

**HIGH-QUALITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS *for*
LOS ANGELES STUDENTS**



Great Public
Schools **Now**

The children of Los Angeles deserve the absolute best.

It shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone who cares about education in our city, to hear that while there are many bright spots to celebrate, too many of our schools have a lot of room left to grow. Many people from diverse backgrounds have dedicated their lives to that growth, whether as teachers, involved parents, policymakers, or as activists and advocates.

Great Public Schools Now is a new organization designed to help reach the goal shared by every single one of these groups – increased access to quality education for all students, regardless of what zip code they live in. And to do it with a sense of urgency and relentless commitment that will require a broad vision, coupled with a laser-like focus, to re-vision what the future of the Los Angeles should look like so we can continue to thrive as a great city.

Making great schools isn't about just one model of success. It's about finding what works, and making sure as many students as possible get access to real, equity-based solutions. As a single mom trying to find the best schools for my own 10-year-old son, I live the challenges and tensions faced by so many parents – finding a school that brings out the best in my son as a learner, a rigorous program that will lead to college attainment and success, and a school culture where his whole, unique self is affirmed and valued, while staying radically committed to public education. That's why it's so important to me to work on meeting these challenges – all of our children deserve nothing less. Yes, it's personal.

In the coming pages, you'll find a new, community-centric plan for improving schools across the region – regardless of governance model, curricular orientation or operational platform. This plan is designed to give parents in low-income areas a real choice, real access for their kids, while preserving and augmenting things that are working today.

I look forward to working with advocates and stakeholders in the weeks and months ahead to put this plan into action and continuing to refine and drive toward a path forward for Los Angeles. This is our city. All kids our 'our kids.' We owe them the urgency of now to make progress toward real fairness and equity in education. They can't – and we won't – wait any longer.

Adelante!



Myrna Castrejón

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS NOW



For decades, educators, administrators, and local elected officials have worked tirelessly to serve all students who attend public schools in Greater Los Angeles. While these efforts have moved our public schools forward, they have not advanced far enough or fast enough to serve every student. Today, **far too many families struggle to access a great public school** and all the opportunity an excellent education provides.

Families often face the greatest difficulty accessing a high-quality public school in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. For these families, who recognize that a great education is the ticket to a better life, the lack of access to high-quality public schools for their children has the potential to limit their future. In areas of Greater Los Angeles, poverty, lack of opportunity, and low performing schools form a potent mix that leaves our youth's potential untapped. **More than 160,000 low income students and English Language Learners are enrolled in schools whose performance is so dismal that 80 percent of students are learning below grade level.** Middle and upper income families enjoy choices the poor have, quite simply, been denied – the ability to move across zip codes in search of better schools and less strained communities. Los Angeles families seek out higher quality options by the thousands, but the demand far outstrips available seats – more than 40,000 students remain on charter waiting lists and thousands more attempt to enroll in high performing district magnets, but there is simply not enough space for them. In the pursuit of equity, we must do more to increase access.





Great Public Schools Now

Great Public Schools Now was formed in late 2015 to increase access to strong schools and provide a quality education to children across Los Angeles, with an urgent focus on expanding choices in areas of high need and for all types of public schools.

The singular goal of Great Public Schools Now is to **increase access to high quality public schools, period.** It is not to pursue any model of schooling for its own sake. The past ten years of charter growth in Los Angeles, though, have demonstrated that replicating what works is the fastest, most effective means of accelerating the increase in high quality options for families. This organization will **catalyze the replication of schools that work, regardless of school governance type, model or programmatic orientation.** We encourage and will support the growth of **all** types of schools – charter or magnet, pilot or Partnership – as long as they provide an excellent education to high-need students. Support will either augment their capacity by adding to their existing enrollment or by starting new schools.

Our goal is to dramatically increase low income families' access to high quality schools – expand what's working and serve students well.

Every single student that gains access to a high-quality public school because of our efforts will constitute a success. And as long as there are neighborhoods where students do not have that access, Great Public Schools Now will continue its efforts.

Our goal is to dramatically increase low income families' access to high quality schools – expand what's working and serve students well.

