

PARTNERSHIP

FOR LOS ANGELES SCHOOLS



**Empowering
Schools and
Communities for 15
Years and Counting**





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PARTNERSHIP
FOR LOS ANGELES SCHOOLS

OUR MISSION

WE **TRANSFORM**
SCHOOLS TO
REVOLUTIONIZE
SCHOOL SYSTEMS



EMPOWERING ALL
STUDENTS WITH
A **HIGH-QUALITY**
EDUCATION

WHO WE ARE

Founded in 2007, the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools is one of the largest, in-district public school transformation organizations in the United States. We are an independent nonprofit working within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to model sustainable and scalable solutions to dramatically improve outcomes for all students.


We manage 20 of the highest-need schools in LAUSD, all of them in Boyle Heights, South LA, and Watts through a one-of-a-kind memorandum of understanding. Unlike charter schools and charter school organizations, the Partnership operates under the same conditions as LAUSD and other public school districts and adheres to all district collective bargaining agreements.


Our goal for 2039 is for students from LAUSD's high and highest-need schools to more than double their graduation rates—from 19% to 40%—from a four-year college.


OUR SCHOOLS





Statistics at a Glance


**160**
Teacher leaders developed


**300**
community partners mobilized


**10K**
parents and families empowered through our Parent College program

**\$175M**
raised and invested in traditional public schools in Los Angeles

**89%**
graduation rate in 2023, 56% increase from 2008

**62%**
of seniors were accepted to four-year colleges in 2023, nearly double our baseline of 32% in 2015

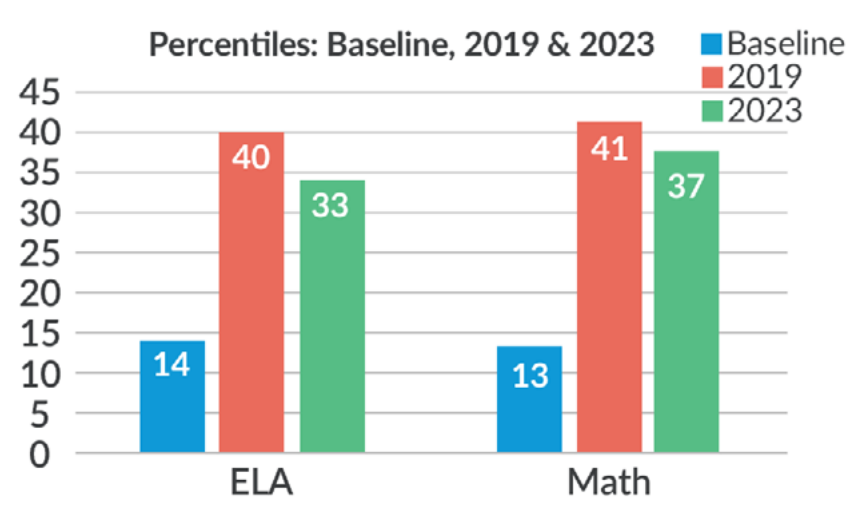
**85%**
of students in 2023 were accepted and plan to attend either a four- or two-year college

**89%**
of students in 2023 completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Student Performance

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Partnership schools made more rapid progress increasing math and English language arts (ELA) proficiency than the district as whole. Consistent with the profile of schools in our network, most Partnership schools started with lower absolute achievement levels than comparable district schools. Since the beginning of the Smarter Balanced assessment in 2015 through 2019 (the last year with available data), Partnership schools increased ELA proficiency at almost twice the rate of the district and nearly three times the rate as the state. Progress in math has also outpaced both the district and state, although at a lesser margin.

Similar to schools and districts across the country, the pandemic disrupted the momentum achieved. The shift to remote learning, coupled with the challenges of adapting to a new educational landscape, led to a deceleration in the rate of improvement. Despite the resilience displayed by the Partnership’s schools and families in navigating these unprecedented times, the impact of the pandemic has undeniably cast a shadow on the pace of progress in English and math education. Now, the focus lies on continuing to build the capacity of our school communities, implementing strategies to overcome these obstacles, and reigniting the momentum towards educational advancement.



Subject	Baseline	2019	2023
ELA	14	40	33
Math	13	41	37

HOW FAR WE'VE COME

2007 The Partnership launches as a collaboration between Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), our co-founders, philanthropists Richard and Melanie Lundquist and former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, and other public and private partners. Melanie and Richard Lundquist announce a 10-year, \$50 million founding gift to ensure the Partnership's sustainability, with Marshall Tuck as the chief executive officer.

2008 The Partnership launches with 10 initial schools in the network: 99th Street Elementary School, Markham Middle School, Figueroa Street Elementary School, Hollenbeck Middle School, Math, Science, and Technology Magnet Academy at Roosevelt, Ritter Elementary School, Roosevelt High School, Santee Education Complex, Stevenson College and Career Preparatory School, and Sunrise Elementary School.



2009 Mendez High School, a newly built campus in Boyle Heights, joins the Partnership for the 2009-10 school year.



2010 Huerta Elementary and Carver Middle School in South LA, and Joyner Elementary in Watts, join the Partnership. Also in 2010, the Partnership worked with American Civil Liberties Union and Public Counsel to file the *Reed v. State of California* suit, alleging such budget-based layoffs denied low-income students their fundamental right under the state constitution to equal educational opportunity.

2011 Jordan High School in Watts joins the Partnership.

2012 The Partnership's memorandum of understanding with LAUSD is renewed, affirming the progress at Partnership schools.



2013 Joan Sullivan Anane, former LA deputy mayor of education and founding principal of the Bronx Academy of Letters in New York, succeeds Marshall Tuck as Partnership CEO.

2014 *Reed v. State of California* is settled, providing additional support to 36 high-need LAUSD schools, including six Partnership schools. This historic settlement acknowledged the impact of disproportionate teacher turnover during budget layoffs and codified the special protections and supports required by high-need, high-poverty schools.

2015 107th Street Elementary in Watts joins the Partnership. The same year, we supported *Cruz v. State of California*, which won a settlement and led to state legislation (AB 1210) requiring schools to provide enough classes so students are not placed in low-value "service classes." Using the Cruz lawsuit, we persuaded LAUSD to provide Joyner Elementary School with additional staff resources to serve students and additional flexibilities to retain effective teachers that would otherwise have had to leave LAUSD when their temporary contracts expired.



2016 20th Street and Grape Street elementary schools in South LA and Watts, respectively, join the Partnership.

2017 The Partnership hosts "Believe With Me," a gala celebrating the Partnership's 10th year.

2018 LAUSD's Board of Education approved a resolution we supported to more accurately identify and fund the district's highest-need schools.



2019 LAUSD Board of Education realigns \$280+ million to schools based on Student Equity Needs Index (SENI) rankings in 2019-20. Historic disinvestment in communities of color has led to inequities for Black and Brown students who live in under-resourced, high-need areas. To combat this crisis, the Partnership advocates for SENI so resources are allocated based on need instead of disbursed equally or per enrollment as in prior years.



2020 49th Street Elementary School in South LA joins the Partnership. The pandemic highlighted pervasive digital inequities and in 2020, we published two equity alerts about bridging LA's digital divide, advocating for high-speed and high-quality internet access in our communities.

2021 LAUSD Board of Education votes to distribute \$700 million to high-need schools using the SENI. This year, we also piloted our sponsored internet program for 400 families in our network prompting LAUSD to launch its own program that brought internet to as many as 100,000 families.

2022 Weigand Avenue Elementary School in Watts joins the Partnership.



2023 Marks the 15th year the Partnership began managing schools.

A photograph of Melanie Lundquist, an older woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a black blazer over a black top. She is standing in front of a colorful mural that depicts a young girl in a red shirt holding a book. The background also shows a building with windows.

Life-Changing Investment

Melanie Lundquist, Co-founder and Philanthropist Activist

Philanthropist Couple Give Millions to Help Ensure Quality Education for All

Melanie Lundquist has fond memories of her childhood and she is particularly proud that she is a graduate of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Melanie frequently talks about the quality education she received and how she wants every student to have the same.

“For 20 years, I looked for an organization that could actually improve educational outcomes for our students,” Melanie said. When she couldn’t find one, she helped create one.

In 2007, Melanie and her husband, Richard Lundquist, co-founded the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools with a \$50 million investment over 10 years, and after that, they gave an additional \$35 million for another 10 years. Richard and Melanie have no regrets.

“There is no other organization doing what the Partnership does,” said Melanie, who is also vice chair of the Partnership’s Board of Directors.

