

Collaborating for Equity

A Scan of the Los Angeles
Educational Ecosystem



Annenberg
Institute for
School Reform

AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all the Los Angeles ecosystem stakeholders who participated in interviews and briefing meetings for their time, candor, and invaluable contributions to this scan. Participating stakeholders are from the California Community Foundation, the Center for Powerful Public Schools, Community Coalition, the Ford Foundation, InnerCity Struggle, Los Angeles Education Partnership, Los Angeles Unified School District, Proyecto Pastoral, UNITE-LA/The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, and the Youth Policy Institute.

We would also like to thank the Ford Foundation for their generous support.

ABOUT THE ANNENBERG INSTITUTE

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR) is a national policy research and reform support organization that collaborates with school districts and communities to improve the conditions and outcomes of education in America. Through three program circles of work – District & Systems Transformation, Community Organizing & Engagement, and Research & Policy – AISR helps these stakeholders join forces and establish sustainable systems that ensure excellence, equity, and social justice for all students, especially in urban, high-poverty communities. This work is grounded in the vision of a “smart education system,” that is, a high-functioning school district that collaborates with community partners to provide a comprehensive web of opportunities and supports for students, inside and outside of school.

Over the past three years, AISR has partnered with the Ford Foundation on the Time for Equity project. Time for Equity builds the capacity of schools, districts, communities, and partner organizations to improve educational opportunities in the nation’s most underserved school systems through expanded and reimagined learning time. Our work so far has included the development of twenty-four indicators that school communities can use as “yardsticks” to measure and refine their efforts to create expanded and improved learning opportunities for young people. These indicators and a host of accompanying resources can be found at www.timeforequity.org.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Potochnik, Tracie, and Angela N. Romans. 2015. *Collaborating for Equity: A Scan of the Los Angeles Educational Ecosystem*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University. Available online at <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/publications>.

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About the Three Los Angeles Approaches

Purpose of the Scan

Los Angeles has an educational ecosystem that is rich with partners committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for students. Throughout the 2014-2015 school year, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR) spent time meeting with a range of partners, including the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and consistently heard a need and desire to work and learn across three major approaches that have taken root in several of the district's schools and neighborhoods: community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhoods (see sidebar).

The goals of this scan were to:

- advance discussions about the commonalities in vision and goals across these three approaches;
- highlight the systems, practices, and structures that are in place to support these approaches at the district and community levels; and
- identify where there are gaps or needs for further support system-wide.

This work was designed to complement the national Time for Equity project, which includes case studies of teacher knowledge, ownership, and leadership of the three approaches in Los Angeles schools.¹

We hope that this scan has succeeded in surfacing shared lessons and priorities that will inform leaders of partner organizations and LAUSD how to better align, support, and expand these approaches systemically and maximize their impact across LAUSD. We also hope it will provide funders with valuable information about how they can best continue to support equitable educational opportunities in Los Angeles.

¹ The Time for Equity project evolved from AISR's support for the Ford Foundation's More and Better Learning Time (MBLT) initiative. See <http://annenberginstitute.org/?q=project/time-equity-project>.

■ COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The community schools approach features an integrated focus on academics, health and social service, youth and community development, and community engagement, with public schools serving as community hubs. They bring together numerous partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities, giving students and parents the tools they need to learn and grow. The community schools infrastructure includes a community school coordinator who is responsible for building relationships with school staff and community partners, engaging community residents, and coordinating efficient delivery of services.

<http://www.communityschools.org/>

■ LINKED LEARNING

Linked Learning transforms students' high school experience by bringing together strong academics, demanding career and technical education, and real world experience. Industry-themed pathways prepare students for a full range of postsecondary options, including four-year college, by incorporating college-preparatory academics, technical education focused on career-based knowledge and skills, work-based learning opportunities, and support services. Partnerships with local organizations and industry professionals are a key part of the Linked Learning approach.

http://www.connectedcalifornia.org/linked_learning/

■ PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS

The purpose of Promise Neighborhoods is to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in the country's most distressed communities, via a continuum of cradle-to-career, neighborhood-based solutions. These include both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center. Silos between programs and agencies are broken down so that solutions are integrated and implemented effectively and efficiently, and effective solutions can be scaled up across a broader region.