The following plan describes the work Great Public Schools Now intends to do in order to achieve this goal. It outlines our geographic priorities – ten high-need neighborhoods where too many students are not getting the education they deserve, and surrounding areas where the demographics and the need are comparable. It further identifies four funding priorities that will help the expansion of high-quality public schools of all types: community outreach and engagement, teacher and leadership support for all Los Angeles, facilities, and school expansion grants.

While this plan lays out our funding priorities and strategy, the details of how best to support high-quality public schools, whether district or charter, will continue to evolve as we engage parents, educators, funders, and civic leaders. We welcome your feedback and support, and we hope you will join us in this historic effort to ensure that all Los Angeles students have access to a great public education.

Our efforts to date

Great Public Schools Now began with the belief that every student in Los Angeles deserves to have access to a high-quality public school in his or her neighborhood. Though funders and Great Public Schools Now's leaders began with some ideas of how to accomplish this goal, our plans have and will continue to evolve based on feedback from community and education stakeholders.

In 2015, Great Public Schools Now commissioned a poll of Los Angeles residents to determine their attitudes toward public education in the city.¹ The poll found that respondents viewed education as the single most important issue facing the city, above job creation, crime, and infrastructure.

74%

of voters living within the Los Angeles Unified School District support the expansion of charter public schools in neighborhoods where existing schools are struggling.

87%

of respondents support "reforming the public education system" in Los Angeles.

88%

of respondents favor investing in district schools through proven programs like magnet schools.

69%

of respondents want additional charter public schools in their own neighborhoods.

88%

of respondents support making sure every student in a community with an underperforming public school has an opportunity to attend a higher performing public school.

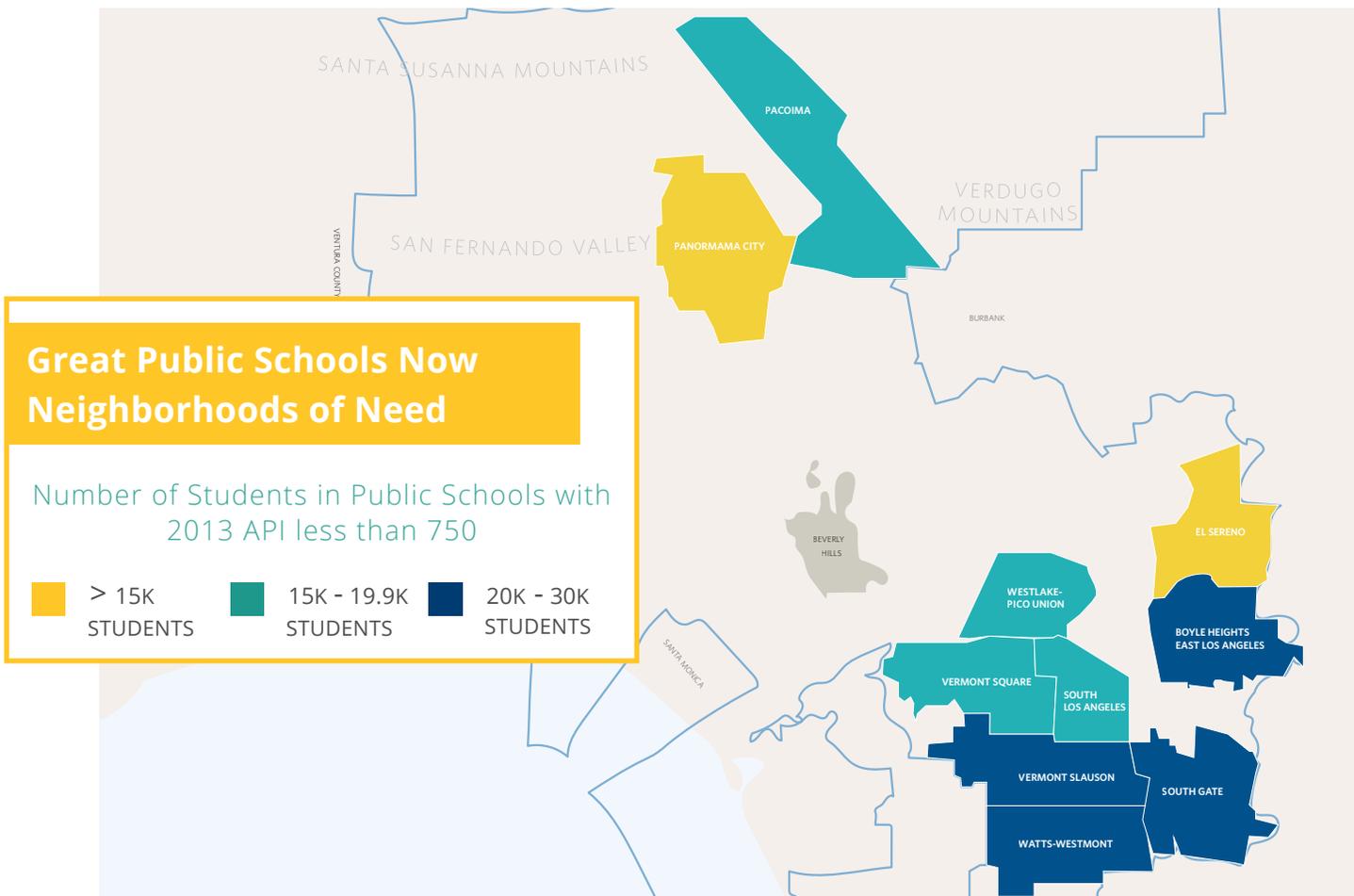
Our poll results showed that Angelenos share our sense of urgency in improving education in the city, and that the overwhelming majority of those polled support expanding proven education options, including magnets and charter public schools.