“Most people are trying to transform public education from outside of the system, but it is the systems that are broken. So, we need to fix the system. The Partnership works from the bottom up, from inside out. Our work happens within LAUSD and we are able to experience firsthand what the problems and obstacles are, which help us create solutions.”

“Most people are trying to transform public education from outside of the system, but it is the systems that are broken.”

Not only are Richard and Melanie helping the Partnership transform schools, they are also directly impacting the lives of students through a fellowship they started in 2010. The Melanie and Richard Lundquist Fellowship program helps identify and support future leaders. This five-year fellowship seeks to further develop students at Partnership middle and high schools who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and a commitment to their education. Scholars gain exposure to college and career experiences, including participation in the annual summer Oregon Young Scholars Program. They also receive a scholarship for fulfilling the program's requirements.

Melanie is proud of what the Partnership has accomplished in 15 years. When asked why she chooses to continue to invest in the organization, her answer is simple.

“Our problems are very long-standing and very deep and if you're going to get these problems fixed, you have to stay the course,” she said. “We are not going away; we are not going to stop helping.”



Melanie and Richard Lundquist

Opening the Doors to Partners



Henry Perez, Executive Director
InnerCity Struggle

More than 15 years ago, Henry Perez, along with students and parents from InnerCity Struggle walked around Boyle Heights knocking on doors to ask residents to sign a petition. The petition would be used to allow the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools to become external managers of some of the highest-need schools east of downtown Los Angeles.

“Our students and our parent members were very excited to bring about change in the schools on the eastside, and to find an alternative to the status quo, which was not working for our students and families,” said Henry, executive director of InnerCity Struggle, a nonprofit organization promoting healthy, safe, and nonviolent communities.

InnerCity Struggle members supported the Partnership for its approach, seeking increased autonomy over school sites, and its aim to improve academic outcomes. Members were particularly impressed by the Partnership’s commitment to transform a culture of exclusion and low expectations into one characterized by collaboration, higher expectations, and students and parents as vital contributors in identifying and solving problems, Henry added.

“The Partnership opened up the doors and invited us in. The value of our community organization working with the Partnership is that we need the inside and the outside approach to solve the needs in our educational system,” he stated.

Through intentional and mutually beneficial collaboration with community partners, the Partnership has been able to leverage additional support and resources for the individualized needs and goals of its schools.

“The Partnership has demonstrated a bold and intentional commitment to creating change and that they are not afraid to partner with the community and be transparent,” Henry said.



From the Beginning...



Myeisha Phillips, Ph.D.
Senior Director of School Transformation

Partnership: How did you come to work with the Partnership and how has it changed over the years?

Myeisha: I was a half-time math coach at Gompers Elementary and a half-time instructional coach at 99th St. Elementary through an MOU that Partnership had with UCLA Center X in its first year of managing schools. I was then recruited by the Partnership for a full-time coordinator role. The position was originally a generalist role but I did specialized work around middle school math. In 2013, I started focusing solely on elementary math. Now, as senior director of school transformation, I support all things elementary math. I support teachers and coaching leaders in ensuring that students have classroom experiences where they do math, think about math, talk about math, feel confident about math, and enjoy math.

Partnership: What is the greatest accomplishment or most impactful work of the math team?

Myeisha: I believe the most impactful work of the math team is building the capacity of teachers and leaders around math. Over the years, we have been able to support teachers with the transition to Common Core standards, new curriculum, and the Smarter Balanced Assessment System. We have been able to go deep on building math content knowledge which for some teachers has improved their own math identity and how they view themselves as math teachers. We have been able to dive deep into high-quality math and math instruction and what that looks and

sounds like. Last but not least, we are very proud of the growth of our students. Over time, we continue to improve student proficiency, and each year, more and more students are reaching math proficiency according to state proficiency measures.

Partnership: Why do you stay?

Myeisha: I have a strong belief in continuous improvement, growth over time, and staying the course. For this work, we need people in it for the long haul and willing to stay the course. I see many individuals in our schools embody this belief and after a few years into the Partnership, I realized that this work required a long-game strategy. I stay because I believe in continuity, and consistency, and that to impact change, you have to stay in it long enough to understand the reoccurring patterns to name them and disrupt them when it impedes progress.



Partnership: What more do you and your team hope to accomplish?

Myeisha: Ultimately, we want all students to reach the state math proficiency measures. We want students to love math, see themselves as mathematicians, and see themselves as ready and capable of choosing math-based fields of study as careers. We want teachers in our network to love math, and to consider themselves capable math teachers who can support students in getting into math-based fields should they desire. For our coaching leaders, we want them to feel confident in supporting mathematics and feel as though they can effectively lead the math efforts at their school sites.

“I have a strong belief in continuous improvement, growth over time, and staying the course.”



Coming Full Circle

Miriam Hernandez, Senior Manager of Operations and Strategy

Miriam Hernandez remembers when the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools began managing Roosevelt High School. The “takeover,” as she referred to it, happened after her older brother graduated but before her younger brother arrived at the Boyle Heights school. It was the summer between her first year and second year. Miriam also remembers that no one seemed happy about it.

“They did not want Partnership, myself included,” she said. “I was weary of change. Most teachers and students felt that way.”

This feeling did not pass right away. Roosevelt, a bustling campus with more than 5,000 students, was broken into seven different schools with about 100-200 students each. Miriam’s new school became Math, Science, and Technology Magnet Academy, or MSTMA.

“It was funny because we were a technology school with almost no technology and what we did have was outdated,” the MSTMA class of 2011 graduate said, laughing.

It took a while for everyone to adapt. It wasn’t until Miriam’s junior year that she noticed positive changes. The Partnership started emphasizing the importance of stakeholder engagement, including listening to students. Miriam also was part of the inaugural group of the Melanie and Richard Lundquist Fellows Program. The program supports students at Partnership middle and high schools and provides them with personal and professional growth opportunities.

“I was able to engage with Partnership people directly and started to see that they really do care,” she said.

Miriam's relationship with the Partnership has come full circle. After graduating from MSTMA, she interned at the organization during college and now works at the Partnership full-time. As senior manager of operations and strategy, she helps schools create and maintain sustainable systems to ensure equitable resources and support student enrollment and attendance.

When Miriam thinks about her time at Roosevelt, once dubbed the "drop-out factory" by students, and MSTMA, she is proud of how far it has come. MSTMA was recognized as a California Distinguished School in 2021 and 2024, and named a 2024 National Merit School of Distinction by Magnet Schools of America.

She credits most of this success to the amazing administration and teachers, some of whom have been there since before the Partnership's involvement. And even though it took a while to realize, she knows that the Partnership also played a large part.

Roosevelt High and MSTMA are proud members of the Partnership's network and share space on a campus which boasts newly renovated buildings with technology integrated into classrooms and vibrant outdoor spaces with student- and community-authored murals that connect the school to its cultural roots. In 2023, Roosevelt had a 89% graduation rate, up from 79% in 2014, and MSTMA's graduation rate was 99%, up four percentage points from 2014.



A Combined Vision for Transformational Education

Leading with Integrity: Q&A with Partnership's New CEO



Guadalupe Guerrero, CEO

willingness to demonstrate care. I was relegated to the back corner of the classroom, alongside the other students of color, to independently work through a self-guided boxed reading program.

My own varied school experiences reinforce my belief in the importance of ensuring each and every student feels a strong sense of belonging and care from the adults around them, and that every educator needs to be equipped to serve diverse learners.

Partnership: What or who inspired you to go into education?

Guadalupe: My elementary school music teacher, Mr. Roland Hayes, inspired me to pay it forward, to become an educator. As a caring and motivational teacher, he offered encouragement, provided guidance, and immediate feedback. Mr. Hayes, who undoubtedly held high expectations for me, simultaneously showered me with praise to ensure he acknowledged my effort and progress. Aside from kick-starting my study of classical music, being in his violin class permitted me, twice a week, to also escape an oppressive classroom setting.

Partnership: How have your values inspired your approach to leadership?

Guadalupe: One of my core values is integrity. I work hard to always be mindful of leading with integrity to demonstrate urgency, maintain a moral imperative, a diligent work ethic, a candid honesty about the work, and to model supportive collegiality.

Partnership: Can you share a memorable experience from your own childhood that had a lasting impact on you?

Guadalupe: As an emergent bilingual student, I remember a teacher who didn't offer me the necessary support, or even a



Partnership: What is it about the Partnership that made you want to come here?

Guadalupe: I was attracted by the Partnership's mission, and the goal of cultivating a counter-narrative for students who have typically been underserved. The notion that innovation and impactful strategies have the potential of further revolutionizing broader school systems' practices, at scale, is greatly appealing. I see it as an effective way of making an exponential difference in the lives of students everywhere.

