups for financial support to maintain staff and programs.¹

Such significant funding reductions can lead to higher student-teacher ratios with decreased one-on-one attention, school overcrowding, safety issues, and reduced resources available to address students with special needs or who are struggling in the traditional brick and mortar setting. Plus, with tuition at private and parochial schools on the rise, families are seeing those expenses move out of reach, returning to the public schools and placing further stress on the system.

Dropout rates are also a major concern and a condition that can be aggravated by funding cuts. According to the California Department of Education⁴, for the 2005-2006 school year, the statewide high school dropout rate was 14.7% for a total of some 68,000 students. Rates for individual counties included Kern at 16.7%, Los Angeles at 17.3%, Orange at 5.9%, San Bernardino at 20.1% and Ventura at 9.0%. The reasons many students drop out of school include boredom or lack of challenge, pursuit of a career in athletics or the arts, work demands, illness and family obligations. A central issue is maintaining and strengthening each student’s engagement, both academically and socially, in a flexible and personalized environment to keep more students in school through graduation.

INSIGHT SCHOOL OFFERS ONLINE SOLUTION

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As a companion to the traditional brick and mortar setting, online education can provide a viable solution to help address these challenges in an environment that is second nature to many, if not most, of today's students. It is an innovative solution with the potential to mitigate many of the effects of reduced funding and factors that often lead to students dropping out.

Insight School of California – Los Angeles students earn their diploma in a highly personalized, student-led, teacher-facilitated program where they can complete their studies at their own speed with weekly deadlines and in their own setting. ISCA-LA online students are engaged by a team of California-credentialed teachers and “iMentors” in a high-quality academic program that is adaptable to personal learning styles and situations. And student forums, clubs, online activities, events, field trips and community service provide a means for active social interaction. In addition to being tuition-free, Insight provides students with a wireless laptop computer, a printer/scanner, reimbursement for Internet access, and materials for required courses.

For homeschoolers, a recent court ruling could have a potentially far-reaching impact on the ability of families to provide homeschooling for their children. An online program provides a safe environment that also offers an integral role for parents in selecting courses from a wide ranging curriculum and actively guiding their child's education.

Insight Schools report the following from students surveyed:

- 82% said quality of education was better than local high school
- 76% said teachers are better than local high school
- 78% find adult mentors helpful
- 43% (85% of D students) believe grades have improved since enrolling
- 89% more likely to attend college after graduation
- 95% would recommend Insight to a friend

For information on Insight School of California – Los Angeles, visit www.insightca.net or call 800-670-5391.

Insight School of California – Los Angeles (ISCA-LA) is a tuition-free, diploma-granting, online public high school serving students who are California residents in Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino and Kern counties. ISCA-LA is governed by Portable Practical Educational Preparation, Inc. and authorized by the Antelope Valley Union High School District. Insight Schools, Inc. is the nation's largest network of tuition-free, diploma-granting, online public high schools. For more information, visit www.insightschools.net or call 800-975-8006.

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SOURCES

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