Great Public Schools Now has also met with **over 50 diverse and differentiated community organizations** to elicit discussion and feedback to shape our vision for the organization and gain valuable insights on what works and what doesn't work in their communities. This community input has informed the plan outlined here, making our strategies more comprehensive and realistic. Ideas like broadening the scope of work to embrace and replicate the 'bright spots' in Los Angeles Unified schools that serve high-needs students well, rethinking how to make Los Angeles an attractive place to teach, and identifying the right neighborhoods for focused partnership and working with community partners emerged from these many conversations across Los Angeles.

In addition to community leaders, **Great Public Schools Now has begun conversations with Los Angeles Unified School District leadership** to define specific strategies for collaboration that help to bridge traditional and charter public schools and foster exchanges that will improve education across Los Angeles. Great Public Schools Now aims to support avenues for the sharing of best-practices, and supporting teacher and principal leadership. We are looking forward to continuing these meetings and expanding them to include other leaders in Greater Los Angeles.

Great Public Schools Now's outreach is far from concluded, and we will continue to meet with additional stakeholders as we continue to shape our efforts to expand high-quality options for students.

¹ Findings of phone poll of 1,150 Los Angeles voters, conducted in September, 2015, by Mercury LLC and released by the California Charter Schools Association in October 2015.



Focus neighborhoods

Access to a high-quality public education is not consistent across Greater Los Angeles. Far too often, students' ZIP codes determine what kind of education they will receive. Great Public Schools Now is focused on bringing high-performing public schools into areas where few, if any, exist.

As a result, we have identified ten neighborhoods and surrounding areas where the needs are greatest and will be the focus of Great Public Schools Now's efforts. These neighborhoods are (in alphabetical order):

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Boyle Heights/East LA | South Los Angeles |
| El Sereno | Vermont Slauson |
| Pacoima | Vermont Square |
| Panorama City | Watts-Westmont |
| South Gate | Westlake-Pico Union |

We identified these areas based on the performance of existing schools in the area and on the poverty level. Each neighborhood and district has clusters of under-performing schools, coupled with a few high-performing schools, measured by prior academic attainment

Great Public Schools Now's efforts work with and within these communities to serve students well and increase access to instruction that will prepare them for college or careers.

(as measured by API), last year's Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBAC), and high school dropout rates. Poverty levels are based on both Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) percentages of student populations and income levels of residents. For illustration purposes, the map here shows each area based on the Los Angeles Times's neighborhood map.

These neighborhoods present pockets of low opportunity, where too many students do not have access to high quality programs that match their potential and are not preparing them for long term success. Great Public Schools Now's efforts work with and within these communities to serve students well and increase access to instruction that will prepare them for college or careers.

Identifying high-quality schools in areas of need

Great Public Schools Now is committed to funding public schools of any type if they meet two criteria: **(1) they must be high-quality or have the potential to be high quality**, and **(2) they must serve students in poverty well**.

