



# A Vision to Support Every Student



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# **“The goal for every publicly funded school in Los Angeles should be the same — to deliver on the promise of a comprehensive, free, innovative, and sustainable public education for every student.”**

## **Introduction**

Parents, educators, and communities all depend on a robust public education system to make sure every student can thrive. However, too often the conversation around the future of public education in Los Angeles revolves around pointing out differences between traditional schools run by the district and charter schools managed by private entities. This simplistic narrative forces all stakeholders in the public education system to take sides in an increasingly acrimonious debate, rather than working together to craft a visionary consensus for a sustainable, innovative, and accessible public education system that will create new educational opportunities for all students.

Each day, more than 780,000 students and their families depend on the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to provide a well-rounded education in a nurturing environment. The overwhelming majority of these students — 82 percent — attend traditional neighborhood schools, but there are also over 100,000 students at 221 independent charter schools operating within LAUSD’s boundaries.<sup>1</sup> These charter schools are funded by taxpayer dollars, but most are managed by privately run entities known as charter management organizations (CMOs).<sup>2</sup>

The goal for every publicly funded school in Los Angeles should be the same — to deliver on the promise of a comprehensive, free, innovative, and sustainable public education for every student. Because of its size and its legal requirement to provide oversight to charter schools, LAUSD is the primary avenue through which improvements to educational programs can occur. Unfortunately, the district and independent charters have

both stumbled in their responsibility to expand educational opportunities for every student. For example, in both types of schools the achievement gap persists between African-American and Latino students and their classmates.

Reclaim Our Schools LA is bringing together students, families, educators, school staff and community members to chart a new course for public education in Los Angeles because our existing educational system does not consistently deliver on the promise of a comprehensive, free, innovative, and sustainable public education for every student. Reclaim Our Schools LA is a coalition organized around a set of guiding principles that we outline here, and that will form the through line around which our future research, organizing, and advocacy will be oriented.

No matter how it is structured or governed, any school receiving public funding in LAUSD should strive toward these commonsense principles — ensuring all students have the opportunity to succeed, fostering an environment to develop experienced educators, providing each student with a comprehensive education, lifting up and replicating proven programs from within the boundaries of LAUSD, and providing meaningful venues for community involvement in the decision-making process.

Taken together, these principles present an ambitious, achievable agenda for improving every school in the district. Our goal is not to create piecemeal improvements at the margins, but to advance a comprehensive plan for transformational change that will fundamentally shift the role schools play in our communities and will expand educational opportunities for every student.

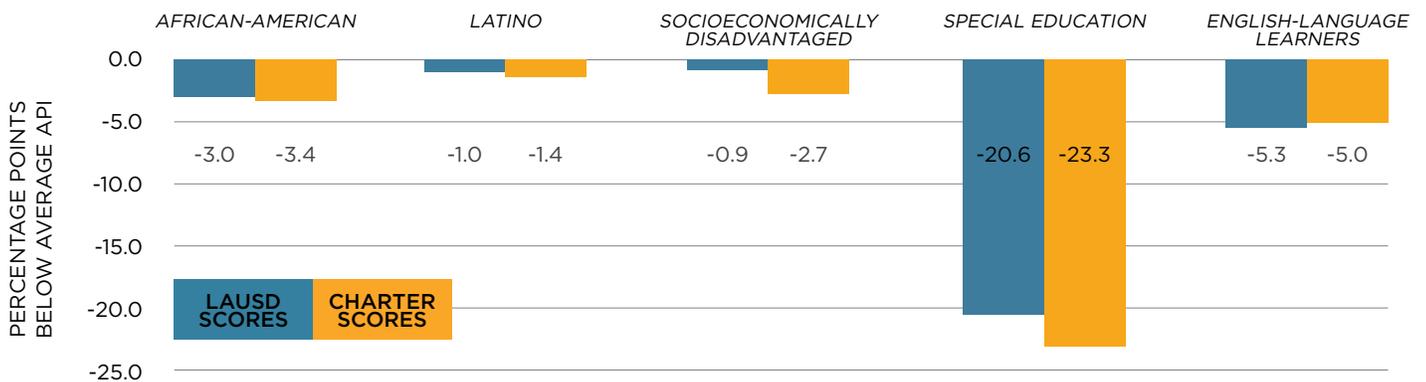
## **Every Student Should Have the Opportunity to Succeed**