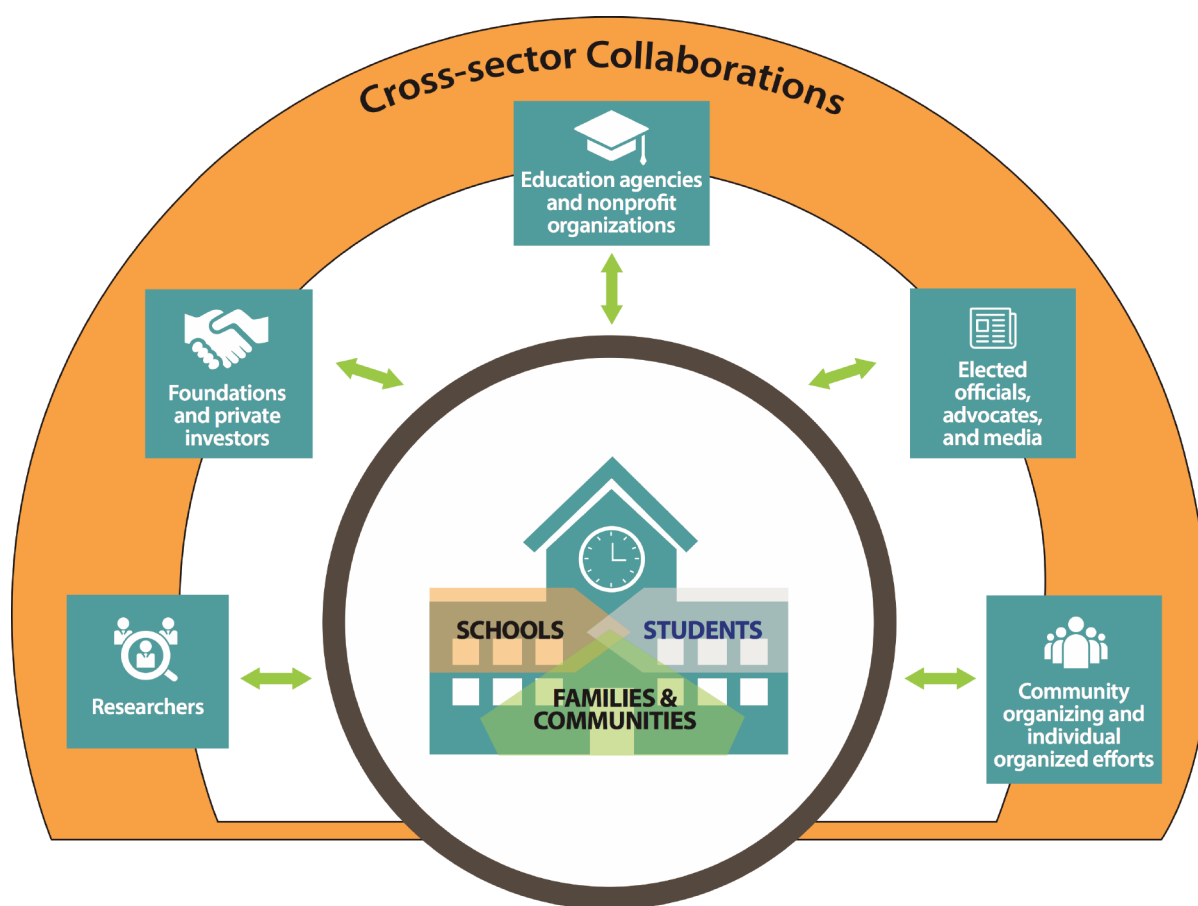
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/>

The Education Ecosystem: A Theory of Action

In AISR's report *Leveraging Time for School Equity: Indicators to Measure More and Better Learning Time*, we put forth a vision of the education ecosystem – the interconnected network of individuals and organizations who work to provide educational opportunities and support for student success across a system, seen in Figure 1 (Del Razo et al. 2014). At the center of this ecosystem are educated, well-rounded, and healthy students, families, and communities

participating in strong and equitable schools and school systems. They are surrounded by the multiple actors that need to engage in the work to reach scale. As much as external stakeholders influence schools and students, schools and students do and should affect the decisions and directions of these stakeholders.