To determine whether a school's student population is high-need, it can be evaluated by both FRPM percentages and income level of the neighborhood; the State of California defines high need as communities where more than 55% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch or are English Language Learners.

Defining quality, though, is more complex at this moment. Even as the State of California navigates changes to its public school assessment and accountability system, Great Public Schools Now will seek to identify

for replication a high quality school, **using multiple measures that may include** state assessment results (with and without accounting for differences in student populations), student retention rates, graduation rates, college readiness metrics, equity measures, and transparency and accountability to the families they serve. Great Public Schools Now may also consider public schools that may not yet meet these high-quality thresholds but that have exhibited strong academic growth and are poised to continue to improve.

Funding priorities

Great Public Schools Now has identified four priority areas for its investment to assist charter public and district public schools in expanding their capacity to serve students in need. They are **(1) community outreach and engagement**, **(2) teacher and leadership pipeline and support**, **(3) facilities**, and **(4) school replication grants**. Though these four areas will be the priorities for Great Public Schools Now, they do not exclude support in other areas consistent with our stated goal.

1 COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

If this effort is to be successful, the continuous engagement and support of parents and community members must be a central component. Great Public Schools Now envisions a multi-year effort that honors families' engagement and authentic advocacy for greater equity and access to great schools. Great Public Schools will continue to engage directly with stakeholders—including public school students and their parents, teachers and representatives of school districts and community-based organizations—in the creation and expansion of high-quality public schools throughout Greater Los Angeles.

Great Public Schools Now will support the growth or creation of schools with the participation of local communities. The Great Public Schools Now team plans to spend significant time and energy reaching out to parents and community members to better understand the kinds of schools they want for their children. Parent voices are far too frequently absent from discussions about Los Angeles' school system. Great Public Schools Now will work with multiple organizations and directly

Great Public Schools Now envisions a multi-year effort that honors families' engagement and authentic advocacy for greater equity and access to great schools.

with community based parent groups to ensure that the families we aim to serve have multiple opportunities for engaging in their children's education.

Moreover, Great Public Schools Now will collaborate with the district and city leaders to create an environment supportive of the growth and sustainability of high-performing public schools. Great Public Schools Now will work to strengthen the policy and civic environment that will help to sustain and grow high-quality public schools, where collaboration and exchange of best practices between the traditional and charter public school sectors leads to more rapid and sustainable transformation and high performance. Great Public Schools Now will seek to facilitate an active coalition of political, business, faith, civic, district, teacher and parent leaders that supports policies that will benefit all students, and craft a children-first agenda for Los Angeles.

2 TEACHER AND LEADERSHIP PIPELINE AND SUPPORT

Los Angeles is fortunate to have thousands of skilled teachers and school leaders who are committed to ensuring that every child receives an excellent education. However, enrollment in teacher preparation programs across the state is rapidly declining. According to the California Teacher Credentialing Commission, enrollment has fallen by more than half in teacher preparation programs across the state between 2008 and 2012,² from 42,245 to 19,933; additionally, large numbers of teachers are expected to retire over the next decade. Moreover, the introduction of new and more rigorous standards, the growing role of technology in classrooms and increased attention to how to help English Language Learners succeed academically, are placing higher demands on educators, even as specialized fields like special education and STEM instruction are severely shorthanded.

A key goal of Great Public Schools Now is to ensure that new and existing Los Angeles public school teachers and leaders receive the highest-quality preparation. Great Public Schools Now is also committed to helping schools recruit a teaching and principal cadre that is diverse—in terms of experience and racial and socioeconomic background—and that can fill historically hard-to-staff positions in science, mathematics and special education. It is equally important to support school leaders in creating the conditions within schools to retain high performers and to develop teacher leaders to serve in critical roles as grade level and department chairs, mentors and to become the next generation of school leaders.

Great Public Schools Now will also seek to support future school leaders and provide ongoing support and coaching to current principals working in GPSN partner public schools. The importance of an effective principal cannot be overstated (research has found that principals alone account for 25 percent of a school's total impact on student achievement).³ Principals fill a staggering

2 California Teacher Credentialing Commission. Annual Report on California Teacher Preparation Programs for the Academic Year 2012-13. October 2015.

