



## **BENEFITS OF AN INDEPENDENT ALLIANCE COLLEGE-READY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Alliance is a community of choice for students, parents, faculty and staff. We exist as a charter school because the traditional public school structure is rigidly bureaucratic and has been unable to adapt to the learning needs of individual students, especially higher-needs students. We are held together by a set of values that have made us one of the strongest and most effective public school networks in the country. And as an independent charter school, we have the autonomy and agility to tailor our education to what kids need. It is not easy work, but together we have and will continue to defy the odds and prove the exceptional public education is possible for all students.

We respectfully disagree with the assertion that unionization with UTLA would help advance educational opportunities for our students. We do not think being a part of the ongoing antagonism between UTLA and LAUSD and limiting our flexibility and autonomy would be beneficial to our students and our teachers.

### **WHAT ALLIANCE OFFERS ITS TEACHERS**

#### **Compensation and Benefits**

In 2015-16, after five years of planning with teacher input along the way, Alliance will move to a significantly increased salary schedule that rewards performance, making it possible for teachers to earn considerably more money more quickly than teachers in surrounding schools.

In addition, all Alliance teachers participate in the California State Teacher Retirement System (STRS) and receive generous health benefits.

In 2014-15, Alliance teachers received an 8% raise. UTLA has not won a raise for teachers at LAUSD for the past 8 years<sup>1</sup>. Their current negotiations are stalled. They are the only union to not reach (or nearly reach) a contract agreement with LAUSD<sup>2</sup>.

Alliance believes in performance-based compensation that rewards and incentivizes excellence. UTLA does not support performance-based compensation of any kind. For the past three years, Alliance has provided individual performance bonuses for effective teaching. In December 2014, 99% of Alliance teachers received a pay bonus based on performance, with bonuses up to \$9,000.

#### **Due Process**

Alliance's goal is to retain good teachers, and no attempt by the UTLA to mischaracterize us can change that. Per our charter authorization agreement, our teachers have due process rights for any disciplinary action, including dismissal. We value the expertise of our teachers highly and take staffing decisions very seriously. There is nothing "arbitrary" about it. In 2014, six of 468 Alliance teachers (or 1.2%) were let go for cause or poor performance. And our teachers have a voice when there are concerns about staffing decisions, Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.utla.net/media/ralliesdailynews>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.utla.net/system/files/LAUSD\\_Letter\\_from\\_Cortines\\_%20012615.pdf](http://www.utla.net/system/files/LAUSD_Letter_from_Cortines_%20012615.pdf)

has a formal means for teachers to express any concern or file any complaints about any aspect of their job or work environment without fear of harassment or retaliation.

### **Professional Development and Growth**

Alliance schools offer more PD than our neighboring LAUSD schools. Our PD days are built with a diversity of offerings and are developed based on teacher feedback and need. As part of our PD, Alliance teachers share their experiences and facilitate PD sessions.

### **Transparent and Fair Evaluation**

Alliance has a fair and transparent evaluation process that was developed over many years with input from teachers. Multiple evaluation measures (observation, student growth, parent and student surveys) provide a well-rounded and comprehensive look at teacher performance. The Framework for Effective Teaching is used by thousands of other charter organizations and traditional school districts in California and across the country<sup>3</sup>. We believe that it provides a consistent and clear set of shared expectations for both teachers and school leaders.

### **Class Size**

Alliance schools have significantly smaller classes size than our neighboring public schools that are under the UTLA contract. Alliance schools average class size: 30; LAUSD-UTLA contract-bound class sizes: 34 to 42.5<sup>4</sup>.

### **Stability**

Alliance is a financially sound, dynamic and growing organization. In contrast, neighboring LAUSD schools where UTLA contracts are in place, another 609 teachers received pink slips just this past month<sup>5</sup>. Alliance has never laid off teachers. On the contrary, we have added new teachers each year. In addition, Ninety-three percent of all public funding goes directly to Alliance schools.

## **HALLMARKS OF WORKING AT ALLIANCE SCHOOLS**

### **Commitment to Students First**

Alliance is a community of teachers, administrators and staff who are committed to ensuring that all students received a high quality, college preparatory education.

While students in traditional public schools have had to organize to get A-G classes for all students (which they still do not all have), Alliance has ensured that all students receive the A-G courses so they are ensured access to college.

### **Collaboration**

Alliance is committed to building dynamic and robust professional learning communities where we share our successes, tackle our challenges and continually improve to better serve the needs of our students. Alliance teachers collaborate together in schools through weekly school site PD as well as with peers from across the Alliance through quarterly PD, and through subject specific working groups. Alliance teachers have the ability to consult directly with their principal on basic employment issues, including instructional practice, schedules, and procedures.

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<sup>3</sup> PRNewsire, June 28, 2011

<sup>4</sup> <http://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib08/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/123/FINAL%20BUDGET%206-13-14%20859AM.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://laschoolreport.com/la-unified-board-and-tough-realities-deficit-layoffs-and-charters/>

In unionized workplaces, only one appointed employee union representative can speak or negotiate on behalf of staff with their supervisor about employment related issues covered in the contract. We do not believe bringing in an outside third party agency (the union) fosters collaboration and shared learning, but instead brings in a culture of division and “what’s in it for me.”

### **Flexibility and Innovation in the Classrooms**

We are committed to continual improvement. We use data to help us understand what is working and what needs to change so we can best serve the needs of our students. If what we are not doing is not working, we have the flexibility to change it quickly. For example, our use of technology has changed and become more flexible over the years to best meet the needs of each school community, each classroom and each student. Those changes were driven directly from the feedback of our teachers and students.

Union agreements largely work to reduce flexibility and differentiation for teacher support and work environments that have been the hallmark of Alliance. The union’s highly regulated approach is a one-size-fits-all strategy and does not allow each school community (and classroom) to focus on the specific needs of each student in our care.

### **Teacher Feedback**

In the most recent anonymous Alliance-wide school staff survey conducted in November 2014, Alliance school-based staff felt overwhelmingly positive about their working conditions<sup>6</sup>.

- 89% agreed or strongly agreed, “My voice is respected in the decision-making process at the school.”
- 91% of staff agreed or strongly agreed, “Overall our school environment is very positive.”
- 92% agreed or strongly agreed, “The principal uses performance evaluation that is transparent and fair.”
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed, “I am valued as an employee.”
- 94% of staff agreed or strongly agreed, “The school supports my professional growth and development.”
- 99% of staff agreed or disagreed, “I am committed to my school’s mission of preparing all students for college.”

### **Commitment to Teachers**

We are very proud of Alliance teachers and grateful for our teachers’ commitment to our students. We know teachers are at the heart of Alliance student success. As such, we have dedicated significant focus, time and resources to attract, develop and retain the very best teachers. We also understand that we need to do more to empower our teachers, and we are absolutely committed to addressing concerns and, in fact, want to maintain the flexibility we need to address them quickly and creatively instead of being governed by a long, rigid, bureaucratic contract with a union that is an avowed enemy of public charter schools.

**We remain committed to continuing to make the Alliance the best place to teach in Los Angeles.**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://plus.laalliance.org/Data/Analysis/SitePages/Home.aspx>