The achievement gap is an unfortunately persistent feature of the education landscape. Research conducted by Professor Sean Reardon at the Stanford University Center for Education Policy Analysis (CEPA) has shown that the achievement gap between

rich and poor students has increased steadily since the 1970s. Although the achievement gap between students of color and white students has decreased slightly over the same period, it still remains a serious problem. Reardon points to divergent socio-

FIGURE 1

Student Groups Scoring Below Average API



economic trends: while broad-based movements for civil rights have pushed the United States towards greater racial and ethnic equity since 1970, income inequality has increased over the same period.<sup>3</sup>

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The concept of an achievement gap may itself be too reductive to fully encompass the depth and breadth of the trends Reardon identifies. Gloria Ladson-Billings, a Faculty Affiliate in the U.S. Department of Education, has noted that the achievement gap, which largely measures differences between groups of students based on standardized test scores, is not a suitable way to “explain and understand the persistent inequality that exists (and has always existed) in our nation’s schools.”

Instead, Ladson-Billings proposes the concept of “education debt” owed to students, particularly students of color and socio-economically disadvantaged students, for the “historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies” that have systematically limited educational opportunities over the course of generations. Attempts to improve educational outcomes by focusing solely on improving test scores are bound to fail if they do not also address the full range of inequities students and their families face on a daily basis.<sup>4</sup>

The interplay between race, income, and educational attainment is complex. In Los Angeles, race and income are deeply intertwined. Across the district, nearly 80 percent of all pupils qualify for free or reduced cost meals based on family income.<sup>5</sup> The fact that 64 percent of all Latino workers do not earn a living wage and that about 38 percent of African-American and Latino children live in poverty means that if new strategies are not implemented, the achievement gap is likely to persist throughout LAUSD.<sup>6,7</sup>

Comparing the three-year average academic performance index (API) scores for multiple demographics of students in LAUSD from the 2010-11 through 2012-13 school years shows how these national trends are expressed on a local level. Figure 1 shows that at both district-run and charter schools, special education (SPED) students, socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) students, African-American students, and Latino students all have lower API scores than their classmates.<sup>8</sup> SED students at charter schools had API scores 2.7 percentage points below that of their charter peers, while SED students in district-run schools fared



better, falling 0.9 percentage points behind their classmates. The persistence of the achievement gap in Los Angeles also points to a need to create more culturally relevant curricula that, as Ladson-Billings puts it, “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically” by “using a student’s culture as a vehicle for learning.”<sup>9,10</sup>

All parents want the best possible education for their children. However, an undeniable achievement gap persists between historically disadvantaged groups — students from low-income families, African-American students, and Latino students — and their higher-income and white classmates. This trend holds across all schools in the district, including charter schools, regardless of the particular measure in use. In August 2016, results of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) were released. CAASPP results are based on revamped standardized tests known as Smarter Balanced tests (SBAC). A statewide analysis of the scores showed “a wide gap in performance between Asian

and white students on one hand and black and Latino students on the other[.]”<sup>11</sup> This same trend was evident in LAUSD, as low-income African-American and Latino students showed the smallest gains in year-over-year CAASPP scores.<sup>12</sup>

It must be noted that there are many ways to measure a student’s progress beyond testing, and the California Department of Education (CDE) is in the process of de-emphasizing the role of test scores in favor of more comprehensive measures of school success that incorporate parent involvement and school climate.<sup>13</sup> This promising development will allow parents, educators, and communities to understand their neighborhood schools on a more fine-grained, holistic level. Test-score-based data do have some utility for illustrative purposes, and provide a broad indication of baseline trends in both charter schools and district-run neighborhood schools over time. The picture that emerges shows that neither model can truly be said to have closed the persistent achievement gap amongst students.

