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LAUSD schools desperate for reform

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THE latest education news, courtesy of a UCLA study, couldn't be more dispiriting: California has some of the worst schools in the country.

Los Angeles has some of the worst schools in the state.

And the San Fernando Valley's schools barely fare better than the rest of the LAUSD.

Often, apologists for the Los Angeles Unified District cite demographics, suggesting that the district's problems are the students' fault. Too many poor kids, too many minority kids, too many immigrant kids.

But there's no scapegoating the kids this time.

California and the LAUSD's failures span across all races, ethnicities and classes. In pretty much all demographic categories, our kids are doing worse than their peers across the state and the country.

We can't blame standardized testing, either. Tests were just one measure UCLA

researchers used. In others - graduation rates, college enrollment, teacher training - the results were just as dismal.

Never have the standard excuses been so thoroughly debunked.

So it's time to discard those excuses once and for all. It's also time to own up to the fact that ours is a vast educational bureaucracy that wastes a fortune, stifles innovation, rewards mediocrity, and warehouses students in behemoth campuses that aren't conducive to learning.

Superintendent David Brewer III and Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa have both launched reform efforts that, they say, will bring the change that's so greatly needed. We can only hope so, because we can't afford to put up with this kind of failure any longer.