Partnership: What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Guadalupe: I love moments when our children and extended family are able to spend time together. I always enjoy a great meal with friends, hearing live music of all kinds, and traveling to places I've never experienced. I like how food, music, and places all help me to experience new cultures and meet people of different backgrounds.

Partnership: What qualities do you believe are essential for creating a positive and collaborative school culture?

Guadalupe: I think for a school to effectively serve students and support educators, a few essential ingredients need to be in place. There has to be a student-centered approach to meeting the academic and non-academic needs of individual children and young adults; there needs to be a strong professional learning community that is continually fostered and supported; and there has to be relational trust with families and a community who are also empowered to partner and support school and student success. Together, school leaders and educators should model a professional learning community focused on student learning.

Partnership: How do you envision supporting teachers in their professional development and well-being?

Guadalupe: For professional educators, schools should be a community of practice where adults support one another and have collegial conversations about curriculum, instruction, and student growth. Everyone contributes to cultivating a positive school climate and culture. The concern for the growth and well-being of students, and adults, is an important feature of a caring school community. Teaching and learning is complex and challenging, and it is also immensely rewarding. As professionals, educators deserve meaningful support, supportive coaching, helpful guidance, and time to collaborate as they continue refining their pedagogy. When we are able to focus on these elements as a collective, then we are better able to effectively meet the needs and well-being of educators and diverse learners.

Partnership: What lessons have you learned from the pandemic, and how are they shaping your thinking about the best approach to teaching, learning, and overall support for student success?

Guadalupe: The pandemic only amplified the need and our responsibility to attend to the social-emotional needs of our students. Unfortunately, we have observed very real mental and behavioral health concerns in our youth and this prompts us to consider how we can meet these key readiness-to-learn challenges. It's become clear that we have to ensure our students feel a connection with others, both peers and adults. They need to be clear about what systems of support exist to help students who are feeling challenged or are struggling academically or non-academically. Learning experiences, more than ever, need to be relevant and personally engaging.

Partnership: How do you define "systems change" within the context of education, and what role do you see equity and justice play in driving systemic reforms in education?

Guadalupe: A public school system should provide both equitable opportunities and outcomes for each and every individual student. As such, schools should continually refine and adapt itself, as an institution, to meeting the assessed needs of diverse students. Issues of equity emerge when any particular student group becomes disenfranchised or marginalized because of a school system's inability or unwillingness to adapt to the needs of its actual students. It is not about students conforming to the schoolhouse, it is about the provision of powerful learning experiences to provoke and promote the brilliance and inherent talent of every individual student. When schools ignore, explicitly or implicitly, this core responsibility, then fundamental issues of justice and civil rights emerge.

Partnership: What would you want to be true in our Partnership schools and our school district 10 years from now?

Guadalupe: Ten years from now, a multitude of college graduates from former Partnership schools will be prospering as professionals serving their communities. Schools outside the network will have learned about and adopted practices that more effectively serve, in particular, Black and Brown students. LAUSD leverages the Partnership as a key incubator for school transformation and deliberately applies these learnings across its portfolio of schools; and other school systems across the country come to visit and learn how to consistently create a counter-narrative for students of color attending schools in underserved communities.

“My own varied school experiences reinforce my belief in the importance of ensuring each and every student feels a strong sense of belonging and care from the adults around them.”



Strong Leaders, Lasting Impact

Marshall Tuck and Joan Sullivan Anane, former CEOs

In the 15 years the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools has been in existence, there have been only two chief executive officers, Marshall Tuck and Joan Sullivan Anane. And while both chose to step down as CEO, they have not turned their backs on the Partnership. In fact, that is furthest from the truth.

Marshall was the organization's first CEO and served for nearly seven years before stepping down and becoming a board member. He remembers all the work that went into creating the Partnership, including the 13-hour days at school sites trying to convince staff and going door-to-door in communities to get petitions signed so they could manage schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). And once everything was agreed upon and the district memorandum of understanding was signed, the Partnership went from managing zero schools on June 30, 2008, to managing 10 on July 1, 2008.

"We went from zero students to serving more than 19,000 in one day," Marshall said. "We had to build the process and the structure underneath it from scratch. It was very complicated and these schools were very big. Roosevelt had 5,000 kids and Santee had 4,000."

The small but mighty Partnership crew had a "ton of heart and a ton of belief" that they could transform schools, Marshall recalled, adding that his passion and faith has not wavered which is why he continues to work with the organization.

Joan, who was chair of the Partnership's Board of Directors before she became CEO, stepped down in December 2023 after serving 10 years. She too continues to play an active role and is committed to supporting the transition of the incoming chief executive officer, Guadalupe Guerrero, who started his Partnership journey on April 2, 2024.

Joan leveraged the success of Marshall's leadership, and under her direction the Partnership's influence and impact went to the next level. When asked what she is most proud of, Joan said it was difficult to come up with one answer because there is so much that the Partnership has done to transform schools and revolutionize school systems.

The graduation rate has increased from 36% to nearly 90%, advocacy efforts helped bridge the digital divide in communities, and Partnership programs like K-PhD are providing access and opportunity for students to engage in high-level work that will get them one step closer to fulfilling their dreams. Also, Joan added, it was inspiring to witness schools like Santee Education Complex go from the bottom 2% of the lowest performing schools in LAUSD to better than average, and 99th Street Elementary go from the bottom 10% to doing better than 65% of LAUSD schools.

But she is most proud that the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools is still operating.

"It's not something you can take for granted in public education, an organization trying to do something as revolutionary and as unprecedented as the Partnership is," she said. "That in itself is a profound success because I think continuity of effort over time is the thing that we know must be in place to deliver on the promise."

The promise to accelerate achievement for students in Partnership schools, across LAUSD, and beyond is one that both Marshall and Joan believe the Partnership has achieved and will continue to do so in its next chapter.





Mother, Teacher, Mentor

Carolyn Webb de Macías, Board Co-Chair

Board Co-Chair has an Undeniable Passion for Children and Education

Carolyn Webb de Macías' journey with the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools began at its inception. In 2007, she was part of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's team when he proposed the idea of the Partnership.

"The mayor had a firm belief that education was how children can reach their highest potential and in fact, it is how they can get out of poverty," Carolyn said.

More than 15 years later, Carolyn continues to work with the Partnership and is currently co-chair of the board of directors. And despite her high-profile job as chief of staff and senior advisor for the current mayor of Los Angeles, Carolyn makes time for the children because she believes it is part of her calling.

"I am fundamentally a mother, a teacher, a mentor by personality, by character, by DNA," she said. "Working with children is my passion."

Carolyn has turned that passion into practice. With a quick look at her resume, one will see that she holds teaching credentials from pre-K to college and has served in various capacities in the education field from elementary school teacher to chief of staff in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in the U.S. Department of Education as an appointee of President Obama.

Carolyn said she is proud of the work of the Partnership and of the impact the organization has made in schools, in communities, and in the lives of children and families for the last 15 years. Although her capacity may change, Carolyn believes she will always support the Partnership and be an advocate for education.

"I just think teaching and learning is something we should all be involved in, and the children deserve it."

Supporting Students, Families, Teachers, and School Leaders

We believe that the leadership schools need already lives in the communities we serve and that the work of school transformation is—at its core—about changing, building, and strengthening systems within a school. As a result, we focus on building the capacity of school leaders, teachers, families, and community partners to implement robust school-site systems that act as the foundation for sustainable, long-term progress.

School Leaders

We equip principals and assistant principals with the learning, skills, and coaching support to develop and implement strong visions and systems with their faculty and staff.

Educators

We provide leadership opportunities and support teachers who seek to impact their school community by taking on leadership roles in instruction, school culture, family engagement, and the arts. We also support schools with hiring and recruiting diverse educators.

Families

We engage parents and families to establish and realize a common vision that understands and supports student achievement.

Community Partners

We collaborate with community partners to leverage additional supports and resources for the individualized needs and goals of our schools and to build courageous coalitions that work together to close equity gaps.



Different Roles, Same Commitment



Randy Romero, Chief Schools Officer

Randy Romero is one of few individuals who has experienced both facets of the Partnership's work to transform and strengthen school systems. He was formerly a teacher and principal at two network schools—Math, Science, and Technology Magnet Academy at Roosevelt High School and Hollenbeck Middle School—and currently serves as the chief schools officer at the Partnership.

"I started as a math teacher, also served as a math coach, and moved into administration because I wanted to enable people to do good work and support them in finding improvement," he said. "One thing I always share with people is that the work I am doing is my mission, not my job. It is who I am as an educator serving my life mission."