## Students Thrive with Experienced Educators

Effective teaching strategies can contribute significantly to closing the achievement gap. The nuts-and-bolts of any specific strategy can be debated, but students benefit when their teachers have had extensive in-classroom experience. A new meta-analysis of 30 studies conducted by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), a Palo Alto-based education policy research institute, quantifies this benefit to students and has shown that teacher experience is positively correlated to improved educational outcomes.<sup>14</sup>

While teacher effectiveness improves most substantially in a teacher’s first few years on the job, LPI’s analysis shows that teachers continue to become even more effective the longer they stay on the job. Even teachers in their second and third *decade* of teaching continue to gain valuable experience. LPI analyzed multiple studies showing that students with more experienced teachers scored better on standardized math and English language arts (ELA) exams.

LPI also quantifies the benefit to students in terms of experienced teachers’ more effective use of classroom time. The meta-analysis shows that teachers with 12 years of experience provide their students with the equivalent of up to three additional months of math learning time and 6.5 months of additional English language arts learning time. This finding is based on the conclusion that as teachers gain more experience, they are able to use

class time more efficiently. In other words, students taught by experienced teachers receive the benefit of more effective teaching so that they are able to learn more material in a shorter span of time. Benefits for students were not limited solely to test scores, as students of more experienced teachers were also more likely to do better on other measures of success, such as reduced absenteeism.<sup>15</sup>

LPI’s meta-analysis shows that cultivating a work environment that encourages teachers to keep teaching will be the linchpin of any successful strategy to improve student learning outcomes. Teachers become more effective “when working in a school that has a strong professional working environment offering opportunities for peer collaboration, professional learning, and meaningful feedback from a strong principal.”<sup>16</sup> In essence, LPI’s analysis shows that a “supportive and collegial”



working environment supports student achievement by ensuring teachers remain on the job longer, and improve their skills more quickly.

Any policy which aims to improve districtwide performance should also include measures to ensure experienced teachers remain in the classroom. Charters may require special attention: a study conducted by the American Institutes for Research at Stanford University found that teachers at California charter schools have, on average, 6.6 fewer years of teaching experience compared to their colleagues in district-run schools.<sup>17</sup> This suggests charter school teachers are turning over at a higher rate than their counterparts at district-run schools; UC Berkeley researchers confirmed this presumption by showing that 50 percent of teachers in charter middle and high schools leave their jobs each year.<sup>18</sup>

Understanding why teachers leave the profession — and why teacher turnover is so much higher in charter schools — is beyond the scope of this document, however LPI points to the mentorship offered to

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new teachers by their more experienced colleagues as an important component of a supportive work environment.<sup>19</sup> In other words, having more experienced colleagues may be useful in slowing rates of teacher turnover by providing novice educators with a strong support network early in their careers.

Experienced teachers can provide high needs schools with significant benefits. LAUSD must craft policies that encourage teachers to remain in these schools so that their improved teaching skills are matched with students who can benefit the most. Charter schools throughout the district should also carefully examine their workplace environments to ensure new teachers are encouraged and supported on the job, and to reduce turnover.

## **A Supportive Learning Environment Supports the Whole Student**

A student’s day does not begin and end at school. Her experience outside of the classroom can contribute just as much to her personal educational outcome as what goes on inside the classroom. A wide range of pupil service staff including school bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, teaching assistants, and special education aides all work in cooperation throughout the day to create a positive and supportive learning environment for students. Pupil service staff also support students’ mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. By focusing on the role that school nurses and guidance counselors play, we highlight the critical role that all pupil service staff play in ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Research compiled by the North Carolina State Board of Education found that as “nurse staffing levels increased, students were absent less.”<sup>20</sup> This analysis also found that high-poverty school districts with better nurse staffing ratios had lower than expected levels of absenteeism. In other words, the presence of a school nurse can mitigate the negative effects of poverty on attendance. Far from dealing solely with occasional scrapes and upset stomachs, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) explains that school nurses are first-responders in addressing the kind of chronic absenteeism that may be the result of “physical, social, economic, environmental and health” factors.<sup>21</sup>

School nurses are often tasked with helping connect students and families to physical and mental healthcare providers, advocating for schoolwide programs to address chronic absenteeism, and conducting parent/caregiver and student classes on health topics. School nurses draw awareness to community health trends that may not yet be on the radar of policy makers.<sup>22</sup> For example, school nurses may be the first to notice an uptick in the number of asthma-related complications keeping students out of the classroom, and to connect this trend to ongoing environmental degradation in the neighborhood.

