

My friends, we are fighting for a future that is worthy of our children. We are fighting for public education, because we believe it is the foundation of our communities and our democracy. We are fighting, because we are San Diegans, who love our city, and we believe, in our hearts, that better schools create better students, and better students make a better San Diego.

Now, you know the challenges. I see many people here tonight who have been fighting for better schools their whole lives. I see teachers who have been fighting to confront and interrupt long-standing beliefs and practices that limit, rather than expand outcomes and experiences for our students. I see principals and support staff who confront the fact our state is 46th in education spending every day. I see Board Members fighting to fund quality schools, not just in some neighborhoods, but in every single neighborhood.

Every day, across our district, we have close to 200 principals, 6,000 teachers, police officers and classified staff, who wake up each day knowing that we are the lucky ones. We are the ones who have the rare privilege of making a massive and immeasurable impact, not just on the lives of the individual students we get to know, love, teach and watch blossom, but on our entire community. Our reach as educators goes beyond what has ever, or can ever, be measured.

We do not have all the state funding our students deserve, but, my friends, we are rich with talented, dedicated teachers and staff, who put service to children above all else. Thanks to all of you, the state of our district is strong.

The state of our district is strong because of schools like this one, Sherman Elementary, giving children the chance to excel in multiple languages.

The state of our district is strong because of principals like Fernando Hernandez from Perkins Elementary. Fernando, could you please stand up?

Fernando leads a community where the homeless student population has gone from 4 percent to 30 percent. And, he meets that challenge with dignity and grace and an absolute and relentless focus on, not only student achievement outcomes, but on the whole child.

Fernando, you know every single student and their family and their story. You embody leading with love and compassion with an intensity and relentless focus on your children. You understand and show us all how to be a humble, gracious and focused servant leader. Thank you for your leadership, Fernando.

The state of our District is strong thanks to inspirational teachers like Jamie Yumiko Brown -- our California teacher of the year and a San Diego High graduate who returned to teach at her alma mater. Jamie, could you stand up please? Jamie felt the sting of being excluded as a child and turned that into a lifelong commitment to lift up student voices by creating a classroom where all students feel safe and respected. Jamie's work is incredible, but her soul is what really shines. Thank you, Jamie.

And, Jamie, I'd like Carmen Garcia, your principal to stand, too. We know how important the partnership between principals and teachers is. You both understand the conditions that allow our students to become actively literate. You both understand that literacy is an important goal, and more importantly you understand that the reason why we focus on literacy is because we want our students to be able to fully participate and contribute in the world when they graduate – and to make the world a better place. Thank you for your work every day at San Diego High. It is truly inspiring.

For four years, it has been my honor to lead the finest group of education professionals in the state of California. In fact, my first day as superintendent was the day Governor Brown signed his major education overhaul plan, the local control funding formula. **Four years later, we can say without reservation that reform is working in San Diego.**

Four years of transformational reform in San Diego have created a school community with equity at our core. Plain and simple, equity for us means that our schools with the highest needs get the most resources and support, because that is how we close the achievement gap. We have a transparent LCAP process with more than 32 public performance metrics, because accountability is also at our core. And, we have meaningful local control. We have heard clearly what our local families have told us they value and want the most –

academic rigor,

the arts,

technology,

sports and fitness,

and civics education –

these are in all our schools, because that is how we help children find their passion so they become self-guided, self-directed learners.

Our schools are better than they were four years ago, and that means more than high test scores – although scores are up. Better schools mean more than high graduation rates – although graduation rates are up, too. Better schools mean more than beautiful new buildings, although we are spending \$1 million a day on average to upgrade our facilities.

Thanks to our students, parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, and community partners, **school reform is working.** It's working when we have more students coming home every day ready to display new skills in another language, in the arts, in technology, sports or civics. It's working when we have more parents who see the look of wonder in their children's eyes every day.

When we make our schools better, our students do better, and that is what ultimately makes our world better. We have an example of that here tonight. An example of our kids participating and contributing in a powerful way to make the world a better place I think Carlos and

Linda LeGerrette are here. Could I ask you to stand up along with the leaders of the Cesar Chavez Service Clubs?