Reflecting on his leadership experiences, Randy expressed appreciation for the Partnership's strategies that empower school communities through shared management and transparent decision-making. Randy discussed how personal connections to the school's performance by administrators, teachers, parents, and students inspire action among those directly impacted.

These approaches are particularly important in schools where student needs are high and everyone must play their part to ensure that scholars have the support they need to succeed.

"Working in high-need neighborhoods is no small challenge as the conditions facing our students outside of school can come in and impede their progress," said Randy. "But with equitable investments of people, time, and money, nothing is insurmountable."

To address these challenges effectively and develop the capacity of adults supporting students in schools, the Partnership provides a range of programs and professional development opportunities. From institutes dedicated to strategic planning to monthly leadership conferences and level-like gatherings, these spaces foster collaboration and the sharing of best practices among schools. By equipping school leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge, Partnership empowers them to create welcoming school cultures, set high expectations, and implement strong systems of instruction to support all students, particularly those traditionally pushed to the margins.

“One thing I always share with people is that the work I am doing is my mission, not my job.”



Aleta Williams, Principal
107th Street Elementary & STEAM Magnet

Capacity Building for School Success

Aleta Williams has worked in the Los Angeles Unified School District for 24 years, the last six have been at 107th Street Elementary & STEAM Magnet, one of 20 schools in the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools' network.

At 107th, she started as assistant principal before becoming principal in the 2021-22 school year. Aleta believes she is fortunate to be part of Partnership's smaller network of schools because of the support she receives. In addition to her regular responsibilities, unexpected challenges pop up almost every single day, and it is especially during these times that Aleta is grateful.

"I have not been in an organization where I can literally pick up the phone and call a person that is the head of a department, and they can remove a barrier or solve a problem for me until I became part of the Partnership."

Whether it is needing resources to purchase shampoo for families because of a lice outbreak or providing emergency financial support to school staff facing unexpected events, the Partnership team will do whatever they can to help, Aleta said.

One major component of the Partnership's work is capacity building. The organization presents principals and assistant principals with best practices, tools, and coaching to develop and implement strong systems with their staff.

"The support system is pretty unprecedented," the principal said.

The Partnership's support reaches every facet of the school, Aleta added. They support school attendance efforts; help pay for student activities like cooking club; assign and pay for English and math coaches to support teachers; provide guidance on budgetary decisions; and help staff classrooms by recruiting teachers from across the nation.

"The Partnership is so embedded in who we are as a school culture and how we handle our day-to-day that it is sometimes hard to figure out where we end and where they begin."

More Than Just ABCs

An example of the Partnership's dedication to fostering the growth and development of teachers is exemplified by its literacy coaches.

Partnership coaches work directly with teachers at school sites, collaborating to improve instruction and overall student performance. Coaches help teachers analyze student data, create lesson plans, guide teachers through new units, offer one-on-one feedback after classroom observations, and deliver curriculum training to administrators.

"The Partnership does all the legwork around finding the talent and making sure we have someone quality here that can support teachers and improve instruction," said Aleta Williams, principal at 107th Street Elementary & STEAM Magnet, as she reflects on how the Partnership uses its own resources to find qualified coaches for her teachers. "It's hugely impactful in terms of being able to increase student achievement."

The Partnership has a team of literacy coaches and another team of math coaches. This approach stands out for its emphasis on having coaches on-site who prioritize a single subject, unlike many school districts which may rely on district coaches who oversee both literacy and math. The model gives teachers the most attention, with coaches spending 90% of their time on tasks that benefit teachers. It also contributes to a more positive school culture, likely stemming from teachers feeling supported, a sentiment measured through Partnership surveys.

"The opportunity to have someone tailor your lessons to meet each student's interests, needs, and strengths for you is huge and can help you elevate your career," said Nychelle Toussaint, senior director of school transformation.

Coaches tailor their support to meet the diverse needs of teachers, employing strategies based on their development level and offering different structures of support. For instance, new or first-year teachers may require hands-on assistance like co-teaching, while experienced teachers may benefit from less frequent coaching cycles.

Notably, the Partnership's dedicated coaches go above and beyond their assigned responsibilities, often leading initiatives such as book clubs, organizing school-wide professional development sessions, and coordinating events like student-teacher soccer games or literacy nights, all aimed at providing additional support and opportunities for students.



Instructional coaching is an essential component of the success of Partnership schools. Math and literacy coaches collaborate with teachers and administrators at our 20 schools, providing them with knowledge, tools, and personalized guidance to excel in their teaching practices and improve student achievement. Our coaches support the Los Angeles Unified School District with district-wide curriculum implementation, modeling best practices, and helping educators navigate the complexities of change.

Crunching Numbers to Success

Strengthening Math Education

Nearly 15 years ago, Myeisha Phillips was a one-person math team at the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools. A year later, Francisco Villegas was brought on board to lead the department. Today, the Partnership's math coaching team is 17 people and growing.

But getting to 17 was not an easy feat. When Myeisha and Francisco started there was a strong appetite to improve math outcomes, not only at Partnership schools but across the country. Francisco remembers telling the CEO if they were going to make a lasting impact, it would require more people because the work is people-centered and that needs to be top of mind when implementing any strategy. But to get more people, he was told, they would have to show impact.

The first step to improve student outcomes was to support teachers by convening them to align their curriculum to the state standards and the state's assessment expectations. However, this very common approach has a ceiling when it comes to impacting student achievement.

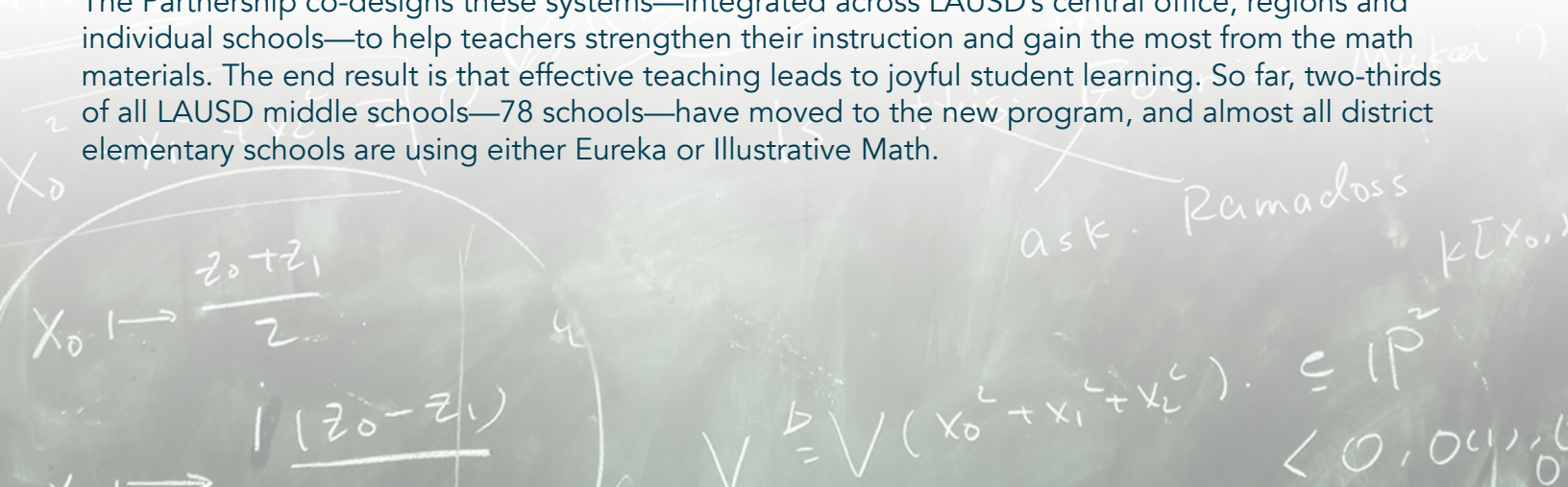
"If we really want to impact student outcomes, including but not limited to achievement on state assessments, we have to focus not just on what is taught but also how it is taught," Francisco said.

Around 2013, the state implemented new common core standards and soon after, teachers were asking for better resources that were aligned to the new standards. In response, the Partnership began to pilot Eureka Math, a high-quality curricular program that emphasized deeper learning, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding of math. By the 2014-2015 school year, Eureka Math was expanded across Partnership elementary schools, with another high-quality program, called Illustrative Math, later piloted by the Partnership primarily in secondary schools.

"Around 2018-2019, we were outpacing the state two-fold at elementary school level, three-fold at our middle schools, and five-fold at high schools," Francisco said.