Guidance counselors play a similar role in fostering long-term relationships with students outside of the classroom. Research conducted by the Institute for Higher Education at the University of Georgia showed that attending counseling sessions “has a positive and significant influence on a student’s likelihood of postsecondary enrollment, and that counseling related effects are greatest for students with low socioeconomic status.”<sup>23</sup>

These commonsense conclusions were further substantiated by a recent *Los Angeles Times* report showing the differing outcomes for two students from the same neighborhood — one attended a public school in Boyle Heights and one attended a private school in Palos Verdes.<sup>24</sup> At the private

school a team of four counselors begins meeting with high school students in their freshman year and counsels them on preparing for the rigors of college applications. Meanwhile, at the district-run school in Boyle Heights that same responsibility falls to a single guidance counselor.

Neither charter nor district-run schools measure up to the pupil service ratios at private schools in California, where according to data collected by the California Association of Independent Schools, there are on average 12 instructional support staff per 100 students.<sup>25</sup> According to

research conducted at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), district-run public schools in California have 0.18 pupil support staff per 100 pupils while charter schools have 0.11 pupil support staff per 100 pupils.<sup>26</sup> Efforts to expand educational opportunities for all students cannot succeed without addressing the scarcity of pupil service staff in both district-run and charter schools. As a result, LAUSD must recruit and retain additional pupil services staff to ensure that gains realized in the classroom are bolstered by school counselors, nurses, and a variety of other health and human services staff.

## Innovation Must Be Broadly Shared and Replicated Across the District

Charter school proponents claim charters improve student educational achievement by spurring innovation through competition with existing district-run schools.<sup>27</sup> However, if the goal is to spread best practices amongst schools, the competitive ethos is not the ideal framework. Arguing that it is necessary to keep “trade secrets” confidential, some charter schools have used the threat of fines or legal action to ensure their teachers do not take “academic policies and strategies” to other schools if they leave the charter.<sup>28</sup> District schools do not gain a competitive advantage against one another by guarding their best practices. In fact, cooperation is the key to maintaining, publicizing, and replicating successful programs developed within the district and reversing the trend of enrollment decline.

Across the district, there are successful neighborhood schools that have provided a well-

rounded, exceptional education to generations of Los Angeles students. Too often, the challenges facing our district are highlighted while the district’s many success stories go unheralded. This paints an unduly grim portrait of the district, while also obscuring from view the programs and practices that have proven successful and that show neighborhood schools working to innovate their curricula and improve educational outcomes for students.

Because each of these programs has been developed within the framework of the district, they are open source models that can be adapted to fit the unique needs of other school sites. Profiled in more detail at the end of this document, San Fernando High School in Pacoima and Grand View Boulevard Elementary School in Mar Vista offer two such models for creating innovative curricula and programs within the context of the neighborhood school.

## All Stakeholders Deserve Real Opportunities for Meaningful Involvement In Decision-Making

Los Angeles Unified is the second largest school district in the nation, stretching from Sylmar to San Pedro and from Venice to East Los Angeles. As a public entity LAUSD is governed by an elected body that cannot legally bar anyone from speaking or participating in public hearings. Ample notice must be posted before a meeting can be held and the district’s budgets are public documents freely available for review by any interested party. The district is also subject to California’s Public Records Act, entitling the public to request and receive any existing document, report, or communication from the district.

Although LAUSD must do more to incorporate parent and community voices into decision-making both at specific schools and at the district level, as a

public entity LAUSD is a democratic institution. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), for example, provide a transparent funding mechanism that takes into account a broad range of factors unique to each school site. While the implementation of these programs has faced some criticism from education advocates, they provide an important venue for community stakeholders to hold district and school site officials accountable to neighborhood needs.<sup>29</sup>

Most LAUSD charter schools are not held to the same legal standards as the district itself; local responsiveness and public accountability vary widely depending on the individuals or organizations running each charter school.<sup>30</sup> Because charter schools are often managed by

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private entities, they are not legally required to turn over their governing documents or budgets to concerned parents, nor are they legally required to publicly disclose the composition of the boards of directors for any private entities involved in school management. Decisions with serious consequences for the educational outcomes of students may be made without notifying parents or accepting community input.<sup>31</sup>