Thanks to these amazing service clubs, the students raised more than \$2,000 and filled a delivery truck floor six times over with food and supplies for the victims of the earthquake in Mexico City. Thank you all – and thank you to Hoover High for hosting that event.

I realize that today our young people are sometimes seen as being self-absorbed ... obsessed with selfies and social media. Many from a different generation cannot relate and ask, “Why do kids take so many selfies and post pictures of every mundane thing they do?”

But, you know, this is not what I see in our young people like those in the Cesar Chavez Service Clubs. To be sure, we all have the desire to be recognized for who we are.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s final sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta -- the church where he was baptized and served as pastor. In it, he talked about what he called the Drum Major Instinct – It’s really the desire we all have for recognition, for attention, for praise and importance. He pointed out that we all want to lead the parade we all in our own ways just basically want to be a drum major.

It’s not that Dr. King believed that the desire to stand out was somehow wrong, or was a bad thing.

He even told us that we should definitely “Keep feeling the need for being important.” He told us that we should absolutely “Keep feeling the need for being first.”

But then he added, “I want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity.”

That is what I see in our young people today. I see kids all of over our city who are not just taking selfies to self-promote. I see kids understanding that they have a contribution to make; that they can make a difference; that they can be upstanders and not bystanders for

social justice; that they can see something, say something, do something. Our students are the change-makers.

From the Kids Eco Clubs to the Cesar Chavez Service Clubs to the Gender Sexuality Alliance Clubs. Our students are making San Diego a better city every day by taking on bullying, climate change and poverty. They are putting themselves first, first in love love for our community and love for our world and love for one another.

It is time for the adults in our district to follow their example. Dr. King understood that love wins in the end, but sometimes hate has the loudest voice.

We know school reform is working in San Diego, but we do not have the loudest voice. We hear voices on the right saying public education cannot work, and privatization is the answer. We hear voices on the left saying we should go back to the way things used to be. That's why we must be the ones to stand up for our students, our schools and our values.

Our district hashtag on Twitter is LoveSDSchools. And our job leaving here tonight is to lead with love, to put ourselves first in service to others, because we know better schools help our students do better, and that makes the world a better place.

Love wins in the end every time. Love wins when every student has access to strong academics, to the arts and music, technology, sports and fitness and civics. That is how our schools are leading with love. So, tomorrow, by all means, call attention to yourself. Seek recognition. Take that selfie, Tweet that tweet, post that link, stand up and make your point at your site governance team meeting. Go ahead and say, "Look at me!"

But, do all those things while you are protecting immigrant families from deportation, or launching your new STEAM lab at your school, or engaging in public discourse with people who want to privatize our public schools, or celebrating the fact your seniors got \$10 million in college scholarships, or helping students explore careers in Blue

Technology on the Midway, or marching with your school band in the Rose Bowl.

Do all those things, and we will support you. Your district will support you. Last year, we started the Quality Schools in Every Neighborhood Awards to recognize those who are making major contributions to our work. On December 1st, we will announce the guidelines for this year, and I hope every school will apply. Call attention to yourselves and the amazing work you do every day; be proud, you have plenty of stories to make us all proud.

Let's remember what Dr. King taught us if you want to be a drum major, be a drum major for justice. Be a drum major for peace. Be a drum major for righteousness.

Dr. King taught us all how to live and be in this world, and he also taught us how to take action...and live a life that creates a legacy...he reminded us about the importance of service above self when he foreshadowed his own death and described how he wanted to be remembered....

“If any of you are around when I have to meet my day, I don't want a long funeral. And if you get somebody to deliver the eulogy, tell them not to talk too long. Tell them not to mention that I have a Nobel Peace Prize—that isn't important. ... I'd like somebody to mention, that day, that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to give his life serving others. I'd like for somebody to say, that day, that Martin Luther King, Jr., tried to love somebody.”

What more can any of us ask for?

Thank you