With the Partnership's success as a proof point, the Los Angeles Unified School District started its own pilot, allowing elementary schools to opt into using either the Eureka or Illustrative Math programs. In 2021, the Partnership began collaborating with LAUSD to support the district's vision for student math success by co-developing systems that support middle schools in using high-quality math materials, in this case Illustrative Math.

The Partnership co-designs these systems—integrated across LAUSD's central office, regions and individual schools—to help teachers strengthen their instruction and gain the most from the math materials. The end result is that effective teaching leads to joyful student learning. So far, two-thirds of all LAUSD middle schools—78 schools—have moved to the new program, and almost all district elementary schools are using either Eureka or Illustrative Math.



Each One, Teach One



Arias Williams, Biology Teacher
Santee Education Complex

Arias Williams embodies the sentiment of the African proverb “Each One, Teach One.” The proverb originated in the era when enslaved Black people were denied an education; so when one person learned to read and write, it was their duty to teach another.

Arias is a mentor teacher with the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools’ Teacher Residency program and he believes in sharing knowledge.

“Knowing that I’m setting an example for someone else makes me strive for excellence and continuously improve,” said Arias, adding that the responsibility of sculpting the next generation of teachers is a role he takes seriously.

Participating as a mentor not only propels Arias to new heights in his own teaching by having to regularly reflect on his methods, but mentoring residents also provides valuable insights into new teaching practices and fosters a dynamic and mutually beneficial exchange.

In 2021, the Partnership launched a teacher residency program in collaboration with the Alder Graduate School of Education to train new teachers. A one-year teacher credential and master’s degree program, the Partnership’s Teacher Residency is tailored to tackle the distinctive challenges of Los Angeles schools. The program emphasizes the preparation of educators for success in high-need communities by focusing on developing effective and culturally responsive teaching strategies that foster positive relationships with students. It provides aspiring educators with comprehensive and hands-on experience at a Partnership school. Teacher residents work alongside experienced mentor teachers for one year, gaining practical insights and refining their teaching skills in a real classroom setting. The program is specifically intended to invest in new teachers of color teaching in high-need schools, and it combines immersive, hands-on practice in the classroom with educational theory and research.

Arias is an ardent supporter of the teacher residency program because he believes in the effectiveness of the co-teacher model. Arias models best teaching and engagement practices, explains instructional decisions, and helps residents develop confidence in the classroom. This approach helps to ensure that residents are prepared for authentic classroom experiences in high-need schools. Arias emphasizes that maintaining a continuous presence over the entire year provides teacher residents with a comprehensive perspective on teaching, encompassing aspects from class culture to engaging in parent conferences. Arias looks forward to seeing the residents graduate and continue their journey by entering classrooms of their own, and possibly becoming mentor teachers themselves one day.



The Power of Parenthood

Parent College, the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools' premier family engagement program, values families as crucial partners in their students' educational journey. Grounded in the belief that the family serves as the child's first teacher and home as their first school, Parent College fosters spaces for families to learn, engage, and advocate for their children's success.

"It's a great opportunity for parents who want to help their children succeed," said Maria Ruiz, reflecting on her journey as a parent enrolled in the classes and as a former Parent College instructor.

Through workshops covering restorative justice, foundational advocacy skills, and health, parents uncover tools to navigate the education maze—from GPA requirements to financial aid. It is a place where they can learn about preparing children for school, understanding A-G requirements, and the importance of reclassification for English learners. Parents emerge better equipped to identify the proper core courses for their children, tutoring support, where to access services, and how to track their progress.

Beyond workshops, Parent College cultivates a community where parents from diverse backgrounds unite in their commitment to their children's success. Through open dialogue and shared experiences, parents create nurturing environments where they feel comfortable sharing challenges and possible solutions.

"There's extensive research linking family engagement to academic success, that's why Parent College is at the heart of our mission to transform schools," said Wendolly Escobar, vice president of family engagement at Partnership.

The Partnership believes it is a joint responsibility of families and schools to support every student's journey. This commitment drives the Partnership's allocation of resources to equip families with the knowledge and skills to advocate effectively, enabling them to be true partners in their children's education every step of the way.

In a world where education is the key to unlocking endless possibilities, Parent College illuminates the path to a brighter future for families across Los Angeles, with nearly 10,000 parents and families engaged thus far.





Bridging Schools and Homes

Kiana Stepney, Parent

From Learner to Leader

Kiana Stepney did not always excel as an advocate for her children in school. Although she has attended every parent conference, helped with homework, and asked about their day, she was uncertain about what would provide the optimal educational experience for them.

That all changed when she joined Parent College. She witnessed firsthand the dedication the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools places on family engagement.

“I had to educate myself before I could help my children ... I want the best for them,” said the mother of three.

Parent College is the signature parent empowerment program of the Partnership. The program educates parents on their rights, roles, and responsibilities through academic workshops designed to help them become engaged and informed advocates for their children’s education. And the program has been a game-changer for Kiana.

It taught her how to be an effective advocate for her kids and provided valuable insights to improve the education system. She learned about the types of courses offered at schools, who to connect with during the course selection process, and the path these courses pave toward college acceptance. Armed with this knowledge today, Kiana said she can now better recognize when her children need extra support, where to access that support, and how to monitor their progress.

Parent College has motivated Kiana to actively join the educational journey of her children beyond mere drop-offs, pickups, and occasional conferences. Through Parent College, she knows parents can and should play a large role in supporting their scholars’ education.

Standing Up for the Watts Community



Perry Crouch, Ph.D, Watts Advocate



Dr. Perry Crouch has been a part of the Watts community for most of his life. He was witness to the unrest and destruction that came with the Watts uprising in 1965, and he was around as the community worked to rebuild what was lost.

The uprising was not the community's only setback. Like many communities of color, there have been generations of disinvestment and systemic racism that have left them with failing schools, inadequate resources, blight, and episodes of high crime and violence. However, amid so much struggle, Watts community leaders and residents have joined forces to demand change and address issues.

Community-led development and infrastructure projects have resulted in affordable homes, the planting of thousands of trees, bike paths, and skills training and job opportunities. Initiatives like the Safe Passage program and collective actions from community partners like Watts Gang Task Force helped address safety concerns. And, Perry said, there was the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools.

In 2008, the Partnership began managing 10 schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Among them were 99th Street, Figueroa Street and Ritter elementary schools, and Edwin Markham Middle School, all in Watts. Then came Joyner Elementary in 2009, Jordan High School in 2011, and 107th Street and Grape Street elementary schools in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

According to Perry, a community activist who worked to make sure kids had safe paths to schools and continues to help the Partnership

stay in touch with the community, many Watts schools had lost control of the students. During that time, it was “definitely a school-to-prison pipeline,” he said.

The Partnership invested in schools, providing additional resources and opportunities for students, as well as beautifying campuses. The organization also provided additional professional development to staff which helped administrators and teachers take back control of schools, Perry said.

“The Partnership gave these schools wings,” he said.

At the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, we collaborate with community partners to leverage additional supports and resources for students, families, and schools. Our team actively builds courageous coalitions that work together to close equity gaps. We recognize the needs of our students, families, and schools go beyond what we can directly provide, so we work with school leaders and approximately 300 community partners to leverage collective expertise and resources to best serve Partnership schools through socio-emotional support, health and wellness care, and academic and after-school programs.

The Partnership’s approach to working with partners includes:

- Developing school-specific strategies and leveraging partner resources to meet school-wide goals
- Scaling community partnerships to deepen impact across the network
- Building community-level partnerships to increase alignment between school and community goals to maximize impact
- Cultivating relationships and convening partners to be strategic ambassadors for our mission and deepen our collective impact
- Serving as advisors for Partnership staff and school communities to engage with community leaders and partners



Making Strides Towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools is pivotal for fostering a workplace culture that thrives on innovation, collaboration, and understanding. By allocating resources to DEI initiatives, we demonstrate a dedication to creating an environment where every team member feels valued, respected, and included. We hope this investment not only enhances the overall office culture but also has a profound impact on the quality of service that we provide to our schools, students, and families.