Of course, some charter schools in Los Angeles are responsive and open to parent and community involvement. These high standards are voluntary, however, and are not buttressed by the full force of state and federal law: if a CMO changes, parent oversight could disappear. Every school in the

## Community Schooling Empowers Families, Educators, and Students to Transform their Schools

Recognizing the necessity of creating a new way forward, schools and districts from across the country have been increasing educational opportunities for all students by implementing community schooling programs. These programs focus on transforming existing schools into “hubs of educational...cultural, health and civic partnerships, which optimize the conditions for learning and catalyze” community revitalization.<sup>33</sup> In other words, community schools are meant to act as the catalysts for a virtuous cycle that incorporates not only expanded educational opportunities for students, but also measureable improvements in wellbeing and stability for entire neighborhoods.

Working to put the community schooling model into practice, the Coalition for Community Schools, in partnership with the Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) and the Southern Education Foundation, have outlined six key elements that the most successful community schools have incorporated into their long-term strategic plans.<sup>34</sup> These are:

district, whether charter or district-run, should be subject to the same basic tools of public control that allow parents, students, and communities to fully participate in the decision-making process.

Ensuring community and family engagement in school-site decision-making yields tangible benefits to student achievement. Research conducted by Joyce L. Epstein and Steven B. Sheldon at Johns Hopkins University indicate that as schools “develop school-family-community partnerships to help improve student attendance, the average rate of chronically absent students in the schools decreased” by nearly 25 percent over the course of a single school year.<sup>32</sup> Communities and families kept out of decision-making processes are less likely to take part in the kinds of “school-family-community” partnerships that have been proven to reduce chronic absenteeism. Open and accountable schools are not only a matter of good governance, but are also necessary to take advantage of educational opportunities offered at any school, whether charter or district-run. Every school within LAUSD boundaries must therefore strive to consistently exceed minimum legally required transparency standards and to proactively work to incorporate parent, community, and student voices into the decision-making process.



1. An engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging curriculum
2. Emphasis on high-quality teaching, not high stakes testing
3. Wraparound support services for students and families
4. Positive discipline practices, such as restorative justice
5. Authentic parent and community engagement
6. Inclusive school leadership committed to the community schools model

Through the process of creating a community school, each of these elements is tailored to reflect the character and unique needs of a neighborhood. Community schools are, therefore, rooted in a community-driven assets and needs assessment that identifies the specific areas of highest concern for a given school site in a particular neighborhood. The assessment also incorporates a community's assets, such as established service providers, religious communities, cultural centers, non-profit organizations, professional associations, and respected neighborhood leaders. Based on this assessment, educators, families, and community partners develop a strategic plan to use existing assets to address areas of deepest need for students. These leaders then identify the community partners with the expertise and resources to respond to specific elements of their strategic plan. The final step is hiring a dedicated community schools coordinator whose job is to "facilitate the development and implementation of the strategic plan in collaboration with school and community partners."<sup>35</sup>

For example, if the community needs assessment shows that foster youth at a given school site have a significant unmet need for additional mental health services, then providing those services may be a high priority in the community school's strategic plan. The County Department of Mental Health, working in conjunction with the on-site community schools coordinator, could establish a pilot program to integrate additional mental health services directly into the campus. While addressing unmet mental health needs is certainly beneficial in its own right, these types of partnerships can also work to reverse drags on student achievement. Incorporating additional health services into a school site would

## National Movement for Community Schooling

Community schooling is not only a theoretical framework, it also provides a practical and empirically tested roadmap to improving key educational outcomes. There have been hundreds of individual schools — and whole districts — from Portland, OR to Cincinnati, OH and from Austin, TX to Baltimore, MD, that have chosen to use a community schooling framework to do just that. Taking Webb Middle School (WMS) in Austin as an example shows that a demonstrable improvement is possible through community school implementation.

