

Los Angeles School District Daily Attendance Improves by 225,000 Students

District Credits CWK Network's Customized TV Show, News Stories, Classroom Support Materials as Key to Success

(June 15, 2005): Every day in America, hundreds of thousands of kids skip class or drop out altogether. This past school year, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) launched a major initiative to reduce truancy and increase student attendance, where typically almost one-third of the district's students do not graduate from high school and nearly 30,000 secondary students are absent each day. With the help of programs developed by CWK Network, LAUSD was able to increase attendance within six months of the campaign launch.

The Count Me In! campaign had multiple strategies, including several customized programs produced by Atlanta-based CWK Network, a company known for its award-winning *Connect with Kids* television and educational programming. The programs and correlating classroom materials were produced in both English and Spanish.

"Our daily attendance at LAUSD schools has improved by approximately 225,000 student days," said Stephanie Brady, director of communications for the LAUSD. "A key part of our success has been the work of CWK Network. They have helped us educate both students and their parents about the value of attending school and the numbers prove that our efforts are working."

Campaign elements: CWK Network produced a customized half-hour television program that aired on KABC in Los Angeles. KABC is one of the 67 local television station partners in CWK Network's unwired network. The program featured real local students discussing the challenges they face to attend school while caring for siblings, working at night, or dealing with family issues. The program also ran in Spanish, and both shows included teachers, educators and child development experts discussing the reasons kids drop out, the options for staying in school and ideas to help kids and parents talk about this issue.

Following the broadcast, KABC and CWK Network hosted a "viewer call-in" staffed by LAUSD professionals. Hundreds of viewers called to learn more about how keeping kids in school. CWK Network also produced a series of ten 90-second news stories featuring students and teachers from the district. LAUSD teachers used the broadcast materials along with correlated classroom activities and lessons developed by CWK Network's curriculum staff.

Increase in attendance translates into increased academic success and funding

According to LAUSD, the increase in attendance will not only help improve student learning and graduation rates, it will generate additional state funds, disbursed to the schools that show improvement. CWK Network continues to provide professional development, training and support to LAUSD's 800 schools participating in Count Me In!

Founded in 1998, CWK Network, Inc. produces the Emmy® award-winning *Connect with Kids* television series. The series of 10 half-hour specials a year is shown on the top network-affiliated stations across the country, reaching 65 percent of U.S. households. CWK Network has also developed more than 120 multimedia programs used in elementary, middle and high schools across the country, as well as consumer programs for parents. All of the programs have one focus: improving the lives of children and along the way, helping parents become better parents. For more information, visit www.connectwithkids.com, or call 1-888-598-KIDS (5437).

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Story Summary

Count Me In! – An initiative from the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) to improve school attendance -- helps students understand the long-term benefits of staying in school, as well as the negative effects of *missing* school. In the television and classroom programs produced by CWK Network, real teens share their true-life stories about the challenges they face to attend school while caring for siblings, working at night, or dealing with family issues.

Facts as a Glance

Why should kids stay in school? Studies show that absenteeism can lead to drug use, early sexual activity and criminal behavior. In fact, more than 80 percent of prisoners in Los Angeles ages 18-25 didn't finish high school. And what about financial freedom? People who graduate high school earn an average of 30 percent more money than dropouts.