Pre 2018-19

- Committee formed to plan an equity-focused staff retreat
- Developed and administered first annual organizational culture survey

2018-19

- Partnership contracts with National Equity Project (NEP), an education reform organization that specializes in leadership development and changing culture and conditions to further equity objectives
- The "Cabinet," a diverse representation of the Partnership team, is established with a purpose of setting direction for home office diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work
- Hired first director of organizational culture and learning
- Hired Keating Advisors to create a new salary framework based on market rates and job descriptions
- Begin analyzing compensation data by race, gender, and other markers
- Salary adjustments made for equity and standardized for job openings and new hires



2019-20

- First NEP all-staff session
- Team uses a liberatory design (equity-centered framework) approach to reimagine internal performance management and evaluation systems
- Title structure committee created to examine title structure, roles, and promotion pathways

2020-21

- Roll out of new title structure and career pathways
- Launched pilot of new performance management system
- Initiated compensation study to update salary framework and make adjustments



2021-22

- Continued and expanded work with NEP to cover coaching for chiefs, vice presidents, and senior directors
- Implemented more transparent promotions criteria and process

2022-23

- Org-wide roll out of new performance management system
- Engaged Edgility Consulting to conduct compensation benchmark study and equity analysis
- Living wage floor of \$65k/year approved for all full-time equivalents

2023-24

- Compensation study results in implementation of policy centered in equity
- Focus on building out supports and intentional space for managers to learn and grow together
- Launched mentorship program for associates and advisors
- Promotions policy updated for clarity and equity
- New CEO joins the Partnership



People of the Partnership



Allan Broslawsky
Senior Project Manager of Curriculum Systems Advising

Seeing the many injustices that affected my students' academic opportunities, both in and outside of the classroom, motivated me to fight against the systemic inequities and barriers to education that disenfranchised communities face.

Claire Brown
Senior Vice President of Talent Management

My mission is to ensure that Partnership students get access to the most skilled, curious, and inspiring teachers and school leaders out there. Our team seeks to understand the barriers and obstacles to hiring and keeping the best, in order to develop creative solutions for the short and long term.



Abigail Carlos Alejo
Senior Coordinator of Family Engagement

I am excited to support our elementary schools in developing, implementing, and overseeing school-based family engagement initiatives. As a first-generation college student, I understand the importance of engaging families.



L.J. Carusone
Vice President of Development

I have always held a belief that education is the foundation for critical thinking and social justice. For over a decade, I've had the privilege of working with the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools that intersects education and advocacy, and where every day is a testament to the transformative power of learning.



Jeanette Gomez
Senior Manager of Policy & Advocacy

My whole educational trajectory has been shaped around my identity as a first-generation student trying to get to college. My experiences and exposure to elite spaces have only strengthened my belief that there should be more students from communities like mine in higher education.





Adrian Hernandez
Senior Math Coach for School Transformation

As the first person from both my mom's and my dad's side of the family to graduate from high school, no one set the precedent or expectations for me when I attended CSU Long Beach. I am a direct product of an inner-city public education, and this is the community and students that I am passionate about serving.

Deycy Hernandez
Chief External Officer

The communities we serve are filled with parents, caregivers, students, educators, and others who understand the transformative power of education. I want to contribute towards building a thriving movement that leads and models what is possible in our schools and education system.



Marcus Hughes
Director of Teacher Residency

A native of South Los Angeles and father of three, I am deeply invested in providing an excellent education for all our students in the city of Los Angeles.

Nayeli Iñiguez
College Success Advisor

I have always been passionate about social justice and equitable access to education. Throughout high school and my post-secondary education, I participated in different initiatives to advocate for more resources for my alma mater, Roosevelt High School, and my community, Boyle Heights.



Virginia Lee
Senior Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships

Quality education is an issue close to my heart, and I am excited to serve and support school communities in reaching their fullest potential.





Melanie Liu
Senior Manager of Home Office Talent

My passion for education equity began when I was in elementary school where I recognized the influence of educators on my growth development. I knew which teachers empowered me and held the magic that could transform my barriers into opportunities.

Erick Marquez
Senior Director of Digital Learning & Innovation

The Partnership allows me the amazing opportunity to give back to the inner-city community that I grew up in.



Dominique Morris
Chief People and Operations Officer

I have a deep belief that all children are entitled to a high-quality public education. I am a product of Los Angeles Unified schools and I had early exposure to the disparities that exist in our education system through my experience in LA classrooms. It was those experiences that inspired me to help make our public education system work better for all students.

Michael Ramirez
Director of Instructional Coaching

During my teaching years, I saw first-hand the immense challenges that our students face, the significant growth that children can make in one year, and how teachers can change the trajectory of their students' lives.



D'Anza Smith-Rodriguez
Senior Coordinator of School Transformation

I am deeply passionate about working to transform our school sites into places where all students receive a high-quality, equitable educational experience. As a mom and wife, I approach our work as if my two kids attended our schools.





BE RESPONSIBLE



Cal

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Revolutionizing Systems: The Power of Advocacy

Reed v. State of California

In 2009, in the months following an economic recession, thousands of California teachers were let go as the economic downturn ate deeply into school budgets. Following state law, the Los Angeles Unified School District practiced “last in, first out,” which means teachers newest to the district and the ones with the least experience were laid off first. However, it is those same educators who are typically more common in schools located in high-need communities.

At Edwin Markham Middle School and Samuel Gompers Middle School—both of which were in the network of the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools—more than two-thirds of the teachers received pink slips. This would leave either a revolving door of substitute teachers or placement of more experienced teachers who were not selected by the school or who did not want to teach in high-need schools.

So with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union and Public Counsel, a lawsuit was filed, *Reed vs. State of California*. The lead plaintiff was Sharail Reed, an 8th grader at Markham.

“We worked with Public Counsel to bring a lawsuit on behalf of students arguing that the layoffs were unconstitutional because they violated students’ rights to equal opportunity to education,” said Adam Fletcher, general counsel and chief of staff for the Partnership.

Eventually, an agreement was reached that led to major new investments, including teacher support at 36 schools that struggled with high teacher turnover, student dropout rates, and low test scores. The Reed case settlement also called for hiring additional assistant principals, counselors and special education support staff; expanding professional development for teachers and administrators; and selecting experienced mentor teachers from school staff.

Perhaps as importantly, the settlement also called for teachers at participating schools to receive special training that might allow them to avoid future layoffs. “Ultimately, all of the parties signed on to a settlement agreement in which the district created a pathway to reduce disproportionate layoffs in Black and Brown communities, which we hope will set a precedent if and when layoffs become necessary again.”

The Partnership’s approach to school transformation is sparked by the synergy between our capacity building and advocacy work. The acceleration of student achievement within our network of schools—a result of the Partnership’s capacity building work—reinforces our influence with LAUSD as we press for wide-reaching systems change. We advocate to change the system when we see barriers to success for students, especially those from under-resourced communities and students of color. We work to remove the barriers and scale successes district-wide. Our role as school-level practitioners with a deep understanding of the needs, challenges, and successes of high-need schools, powers our work as education policy advocates and uniquely positions us for systems change. Our access and flexibility allow us to identify innovative best practices. We have demonstrated impact by piloting programs that the district has subsequently implemented at scale. We support this scaling by sharing lessons learned from our implementation experience.

Fighting to Be Seen

Partnership's Initiative to Identify Gifted Students



The Partnership for Los Angeles Schools actively works to recognize and identify potential solutions to systemic challenges that adversely impact schools in high-need communities. One of the Partnership's early wins was ensuring all students had the opportunity to be identified as gifted.

Prior to 2010, students in the Los Angeles Unified School District had to be referred in order to get tested for the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. While the referral could come from a teacher, a parent, or an adult with knowledge of a child's potential, this still resulted in disproportionality based on race and/or influence, said Adam Fletcher, general counsel and chief of staff for the Partnership.

"We noticed a lot of students in our communities, specifically Black and Brown students, were not being recognized as gifted, and we knew they were," Adam

said. "And this meant they did not have access to the opportunities and the resources that came with being in the gifted program."

In some Partnership schools, there were less than 1% of students in gifted programs, when the district average was above 10%. So Partnership began using philanthropic dollars to pay to have all students tested and soon after, 13% of Partnership students were identified as gifted and could now access additional resources that came with GATE programs.

Seeing the impact, the district began testing all students for gifted education in the second grade.

"This was a big win and it resulted in all students being tested immediately, and even today, gifted testing is more accessible," Adam said. "More students continue to be identified as gifted who wouldn't otherwise have been. We are proud of that."



Allocating Funding to Schools That Need It Most

During its 15-year journey, the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools has been committed to tackling challenges in the communities that need it most, often low-income Black and Brown communities that have been historically under-resourced. As fierce advocates for equity in education, it should be no surprise that protecting the Student Equity Needs Index (SENI) and ensuring that resources are allocated properly is a top priority for the organization.

"We support SENI because it affirms our belief that every student, regardless of race, income, or ability, deserves a quality education that sees their full potential, invests in their needs, and reminds them to dream big," said Deycy Hernandez, chief external officer at the Partnership.

