



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 16, 2021

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UNITE-LA Applauds L.A. Unified Board for Its Commitment to Invest \$63 million to Expand the Community Schools Initiative over Four Years

Community School designation will expand from 40 to 70 schools by 2025

LOS ANGELES – UNITE-LA applauds the Los Angeles Unified Board of Education for unanimously passing a resolution to invest in increasing the capacity and infrastructure to establish more schools across the district as community schools. The L.A. Unified [Community Schools Initiative](#) (CSI) builds and leverages partnerships to create the conditions students need to thrive by focusing attention, time, and resources on a shared vision for student and school success.

“There’s great potential for our Community Schools Initiative to meet students’ holistic needs and expand learning opportunities through thoughtful engagement and new partnerships. I’m proud that the School Board is not just committed to Community Schools as a concept, but further committed to ensuring our Community Schools are a success,” said LAUSD Board President Kelly Gonez.

Next school year, over 21,000 L.A. Unified students will attend one of 30 schools undergoing Community School transformation. The resolution approved yesterday will expand the number of district Community Schools to 70 by 2025.

Each school’s transformation begins with the hiring of a Community School Coordinator who leads the implementation of a robust stakeholder engagement process to develop a needs and assets assessment, through which the school identifies their top priorities for improvement. Teams of school, family, and community stakeholders work together to collaboratively problem solve and bring new community resources and expanded learning opportunities to students.

A list of the 17 Cohort One and 13 Cohort Two Community Schools is available at: achieve.lausd.net/csi. Selected by the Community Schools Steering Committee in May, Cohort Two schools begin their transform in fall 2021. An additional 10 schools participating in the Black Student Achievement Plan will be identified in 2021-2022 to transform into Community Schools.

“UNITE-LA, as the convener of the [L.A. Compact](#), has long championed the community schools’ model as a strategy to transform our education system and close persistent opportunity gaps, especially for low-income students and students of color,” said Carrie Lemmon, Senior Director for Systems Change Strategy at UNITE-LA. “In line with UNITE-LA’s mission, we would like to see community schools expand across the L.A. region, so all youth have equal access to education and high-level job training, resulting in a thriving local economy.”

Growing support for the community schools model, as a model to transform educational outcomes, has also led to new state and federal funding opportunities to implement and expand it. In April, L.A. Unified was awarded two [California Community Schools Partnership Grants](#) for a total of \$6 million. This funding comes at a crucial time as schools realign themselves to better respond to the educational, social, and racial inequities exacerbated by COVID-19. It will support the 17 schools in Cohort One for an additional two-years.

Leveraging the assets of three co-convening partners – L.A. Unified, UTLA, and UNITE-LA – and the expertise of the diverse community leaders serving on the Community Schools Steering Committee, Board President Kelly Gonez and Board Member Jackie Goldberg yesterday led the effort for a successful and sustainable CSI by increasing capacity and technical assistance for a variety of items related to the initiative, including management, coordination, implementation, and evaluation.

“Around the country, Community Schools are having remarkable outcomes, including raising student enrollment, attendance, and graduation rates and decreasing the opportunity gap, the dropout rate, and severe absenteeism. Having more of these school models in our neighborhoods will address long-standing inequities and improve outcomes for Black and brown students,” said UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz.

“I am excited that Palms Elementary, where my son is in fourth grade, will be a community school. I’m looking forward to having deeper partnerships with our teachers and community,” said Karla Garcia, parent leader with Reclaim Our Schools LA. “I feel like being a community school will really help with my son’s individual academic and socio-emotional needs.”

“Expanded learning time, including afterschool and summer learning programs, is a key component of the community schools model and LA’s BEST is proud to partner with L.A. Unified to provide these wraparound services to students,” said Eric Gurna, President and CEO at LA’s Best. “We are thrilled that LAUSD is continuing to grow the Community Schools Initiative, which will help connect students and families most in need to services provided by community-based partners -- and ultimately support their learning, social-emotional wellbeing, and physical and mental health.”

“This builds on more than a decade of work by the Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP) to advance the Community Schools model in Los Angeles,” said LAEP Chief Executive Officer Michele Broadnax. “It is more important than ever before to align community resources and school assets to build collaborative, problem-solving systems that remove barriers to learning, and expanding access to this model will help more LAUSD students, especially Black students, during this critical time in our history.”

“Community schools become hubs of their neighborhoods – uniting families, educators, and community partners to create rich opportunities for learning and social and emotional development. It’s not just good for the students. It’s good for all of us,” said David Rattray, President and CEO at UNITE-LA.

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About UNITE-LA

Over the past 20 years, UNITE-LA has been a trusted business intermediary, dedicated to supporting the development of an effective local public education system, so that all children and youth succeed in college, career and beyond. Through the intersection of programming, policy, and systems change efforts, UNITE-LA works to increase access to high-quality early childhood education, develop career pathways in high-growth industries, improve college access and success, and ensure workforce readiness, especially for individuals with high barriers into the workforce. Visit www.unitela.com.