



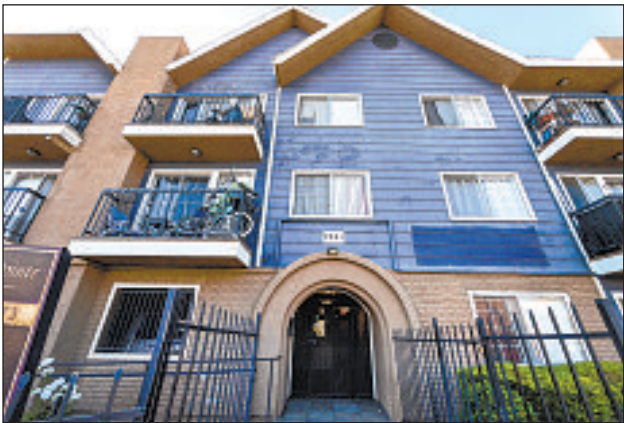
AFTER HIS mother kicked him out, Alvondo Williams Jr., 18, went to live with his grandfather in North Carolina.

A baby was left in the care of her brother, 11. Now she's dead

Despite multiple reports about the family, L.A. County never opened a case

By Rebecca Ellis

The soft-spoken 18-year-old had run out of food for his three younger siblings. He told the Canoga Park High School counselor that his mother was disappearing for days at a time, leaving him and his siblings, ages 11, 3 and 1, with hardly anything to eat. He filled his stomach with water to stave off the hunger. The senior, Alvondo Williams Jr., was sent home May 6 with a cooler filled with bread, milk, sandwich meat and cereal. The counselor then called the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services hotline to re-



THE CANOGA PARK apartment where a malnourished 1-year-old girl was found dead on July 1.

port possible neglect in a home with "more condiments than food." Over the next two days, an LAPD officer and then a DCFS social worker toured the family's Canoga Park apartment. Both took the full refrigerator — stocked with food the school had just provided — as a sign the children had enough to eat, according to DCFS records obtained by The Times. Despite receiving several reports this spring about a family with an absent mother and gnawing hunger, the DCFS never opened a case — even after another school counselor called the hotline on May 13 to say that Williams' mother had kicked him out of the house. [See Case, A9]

L.A. Unified's achievement scores improve

Graduation rate rises and suspensions drop, but schools fall short of state learning goals.

By Howard Blume

The Los Angeles Unified School District showed strong gains in newly released state metrics and reached a record graduation

rate, but overall academic performance fell well short of state learning goals. The latest release of state data indicated positive trends for the state's largest school system, with improvement that outpaced the state as a whole. In absolute terms, however, the performance of L.A. Unified is middling, even as depicted by a state accountability system that rarely shows school systems in a

harsh light. "LAUSD scores are on an upward trend, but the initial goal needs to be to attain results that meet or exceed LAUSD pre-pandemic levels," said Michael W. Kirst, a former state Board of Education president and a Stanford emeritus professor of education and business administration. "For example, there are some test-score results that meet this goal. I am less interested now in

how they compare to the rest of the state on dashboard indicators. That will be more relevant in subsequent years." The district's highest-rated metric was for its suspension rate, which scored the state's best color rating of blue — indicating that L.A. Unified has successfully slashed the number of students sent home from school for disciplinary reasons. This figure — combined

with rising test scores — is genuinely positive news because it suggests that even the more challenging students are improving and remaining in class to take the state tests, rather than being hidden during the testing window via suspensions. The district also received a green, or "good," rating for its graduation rate of 87% — a record for L.A. Unified. This figure is more chal- [See LAUSD, A12]

Trump-Putin bond back in the spotlight

The world leaders share some traits and want some of the same things. But a chasm divides them.

By Laura King

WASHINGTON — They tend to gush over each other in public, but their private dealings are often opaque. Both are brazenly transactional, and cling tenaciously to grudges. Each likes to keep everyone around him guessing. Of all President-elect

Donald Trump's relationships with world leaders — which are coming into sharper focus as he prepares to take office again in less than two months — that with Russian President Vladimir Putin may be the most consequential, and the most fraught. Trump says his foreign policy motto will be "America first." Critics fear that Trump will be steamrolled by the former Soviet intelligence officer on Ukraine, on sanctions aimed at curbing Russian aggression, and on the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Whatever his course, he [See Leaders, A7]



DONALD TRUMP, with Vladimir Putin in 2019, has said that a personal relationship with the Russian president benefited the U.S. rather than undermining it.

UCLA's fall class is among its most diverse

University continues representation gains, diverging from other elite colleges after '23 affirmative action ban.

By Teresa Watanabe

Madison Hamilton graduated from Canoga Park Senior High School in spring with multiple accolades: She was high school valedictorian with a 4.5 GPA who aced all eight of her AP tests. She tutored fellow students with special needs and founded a social club for them. And she received a rarefied admission offer from Stanford University, one of the most selective institutions in the nation.

But Hamilton turned Stanford down for UCLA. She said the Westwood campus' welcoming environment for Black students like her was the deciding factor. During the spring, for instance, UCLA invited her to campus for an African American Academic Excellence event, where she met Black faculty, including Tracy L. Johnson, dean of the Division of Life Sciences and professor of molecular, cell and developmental biology. "Seeing a Black professor who looked like me in a field I wanted to go into really inspired me and made me want to go to UCLA even more," Hamilton said. "It made me feel like UCLA really wanted me."

While other elite universities around the nation have seen precipitous declines in diversity in their first class enrolled after the U.S. Supreme Court banned affirmative action, UCLA has bucked that trend with record numbers of Black and Latino students in fall 2024. Like all California public educational institutions, UCLA has been barred from considering race, sex, ethnicity, color or national origin in admissions under Proposition 209, which voters approved in 1996. That [See UCLA, A8]

Trump picks ally as FBI director

Nominee Kash Patel has sought to reduce agency's footprint and hunt down "conspirators." NATION, A6

2 babies' deaths prompt action

L.A. County officials call for service boost for pregnant women who are living on the street. CALIFORNIA, B1

Record opening for 'Moana 2'

The animated Disney sequel breaks box office records in its holiday weekend premiere. ENTERTAINMENT, E1

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 75/50. B6

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