Established in 2014, SENI is an index that ranks all K-12 schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District from highest to lowest need to allocate district funding equitably. SENI considers many factors to determine the level of need in each school, including the number of English learners, students experiencing homelessness, students in low-income households, and students with disabilities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LAUSD added COVID-19 data to the index, such as infection and death rates as additional factors, taking into account the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on low-income communities of color.

In 2018, the Partnership officially joined the Equity Alliance for LA's Kids—a coalition that pushes for comprehensive systems change to address systems that uphold the legacy of institutionalized racism—continues to advocate for more resources for high-need schools. In 2021, the LAUSD board approved \$700 million, up from the \$282 million that was previously invested, to be distributed using the index.

"This was a big win and we commended the district for passing the resolution which provided much-needed flexible funding to hundreds of schools across the district, especially for high and highest need schools," Deycy said.

School principals in the Partnership network used SENI funds to hire extra staff like counselors, nurses, and librarians. These funds also support professional development for teachers, mental health services for students, and efforts to engage parents and community members.



From Uncertain Future to College



Jan Arroyo, Santee Education Complex Alumnus, current student at University of Southern California

After nearly 16 years, Jan Arroyo embraced the realization that his voice matters. Empowered by this knowledge, he now channels his voice to bring about positive change.

“I did not realize the power behind my voice until I joined the Policy Advisory Board. I did not know that my ideas or opinions could make a difference,” he said.

Jan joined the Partnership’s Policy Advisory Board during his second year at Santee Education Complex, the year when the pandemic struck. He learned about the digital divide and how to

advocate for better broadband access for his and neighboring communities bearing the brunt of the problem during the transition to virtual learning.

Today, as a second-year student at the University of Southern California, Jan asserts that the program has shaped his career path.

“My major, which is now computer science and business administration, is all molded by my one goal to one day open my own nonprofit in the tech sector and make a social impact in my community. My future is centered around South Central and I don’t see that ever changing.”

Jan also acknowledged the influential role of Santee in his growth and development. Since his first year of high school, he received invaluable guidance from dedicated teachers and counselors, who not only steered him toward college but also fostered a vibrant culture of critical thinking, advocacy, and curiosity, he said.



The Policy Advisory Board is a cohort of students, parents, educators, and leaders that highlights the diverse experiences and perspectives of our school communities to better inform the Partnership’s education policy decision-making process. The board is a body representative of the Partnership’s diverse perspectives and experiences based on gender, race, ethnicity, expertise, and geographic location.

Shaping Career Paths Through Policy Participation

Heaven Watson is a Watts native who attended two Partnership schools, Edwin Markham Middle School and Jordan High School. Heaven graduated from high school in 2023 and is currently a student at San Jose State University.

In October 2021, we spoke with Heaven Watson about her experience with the Partnership's Policy Advisory Board, a cohort of students, parents, educators, and leaders that elevates the diverse experiences and perspectives of school communities to better inform decision-making on policy positions.

Two years later, in 2023, we reconnected with her to see how she was doing in college.

"San Jose State University is different from what I was used to," Heaven shared. "It was a new environmental and cultural change. I'm continuously looking for places that hold representation for me. We have a small, but strong Black community."

Offered to 10 Partnership students each year, Jane Watkins Fellowship recipients receive \$10,000 annually to help with college tuition. Because of this, Heaven said she attended college with no financial worries. She had planned on working two jobs during college to make up for any financial aid gap, but now she has time to participate in school clubs like the Black Student Union to advocate for school campus policies that affect her and her peers.



Heaven Watson, Jordan High School Alumna, current student at San Jose State University

“I’m continuously looking for places that hold representation for me.”

Heaven expressed that her educational interests were shaped by her participation in the Partnership's Policy Advisory Board. During her time on the board, Heaven gained firsthand experience in policy-making, particularly education policies for English learners. She said it propelled her to pursue public policy as her major. Originally, Heaven was going to major in African-American Studies, but now it will be her minor. She has a vested interest in making a positive impact and advocating for changes in policies affecting her community. While at Jordan, she was involved in the Associated Student Body, enjoyed being of service to other students, and was part of other clubs because it meant connecting with mentors who wanted to see her flourish. Heaven was also a part of the LA Trust for Children's Health Board, where she advocated for sexual health and mental health awareness.

"Policy and advocacy are in my future," she said.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Not only did the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate existing racial wealth inequalities, but the move to remote online learning reinforced educational disparities, particularly in the K-12 public school system. The pandemic forced students to receive their education through virtual instruction, but many students—especially those in under-resourced communities of color—were unable to participate due to insufficient internet access.

In 2020, the Partnership interviewed more than 1,000 families from Boyle Heights, South Los Angeles, and Watts, and learned that there were barriers for them to take advantage of the “free” offers from internet service providers (ISP). This was during a time when the need for high-speed internet was critical so that students could participate in online classrooms. These barriers included limited access or no service in their zip codes, mandatory deposits and social security information, installation fees, and pricey long-term contracts.



“We quickly discovered that in Watts there was a housing project that didn’t have any coverage. A family that had resources could not buy access to broadband,” said Joan Sullivan Anane, former chief executive officer of the Partnership. “So our first challenge was addressing that.”

After hearing from families, the Partnership made 50 calls to ISPs to learn more about the challenges and figure out a solution. This led the Partnership to pilot Students Connected, a sponsorship program offering high-speed home internet to over 400 families in their service areas at no cost, enabling students to complete

coursework, stay engaged during hybrid learning, and do homework and research at home.

“The Partnership became an intermediary and provided broadband to families and paid for it through philanthropy,” Joan recalled. “But this wasn’t enough for us as the Partnership. We’re thinking about the larger system. Getting broadband for our families who did not otherwise have access was a huge and important step, but it was only one step.”

The survey and pilot program were just the beginning. Throughout the pandemic, the Partnership advocated for fair access to affordable services by involving parents, testified at the California Department of Education’s Digital Divide task force, and shared research findings at conferences. Additionally, the Partnership organized coalition letters with policy suggestions, conducted research with the University of Southern California on the challenges of distance learning, participated in media interviews highlighting the lack of support for low-income communities, and helped form a coalition in Los Angeles to develop recommendations at the local and state levels.

On a local level, the Partnership went to partners at Los Angeles Unified School District to see how the Partnership could support the district in becoming a provider of broadband. And not too long after, the district launched its own program where they were able to provide access to 100,000 families, modeled after Students Connected.

Organizing for Student Success

Meet Maria Ruiz, a proud mother of three children who attended Partnership schools. Maria is also proud of herself, for one of her most fulfilling achievements: learning how to be an advocate for her children.

“Parents can learn the tools of how they can advocate not only for their children in their local school but also in the district, and at a state level,” she said.

Maria’s journey to empowerment started with her involvement in initiatives like United Parents for Educational Justice (UPEJ), a parent organizing and advocacy group supported by the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools. Over the past decade, Maria has evolved into a champion for parent involvement. She utilizes the tools learned through UPEJ to engage parents in advocating for equitable funding and the implementation of the Student Equity Needs Index, a research-based equity index implemented by the Los Angeles Unified School District that uses academic and community indicators to rank schools based on student needs. The various responsibilities she has taken on include facilitating meetings with district officials, organizing parents to participate in rallies, and giving testimony during school board meetings.

“Parents should be included in finding solutions and making decisions around the issues impacting their students and school communities,” Maria said.

Like the Partnership, Maria is a strong advocate for collaboration, emphasizing parents as indispensable stakeholders whose insights enrich decision-making for solutions that address the needs of schools and the students they serve. Recognizing the knowledge and experiences that parents bring to the table, she contends that parent input is vital not only for informed decision-making but also for fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.



Maria Ruiz, UPEJ participant

United Parents for Educational Justice (UPEJ) is a Partnership initiative dedicated to strengthening the advocacy power of parents for a future of equitable education and safe communities. The group focuses on issues impacting schools, particularly school funding and pedestrian safety. UPEJ offers a space where parents cultivate skills, knowledge, and understanding, celebrating parental engagement as one of the key driving forces behind equitable and sustainable change for every student. Participants delve into core power-building competencies such as goal setting and progress tracking, assessing organizational capacity, engaging stakeholders, and communications strategies. UPEJ started in 2018 and currently has 88 members.

Innovative Strategies & Academic Success



Restorative Communities

A restorative community is the result of intentionally promoting a positive and healthy school culture by building, strengthening, and, when harm occurs, repairing relationships through social and emotional learning, circle practice, and restorative dialogue. Restorative communities honor diversity, identity, and human rights.

