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UNITED WAY OF GREATER LOS ANGELES AND CLASS COALITION LAUNCH NEW PARENT ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT TO HELP THOUSANDS OF PARENTS TO LEARN TO NAVIGATE SCHOOL SYSTEM

More than 5,000 copies of the free Parent Engagement Toolkit will be distributed to parents

Los Angeles, CA – United Way of Greater Los Angeles and the Communities for Los Angeles Student Success (CLASS) Coalition have designed a *Parent Engagement Toolkit* to help parents navigate the complex Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) system, and determine if their school is adequately supporting their child toward graduation, college and career. The focus of the Toolkit will be to help strengthen and support parent-principal partnerships, create a system-wide conversation about inadequate funding for high-need student populations, and encourage school sites to rethink budget allocations.

The free printed and downloadable guide, available in English and Spanish, will be launched on Thursday, January 19, during a network convening of community groups and organizations from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the United Way of Greater Los Angeles office (1150 S. Olive Street, Suite T500, Los Angeles, CA 90015). In the coming months, this network comprised of community partners including Families in Schools, Educators 4 Excellence, Community Coalition, Center for Powerful Public Schools, Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), InnerCity Struggle, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Los Angeles Urban League, Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), Promesa Boyle Heights and others will help disseminate the Toolkit to parents and parent leaders.

“United Way is committed to helping communities become active – knowledgeable – participants in the education of our children,” said Elise Buik, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Los Angeles. “This is why we’re continuously working with partners to identify the best ways to present helpful tips and information to parents, in a linguistically and culturally sensitive way, that can make a real impact in their children’s education. We are driving change in our communities by empowering parents with the tools *they* need to advocate on behalf of their children,” added Buik.

With the Toolkit, parents will understand their children’s academic progress; monitor school investments and help steer these toward student academic success; and learn how to ask questions that will enable them to access needed resources for their children. In addition, the Toolkit provides information on how parents can learn more about their school’s budget under the new state funding system or Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and how to evaluate whether or not school investments are aligned with student needs. More **-more-** importantly, the Toolkit encourages parents and principals to connect school budgets and investments to student success.

“The *Parent Engagement Toolkit* is the resource guide that has been missing from previous parent engagement efforts,” said Maria Elena Meraz, Executive Director of Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), a nonprofit that builds partnerships between parents, students and educators to improve educational outcomes. “Since California announced in 2013 the distribution of school funds through the LCFF as a way to create a more equitably funded education system, we’ve worked with United Way to inform communities about the impact of these monies in our schools. Although we’ve made progress, there is still much work that needs to be done in order to ensure that low-income and foster care children, and English Language Learners receive proper funding resources. This is why this work is so critical,” added MerazAb.

United Way of Greater Los Angeles is committed to creating education pathways that help children and their families break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, and equipping communities with the tools necessary to succeed in school. The *Parent Engagement Toolkit* is one in a series of efforts over the course of fifteen years that have sought to support students, so that they can become college and career ready. It will serve as a launch pad for informed conversations between parents, students and educators, leading to stronger partnerships that ensure student progress.

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For more information

For further information about the *Parent Engagement Toolkit*, or to schedule an interview, please contact Evelyn G. Alemán at (818) 881-7976 or evelyn@mipr.net. To receive a copy of the *Parent Engagement Toolkit* in English, please contact Sara Mooney at United Way of Greater Los Angeles by calling (213) 808-6290 or via E-mail at smooney@unitedwayla.org. To receive a copy in Spanish, please contact Cristina Castañeda at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) by calling (213) 639-2512 x. 162 or via E-mail at ccastaneda@maldef.org.

About United Way of Greater Los Angeles

United Way of Greater Los Angeles is a nonprofit organization that creates pathways out of poverty by helping homeless people move into housing, providing students with the support they need to graduate high school prepared for college and the workforce, and helping hard-working families become financially stable. United Way identifies the root causes of poverty and works strategically to solve them by building alliances across all sectors, funding targeted programs and advocating for change. For more information, visit www.unitedwayla.org.

About Communities for Los Angeles Student Success

Communities for Los Angeles Student Success (CLASS) is a coalition of parent, student, educator, community-based and civil rights organizations that, since its inception, is dedicated to ensuring all students in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) receive an equitable, high-quality public education. The coalition, through its ten core organizations including United Way of Greater Los Angeles and over 60 network partners, represents over 150,000 constituents.

About PIQE

Since 1992, the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) has built partnerships between parents, students, and educators to further student academic achievement. In this role, PIQE has served more 769 schools in 50 school districts within the counties of Los Angeles and Ventura, and has graduated more than 200,345 parents from its programs, thus enhancing the education of approximately 600,000 students.