3 Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

range of roles, and, unsurprisingly, the position is subject to high rates of burnout and turnover. A recent report by the School Leaders Network found that 50 percent of new principals are not retained beyond their third year of leading.⁴ Demands are arguably the highest for principals who establish new schools or attempt to turn around chronically low-performing schools. These individuals need a more personalized training experience that develops different skills than are required of principals taking over established, high-quality schools.

A key goal of Great Public Schools Now is to ensure that new and existing Los Angeles public school teachers and leaders receive the highest-quality preparation.

Great Public Schools Now hopes to work with existing and new organizations to better prepare and support Los Angeles public school teachers. This may include grants to traditional and alternative-route teacher preparation programs (e.g., teacher residencies and intern programs) and partnerships with other pre-service training organizations. Great Public Schools Now will have a specific focus on programs that, through recruitment and/or training, are helping to address ongoing shortages in fields like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and special education and the need for a more diverse teacher force that better reflects the backgrounds of Los Angeles students.

For school leaders, Great Public Schools Now will support organizations that provide differentiated training programs for rising leaders for new district or charter public schools and coaching for returning principals for new charter or district schools to improve their practice, develop opportunities for teacher leaders and create the conditions that not only enhance student success (such as providing better coaching and support for teachers) but also retain and encourage the input of high-performing teachers.

4 School Leaders Network. "Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover." October 2014.

3 FACILITIES

Every student in Los Angeles has the right to learn in a safe, clean, positive learning environment. Yet identifying and securing adequate facilities remains the most significant barrier to opening new charter public schools in Greater Los Angeles.

Though Proposition 39 gives charter public schools the right to “reasonably equivalent” facilities, district space is limited and can be unreliable. As a result, many charter public schools choose to build their own facilities or buy and renovate existing buildings. Others are able to secure long-term leases in commercial buildings, churches or other properties.

Great Public Schools Now will employ a range of solutions to assist charter public schools in financing long-term or permanent facilities, including subsidizing lease and debt service costs directly or by providing grants to nonprofit real estate developers. Great Public Schools Now may also seek to incentivize collaboration by mitigating some of the costs of co-location on district operated and independent charter public schools.

4 SCHOOL REPLICATION GRANTS FOR ALL TYPES OF SCHOOLS

Great Public Schools Now plans to support the growth or expansion of high-quality public schools or proposed schools with the potential to be high-quality in Los Angeles neighborhoods with the greatest need (i.e., those where large numbers of low-income families reside and that lack high-quality public school options). Schools that receive grants from Great Public Schools Now may include any type of high-performing public school, including charter public schools, district magnet schools, pilot, Partnership for Los Angeles schools and other district public schools, provided they demonstrate a track record or significant potential to be successful on various performance measures.

Grants to new or expanding high-quality public schools will ensure that sufficient resources are available during the first three to five years of growth in order to stabilize operations and achieve long term financial sustainability beyond philanthropic support.

Grant-making Process and Next Steps

Great Public Schools Now knows that the most effective path to building successful school environments where students can thrive is to focus on a ‘whole school’ model of growth and replication, where the right autonomies ensure that every aspect of the school is driven by the mission to succeed. Therefore, Great Public Schools Now will make **targeted investments across multiple organizations – not general**

programmatic investments – to ensure great schools grow where the students need them the most. More specific funding guidelines will be forthcoming in Fall 2016, but our efforts will be directed to prioritize proposals that will serve the highest concentration of students in need within our priority neighborhoods and across our four focus areas of work.

CONCLUSION

Great Public Schools Now is committed to dramatically expanding educational opportunity in Greater Los Angeles. We will achieve this goal by identifying what's working in existing high-performing public schools and expanding or replicating those schools so more students can have access. We will work with parents, educators, school leaders, community groups, civic leaders, LAUSD and other stakeholders and advocates throughout Los Angeles as we pursue this effort. And we will not rest until every student has access to a high-quality public school in his or her neighborhood.





FAIR
EDUCATION
FOR ALL



Great Public Schools Now

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Far too many families in Greater Los Angeles struggle to access a great public school in their neighborhood. Despite improvements in public education over the past decade, far too many students across Southern California are attending schools that leave them unprepared for the future.

Recognizing the urgency of the problem, Great Public Schools Now was formed to support the replication of successful public schools, regardless of school governance type, in communities of need. The effort will seek to augment their capacity by adding to their existing enrollment or by starting a new school.

