

## Los Angeles Unified School District

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#### For Immediate Release

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# News Release

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## LAUSD CUTS THE RIBBON AT FIRST MIDDLE SCHOOL FOCUSED ON SINGLE GENDER INSTRUCTION

*Teachers Have Been Trained in Understanding How Boys and Girls Learn Differently at this Age Level*

(Los Angeles, CA) Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board President Mónica García joined Los Angeles City Councilmember Tom LaBonge and special guests at a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Young Oak Kim Academy (YOKA) this morning. YOKA brings a new model of reform at the middle school level with its focus on single gender instruction for boys and girls as well as a science, technology, engineering and math centered curriculum.

"Young Oak Kim Academy offers a promising new approach for middle school, with an ambitious and focused academic program in an historically underserved area," said García. "The state-of-the-art school already boasts a wonderful level of support from the community. I know that Principal Edward Colación, together with his team of teachers and staff, is well prepared to show the world how community involvement, innovation and reform produce student success and high graduation rates."

"Young Oak Kim Academy is at the crossroads of the city of the future, since it's a middle school built over a transit station," said Councilmember LaBonge. "The opening of this school signals an extremely important move forward for the city."

YOKA is named after a Korean American war hero and the first Asian American colonel to command a regular U.S. combat battalion in war. Colonel Young Oak Kim is not only a war veteran who dedicated his life to fighting for social justice in his community and his country, but also a graduate of Belmont High School.

"My family and I are very honored to have this school named after Colonel Kim," said Willa Kim, sister of Colonel Young Oak Kim. "I would like to see the students of the school benefit from the legacy Colonel Kim left."

"Named after the brave Korean American U.S. Army combat veteran of World War II and the Korean War, the Young Oak Kim Academy is, indeed, an amazing monument of pride for the Korean American community in Los Angeles," said Korean Consul General Jae Soo Kim. "I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Los Angeles Unified School District for bestowing on us this great honor. It's wonderful to know that Colonel Kim's legacy will live on for future generations."

YOKA is LAUSD's first school organized around single gender Small Learning Communities (SLCs) and is committed to delivering an excellent education to boys and girls in single gender core classes. The campus' two SLCs will focus on applying skills through interdisciplinary learning projects.

"This is the first school in LAUSD developed to support the concept of single gender instruction, and it is great to see the enthusiasm among parents and the community. More importantly, we are excited by the promising results of this method of teaching and engaging our young people," said Interim Local District 4 Superintendent

(more)

Byron J. Maltez. "The school's additional focus on science, technology, engineering and math will well prepare students for success in high school and beyond."

The school is located in Central Los Angeles next to the Vermont Red Line Metro Station and serves the communities of Koreatown and Pico Union. Built to the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) building "green" criteria, the campus consists of two SLCs with shared facilities that include a library, multipurpose room, cafeteria and a gymnasium, as well as a grass field and rooftop athletic facilities. The campus also features a garden donated by the Los Angeles Korean Consulate. The school opened to approximately 740 students on September 9, providing overcrowding relief to two of LAUSD's critically overcrowded schools: Berendo and Virgil middle schools.

"I'm honored to open a brand new school in the name of Young Oak Kim and we look forward as instructional leaders to lead our single-gender academy students into the fields of science, engineering, technology and math," said YOKA Principal Edward Colación. "The kids and the parents are very excited to be here at a new school with a new culture. We're eager to provide a quality education in a quality facility."

"Parents are very enthusiastic to have the opportunity for their children to attend a neighborhood school that reflects 20 years of the latest research in the way students learn," said former Local District 4 Superintendent Richard Alonzo. "This is a school where the teachers have been trained in understanding how, due to differences in brain development, boys learn differently from girls and girls learn differently from boys at this age level, and the school is designed to accommodate this kind of teaching."

"I am pleased that our building program is not only delivering new schools built to CHPS standards, it is also supporting academic reform by facilitating small learning communities, like we see here at YOKA," said LAUSD Chief Facilities Executive Guy Mehula. "This year alone, our new schools have enabled 25 schools to eliminate the use of a year round calendar and it is our goal that by the 2012 – 2013 school year, all students will be attending safe and healthy schools in their neighborhood that operate on a traditional, two-semester academic calendar."

YOKA is part of LAUSD's \$20.1 billion New School Construction and Modernization Program to provide every student a safe and healthy neighborhood school operating on a traditional, two-semester calendar. LAUSD's building program has made significant gains to reduce campus overcrowding, with the return of nearly 140 schools to a traditional academic calendar, the elimination of involuntary busing for elementary school students, and a more than 80 percent reduction in involuntary busing of secondary students. For more information on these and other new school or modernization projects District-wide, please visit [www.laschools.org](http://www.laschools.org).

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