In 2007, Webb was the lowest performing middle school in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) and was slated for closure. Many parents, students, educators, and community members, however, felt that busing students

TABLE 1

### Webb Middle School Before and After Community School Conversion

2009	2015
<b>Enrollment</b> — 485 (97% FRM; 50% ELL)	<b>Enrollment</b> — 750 (97% FRM; 47% ELL)
Lowest performing middle school in Austin; on verge of closure.	Highest performing Title 1 Middle School of 14 other Middle Schools
<b>Graduation Rate</b> 48%	<b>Graduation Rate</b> 78%

allow both students and their families to more easily access care, or to receive information on managing chronic illnesses like asthma and diabetes.<sup>36</sup>

Networks of community schools operating in concert with strong district support have been successful in "reducing absenteeism, improving health and well-being of students and their families, and increasing the rates of high school graduation and college attendance."<sup>37</sup> Ideally implemented on a district-wide basis, the goal of a community schools program is to not only improve educational outcomes, but also to create more stable, safe, and healthy neighborhoods.<sup>38</sup> This in turn drives new resources to ameliorating the negative effects of poverty, homelessness, violence, and/or trauma on students' ability to thrive at school.

outside the neighborhood was unnecessarily "punitive."<sup>39</sup> Holding firm in their belief that WMS could become a school in which students could thrive, these stakeholders presented a plan to their superintendent and school board to implement a community school strategy at Webb.

WMS did not become a community school overnight. Between 2007 and 2009, hundreds of students, families, community members, and other stakeholders crafted a vision for what they wanted from their school. They produced a comprehensive needs and assets assessment which showed existing community partnerships were poorly coordinated, many Webb families did not have regular access to medical care, and language barriers prevented parents and teachers from forging close, trusting working relationships.<sup>40</sup>

The fact that 97 percent of students were eligible for free or reduced meals (FRM), and half of all students were classified as English-language learners (ELL), reflected the socio-economic reality of the Webb community. Many Webb parents are immigrants who hold low-wage jobs in the service or construction sectors.

In 2009, as Webb began to implement the community schools program, the school was not performing well: it was under-enrolled, and the graduation rate stood at 48 percent. By 2015, Webb's indicators showed a dramatic turnaround. Enrollment had increased by 55 percent and the graduation rate had increased to 78 percent, with an average daily attendance of 95 percent. It should be noted that over this time period the percentage of FRM and ELL students remained relatively unchanged. These improvements are summarized in Table 1.

## A Transformative Roadmap for Every School in Los Angeles

Reclaim Our Schools LA believes that a community schools model represents an effective approach to closing the achievement gap, keeping great teachers in the classroom, providing students with more pupil support services, maintaining public control over neighborhood schools, and creating excellent public schools across the city. It is an approach that seems ideally suited to achieve the guiding principles described throughout this document.

In the community schools model, many of the barriers to educational achievement identified above may be effectively addressed. An inviting school that is an organic extension of its community can provide teachers the type of supportive workplace likely to keep them in the classroom. Community schools also offer opportunities to incorporate more pupil service staff and wraparound services, like health clinics, after school programs, and counseling tailored to the needs of the student population at a given school site. Combining more robust pupil services with more experienced teachers will shrink the achievement gap and improve non-academic measures of success. Increasing avenues for community use of school spaces creates new opportunities for parents and neighborhoods to direct how school resources are used. With these foundational principles in place, community school stakeholders are more likely to conceive of and implement innovative programs that provide new models for other schools throughout the district.

Between 2009 and 2015, Webb also made significant strides toward addressing the community needs identified in the initial assessment. The school hired a dedicated Community School Coordinator to bring in new community partners like college mentoring program Breakthrough Austin. A mobile clinic regularly visits the school to provide free immunizations and physicals. The school began offering English-language classes for parents three days a week and secured a dedicated bilingual education organizer to increase family and community engagement through home visits. These changes disrupt the negative effects of an ailing community on student learning, and replace them with the positive effects of a strengthening community on student learning. Based on the strength of Webb's results, the AISD is now in the process of creating a district-wide community schools program grounded in a comprehensive needs and assets assessment.

Reclaim Our Schools LA believes that a successfully implemented and transformative community schools program provides a new way forward to increase access to educational opportunities for all students. The individual design and implementation, uniquely tailored by each school community, will be key to the success of a system-wide community schools approach. As necessary as the community schooling approach is, we recognize that it alone will not fulfill the promise of the comprehensive, free, innovative, and sustainable public education all students deserve.