Great Public Schools Now will focus on ten neighborhoods across Greater Los Angeles where the prevalence of free and reduced lunch and local income levels intersect with chronically underperforming schools and few high quality school choices for struggling families. In these areas of low opportunity, more than 160,000 students are stuck in under-performing schools that are not preparing them for the success of which they are capable.

Our goal is to dramatically increase the number of high-quality public schools in these and other high-need neighborhoods where similar conditions prevail, and strengthen the environment to support high achievement for all Los Angeles students, whether by duplicating best practices, providing needed material support, or expanding capacity for enrollment.

Great Public Schools Now has identified four funding priorities that will help the expansion of high-quality public schools to carry out its mission.



1 Community outreach and engagement

Great Public Schools Now envisions a multi-year effort that honors families' engagement and authentic advocacy for greater equity and access to great schools. Engaging directly with stakeholders, Great Public Schools Now will support the growth or creation of schools with the participation of local communities. The Great Public Schools Now team plans to spend significant time and energy reaching out to parents and community members to better understand the kinds of schools they want for their children. Parent voices are far too frequently absent from discussions about Los Angeles' school system.

Moreover, Great Public Schools Now will collaborate with the district and city leaders to create an environment supportive of the growth and sustainability of high-performing public schools. This includes facilitating an active coalition of political, business, faith, civic, district, teacher and parent leaders that supports policies that will benefit all students, and craft a children-first agenda for Los Angeles.

2 Teacher and leadership pipeline and support

Los Angeles is fortunate to have thousands of skilled teachers and school leaders who are committed to ensuring that every child receives an excellent education. However, enrollment in teacher preparation programs across the state is rapidly declining. Great Public Schools Now is committed to helping schools recruit a teaching and principal cadre that is diverse—in terms of experience and racial and socioeconomic background—and that can fill historically hard-to-staff positions in science, mathematics and special education. It is equally important to support school leaders in creating the conditions within schools to retain high performers and to develop teacher leaders to serve in critical roles as grade level and department chairs, mentors and to become the next generation of school leaders.

Great Public Schools Now will also seek to support future school leaders and provide ongoing support and coaching to current principals

working in GPSN partner public schools, and Great Public Schools Now hopes to work with existing and new organizations to better prepare and support Los Angeles public school teachers. This may include grants to traditional and alternative-route teacher preparation programs (e.g., teacher residencies and intern programs) and partnerships with other pre-service training organizations.

For school leaders, Great Public Schools Now will support organizations that provide differentiated training programs for rising leaders for new district or charter public schools and coaching for returning principals for new charter or district schools to improve their practice, develop opportunities for teacher leaders and create the conditions that not only enhance student success (such as providing better coaching and support for teachers) but also retain and encourage the input of high-performing teachers.



3 Facilities

Every student in Los Angeles has the right to learn in a safe, clean, positive learning environment. Yet identifying and securing adequate facilities remains the most significant barrier to opening new charter public schools in Greater Los Angeles.

Great Public Schools Now will employ a range of solutions to assist charter public schools in financing long-term or permanent facilities, including subsidizing lease and debt service costs directly or by providing grants to nonprofit real estate developers. Great Public Schools Now may also seek to incentivize collaboration by mitigating some of the costs of co-location on district operated and independent charter public schools.

4 School replication grants for all types of schools

Great Public Schools Now plans to support the growth or expansion of high-quality public schools or proposed schools with the potential to be high-quality in Los Angeles neighborhoods with the greatest need (i.e., those where large numbers of low-income families reside and that lack high-quality public school options). Schools that receive grants from Great Public Schools Now may include any type of high-performing public school, including charter public schools, district magnet schools, pilot, Partnership for Los Angeles schools and other district public schools, provided they demonstrate a track record or significant potential to be successful on various performance measures.

The goal of GPSN and this plan is to dramatically increase students' access to a high quality system of learning – to expand what's working and serve students well. Every single student that gains access to a high-quality public school constitutes a success for our communities, and as long as there are neighborhoods where students do not have that access, there will be a role for Great Public Schools Now and its efforts.

The goal of Great Public Schools Now and this plan is to dramatically increase students' access to a high quality system of learning – to expand what's working and serve students well.





Great Public Schools Now

www.greatpublicschoolsnow.org

 GreatSchoolsLA  GreatPublicSchoolsNow