At the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, we have 23 school leads who focus on promoting restorative practices on school campuses. We have trained hundreds of parents through Parent College, and over 5,000 educators across the network in restorative practices, social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed practices, which has supported the steady decrease in school suspensions. Building the capacity of teacher leaders and a school-wide approach that integrates staff culture and wellbeing, as well as student culture and wellbeing, makes restorative communities successful at schools.

“Conflict is part of the human experience, and we must cultivate the skills needed to transform conflict into learning opportunities for students and adults alike. Restorative justice provides a powerful, indigenous framework that honors each person’s humanity and gives us practical tools to build community.” – Julija Zubac, senior director of Restorative Communities

Promoting a Positive School Culture

The Partnership’s culture team envisions a healthy school culture to cultivate schools that center joy and belonging, to empower each scholar to create a vision that honors their identity, dreams, and creativity. By integrating restorative practices, a college-going and completion culture, and arts-rich schools, we support systems-building at school sites alongside school leaders, educators, students, and families.

College-Going Culture



The Partnership is dedicated to equipping every student for success and putting them on track to college. To foster a strong college-going culture, we invest in college success advisors, placing them at our high schools. We also have 14 college leads who support schools by offering counselor convenings, scholarships for students, mini-grants, and summer programming for college-bound graduates. They also maintain College Compass, a system for progress tracking and goal-setting, and provide tools for college preparation in the classroom for grades K-12.

In addition to our college leads, the Partnership has college success advisors who collaborate with the school's counseling team, college access, and college preparation partners to provide meaningful opportunities for students to explore college and career options. In the process, they prioritize elevating students' voices and experiences. This approach allows us to work towards solving common barriers to college success among students of color, including economic insecurity, language barriers, and the challenges of being a first-generation college applicant. Each advisor supports their assigned school with college and career event planning, college readiness presentations, organizing college field trips, parent engagement, and other related activities. Notably, advisors also implement the College Compass program school-wide. College Compass is our commitment to elevating key college readiness indicators for students, such as attendance, reading and math scores, and grades, to track their progress toward college and set short- and long-term goals for their futures.





Embracing the Arts

Art instruction helps students to think critically, express themselves, and discover new perspectives. Arts education is an important component of holistic student learning and positive school culture. The Partnership has 18 arts leads in schools, who oversee all arts programming at our school sites, including supporting LAUSD's Cultural Arts Passport program that provides students with cultural experiences, producing school-wide events like art shows and dance festivals, and leading the arts department at the middle and high school level. The Partnership holds quarterly seminars where arts leads develop their leadership skills, such as team management and participate in school arts committees that expand the impact of the arts across the entire school community. They are also able to connect their programs with the larger arts community through the Partnership's college programming, which supports students as they explore college and careers in creative fields.

"This year has been very eye-opening in making me realize how much our students need a formal education in visual arts. Many of them have never used many of the mediums we are working with, such as oil pastels, watercolor, transfer paper, acrylic paint, bleeding tissue paper, and so on. If students did not have the opportunity to come to art every week, it is likely they would not be meeting visual arts standards until middle school or high school. So, while I know I am facing the challenge of helping students fill in the gaps in their art education, I feel energized and excited about taking this on."

– Diana Rios, visual arts teacher from 99th Street Elementary School (the only full-time arts teacher at an elementary school in LAUSD)



Cultivating an Interest in Advanced Degrees

According to the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools' math team, too few Black and Latino students from under-resourced neighborhoods are pursuing science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) in college. The problem, they say, is partially due to the lack of access to curricula that students need to pursue and achieve a degree in the field. But the team is actively working to change this for students in Boyle Heights, South Los Angeles, and Watts.

In most schools across the country, there are students who have a natural aptitude for math and are ready to tackle more advanced work, said Al Lucero, senior director of advanced math and sciences for the Partnership. But for many in under-resourced communities, schools are not set up to support those students.

Generally, Al said, the course pathway in schools is Algebra 1, geometry, Algebra 2, pre-calculus and calculus. But oftentimes that is not enough if students want to pursue a STEM degree. In more affluent communities, there are more opportunities, resources, and enrichment programs that students can participate in. "There are programs that support advanced curriculums but many do not look for students in Black and Brown communities," Al said.

This led the Partnership to create K-Ph.D., a program that aims to give scholars the support and enrichment opportunities they need to pursue any degree in mathematics, including a doctorate, and become leading mathematicians, computer scientists, and engineers.



Starting as a pilot in the 2021-22 school year, the program cultivates the natural talent of scholars and teachers to create a culture of problem-solving and academic excellence in mathematics. Unlike costly private programs, the Partnership's K-PhD team collaborates directly with schools to achieve mathematical excellence, all without any cost to students.

Currently, the program is at 12 Partnership schools, including six elementary schools. Activities, which vary by grade level, include math games, robotics, coding, math competitions, and internship opportunities.

"The Partnership promotes practices that you will see in more affluent schools," said Myeisha Phillips, senior director of school transformation. "And from an equity standpoint, we believe these are the types of experiences that our students need and deserve."

Distinguishing Fellowships and Scholarships



The Partnership for Los Angeles Schools hosts distinguishing fellowships and scholarships for students in our secondary schools. Affordability presents a significant barrier to college access for many students in Boyle Heights, South LA, and Watts. These scholarships recognize that financial aid awards are not always sufficient for students from under-resourced communities to have a full college experience that allows them to graduate with little to no debt. Our focus on resource equity helps drive how we select recipients and is the lens through which we approach our advocacy around college affordability.

The Melanie and Richard Lundquist Fellows Program

Lundquist fellows participate in leadership development opportunities while earning scholarships toward the pursuit of a higher education. Started in 2010, the fellowship supports students in our middle and high schools. The five-year fellowship program seeks to further develop students who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and commitment to their schools, education, and communities with an academic scholarship and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Students gain exposure to college and career experiences, including participation in the annual summer Oregon Young Scholars Program, and receive \$2,000 after completion of the program.

The Jane Watkins Fellowship

Launched in 2021, the Watkins Fellowship provides 10 college-bound seniors with \$10,000 each, every year for a total of \$40,000 over four years. This scholarship provides critical financial support to students with tuition and housing expenses and other resources for their college education. The scholarship program also helps build college retention and offers fellows mentorship and academic advisement, access to skill-building workshops, and a support network of peers. This program is open to all seniors in our five high schools—Jordan High, Mendez High, MSTMA at Roosevelt, Roosevelt High, and Santee Education Complex—but only two seniors from each high school are selected each year. In eight years since its launch, we aim to support 80 Partnership high school graduates with critical financial support for college. Fellows also benefit from regular check-ins, guidance with course selection, and workshops on financial literacy and self-efficacy. We believe that all students should have the necessary resources to attend college and recognize that affordability can often serve as a barrier to students in high-need schools seeking higher education.

Len Hill Scholarship

A one-time \$2,500 scholarship awarded yearly to three college-bound graduates from Jordan High School. This scholarship allows recipients to minimize loan requests and help close gaps in their financial aid awards.



Discovering a Love for Academics

Edgardo Aceituno, Roosevelt High School Alumnus, current student at California State University, Fullerton

From the heart of Boyle Heights and the son of Honduran immigrants, Edgardo Aceituno is a trailblazer. As the first in his family to attend college, Edgardo knows its importance and is proud to set an example for his siblings. Reflecting on his experience at Roosevelt High School, Edgardo attributes his academic growth not only to dedicated teachers but also to the many resources within the school environment.

"They are the reason that I am here. I did not even know how to apply to college or what a UC or CSU was," he said.

Edgardo's love for learning flourished under the guidance of educators who challenged him academically and created a nurturing space rich with opportunities. A pivotal resource was the College Corner, a resource within Roosevelt's College Center. This program became a beacon for students like Edgardo, offering insights into navigating college applications, the complexities of obtaining financial aid, and providing valuable advice on optimizing the college experience.

At the core of Edgardo's recent success is the Watkins Fellowship, an opportunity only open to seniors in the Partnership network. The fellowship provides up to \$40,000 for students to use on tuition and housing expenses. It brought the Cal State Fullerton student an ease of mind knowing he had financial support to live off campus in a quiet study environment, a luxury he once lacked in a shared living space with his younger siblings.

"I found a new love for academics, a love that was previously absent," he said, reflecting on what the Watkins Fellowship has done for him. "Now I view education as a pathway to meaningful connections, self-discovery, and opportunities to assist others."

Edgardo's journey is a testament to the transformative power of a supportive environment. Emma Castro, Edgardo's mother, echoes this sentiment, expressing deep gratitude for opportunities she said that even with two jobs she "never would have been able to afford."

Our Sincerest Gratitude

Thank you to our generous donors whose steadfast belief in our mission allows us to continue to fight for educational equity.

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