As noted above, for example, we believe a new policy is necessary to ensure all schools receiving public funding adhere to the same robust transparency and accountability policies; this will help ensure a democratic, public, and participatory process that truly serves all. Increasing the amount of funding for each pupil will also be critical to maintaining and replicating the most effective and innovative programs in the district.

As decision-makers in Los Angeles grapple with how best to improve our educational system, Reclaim Our Schools LA believes that this approach will also provide stakeholders with concrete strategies to explore long-term, visionary solutions for a district of neighborhood schools that can provide a comprehensive, free, innovative, and sustainable public education for all students in Los Angeles.

## San Fernando High School: Long History, Strong Partnerships



San Fernando High School (SFHS) proves that a traditional neighborhood school can provide a comprehensive set of educational opportunities for all students. As of the 2014-2015 school year, more than 88 percent of the 2,300 students at SFHS were eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals, and 15 percent of students were English-language learners (ELL). More than 96 percent of students identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Founded in 1896, San Fernando High School has been an anchor institution in the Northeast San Fernando Valley for generations. The school's long history and its deep relationships with numerous community-based organizations make SFHS a critical hub of service provision for the community. The campus boasts a full service school-based health center operated by the Northeast Valley Health Corporation.<sup>41</sup> The health center provides comprehensive health services including behavioral health counseling, dental services, immunizations, and reproductive health screening for all students.<sup>42</sup>

SFHS also partners with numerous community-based and non-profit organizations to extend the types of before- and after-school services offered on campus. These include a partnership with Project Grad and University of California Early Academic Outreach Program, both of which

provide ongoing college application support for students and families.

In addition to housing a math, science, and technology magnet program, SFHS has developed distinct academic programs focused on students' areas of interest. Called "academies," these include the Humanitas Futures Academy, which provides students with writing-intensive, interdisciplinary training, and the Engineering and Design Academy, which prepares students to enter the fields of engineering and computer science. SFHS has also committed to continue expanding Career Technical Education by investing in a full-scale commercial kitchen, 3D printing, and robotics labs. The school has also maintained programs in arts education, auto shop, wood working, and physical fitness at a time when such programs are increasingly rare.<sup>43</sup>

SFHS provides a clear example of how strong bonds between school and community benefit students. Graduation rates have outpaced district-wide rates since the 2010-2011 school year, and by 2014-15 SFHS was meeting or exceeding county and state graduation rates as well. The school also outpaces the district, county, and state in terms of the number of students taking the ACT. Students at San Fernando High have also been getting healthier: the rate of 9<sup>th</sup> graders at Health Risk has declined by nearly 42 percent since the 2010-11 school year.<sup>44</sup>



## Grand View Boulevard Elementary School: Hub of Collaboration and Community

Mar Vista's Grand View Boulevard Elementary has been a stable hub of community engagement, even as the neighborhood around it experienced the demographic and socio-economic changes brought by the rapid growth of tech industries in neighboring Venice. As of the 2014-15 school year, 65 percent of Grand View students were eligible for free and reduced-price meal plans and 41 percent of students were classified as English-language learners. While the majority of ELL students at Grand View speak Spanish, students also speak Arabic, Farsi, Korean, and Tagalog as their primary languages. The school is 74 percent Latino, down from 84 percent in the 2010-11 school year. African-American students compose 12 percent of Grand View, and white students account for 11 percent.<sup>45</sup>

The culture at Grand View is one of acceptance, of ensuring that parents always feel welcome to participate as partners in all aspects of the

school.<sup>46</sup> Strong neighborhood support has been key to aligning school and community priorities. This includes an active parent center which has held workshops on social and emotional learning, and a series of bilingual trainings geared to Latino families to promote school readiness and family wellbeing. Grand View also offers one of the oldest Spanish-language immersion programs in the district.<sup>47</sup>

Grand View has forged a school-based partnership with Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, which offers multi-lingual mental health support for students and families dealing with trauma or other barriers to learning such as depression or ADHD.<sup>48</sup> With a strong focus on parent involvement, a well-established language immersion program, and a key community mental health partner, Grand View Boulevard Elementary School represents that type of neighborhood-oriented school that serves as a critical anchor institution throughout the district.

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