This approach includes stakeholders that are both “internal” and “external” to a school district and captures a component critical for supporting all students: cross-sector collaboration across stakeholder groups. This cross-sector work only happens when it is intentional and resourced; it takes significant time to work across sectors to meet and build a shared vision and goals.



Ecosystem icons by: OCHA, Freepik. Flaticon is licensed under Creative Commons BY 3.0.

FIGURE 1. The Time for Equity Education Ecosystem

Figure 1 is not a static snapshot. The educational ecosystem is dynamic and both influences and is influenced by the social, political, and cultural context of a city or school system.

In our interviews, we asked participants to put forth their vision of a strong and sustainable ecosystem. The following elements emerged most consistently:

- positive, supportive relationships between schools and communities, including partnerships with families;

- strategic collaboration and alignment between stakeholders, including sectors outside of education;
- empowered teachers, families, and students; and
- investments that benefit students who need them most.



Center for Powerful Public Schools

Methods

To learn more about the perceptions of staff from community-based organizations (CBOs), schools, and districts working to support the three approaches that are the focus of our scan, AISR facilitated a participatory process, grounded in select system-level indicators from the Time for Equity framework, and driven by the following question:

How can the partners within the Los Angeles education ecosystem create and enhance district-wide systems and structures that support aligned work across three approaches – community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhoods – focused on equitable education reform?

Our research question was informed by two key system-level indicators² from the *Leveraging Time for School Equity* report related to the issue of scalability of approaches (see Figure 2):

² Education indicators are “yardsticks” that can inform a system by highlighting areas in need of development as well as areas that have experienced growth and improvements. For more on all twenty-four Time for Equity indicators, see <http://annenberginstitute.org/?q=publication/leveraging-time-school-equity>.

- Strong and sustainable more and better learning time (MBLT) ecosystem;
- Widespread adoption.

In keeping with Coburn’s (2003) conceptualization of scale, these indicators highlight measures that signal a shift and spread in the norms, principles, and beliefs that undergird the intent to provide equitable educational opportunities, including more and better learning time, to all students.

In the first phase of our work, we conducted a series of one-on-one or paired interviews with stakeholders, including staff from community-based organizations, district and school personnel, and funders. Using a snowball sampling technique, we began by talking to ecosystem partners who had already engaged in Time for Equity work, or with whom AISR had existing relationships. These stakeholders then referred additional interviewees in multiple parts of the ecosystem (district/school/community) to ensure a representative range of voices across approaches, sectors, and role type. We conducted a total of twenty-six interviews with twenty-nine individuals:

- fourteen leaders or staff from CBOs, including non-profit organizations, technical assistance providers, and community organizing groups (see Appendix);



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- three LAUSD staff;
- ten school-based staff supporting one or more of the three major approaches (community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhoods); and
- two funders.

Using qualitative methodology, staff from AISR generated major themes and findings from this series of individual interviews.

In the second phase of our work, we convened ecosystem partners representing the three major approaches. In late June 2015, we asked partners to respond to and engage with identified themes, discuss and refine the shared vision and priorities that emerged in the scan, and identify a set of recommendations for moving forward. This report is informed both by our initial set of interviews and by feedback from the partners and work that occurred at this meeting.

SYSTEM LEVEL	<p>STRONG & SUSTAINABLE MORE AND BETTER LEARNING TIME (MBLT) ECOSYSTEM</p> <p>Are viable MBLT ecosystems present?</p> <p>Why does this matter?</p> <p>To reach the systemic goal of the MBLT initiative, it is critical that rich learning opportunities are made available to all students. This indicator measures the breadth of MBLT implementation across the entire ecosystem, focusing on the number of schools and districts working toward the implementation of MBLT approaches and ensuring that students across the system graduate prepared to succeed in college, career, and civic life.</p> <p>What are some possible ways to measure this indicator?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A growing number of schools and districts are implementing sustainable MBLT approaches. • A growing number of school partners such as community-based organizations, outreach college programs, businesses and industries, city-sponsored community programs, and colleges and universities support implementation of MBLT across districts. • There is growing fiscal support for MBLT (through the reallocation of funds and/or other investments such as foundation support). • A growing number of research partners are in place, or a growing number of research projects focused on MBLT are published or under way. • There are a growing number of media, policy, and public references to more and better learning time.
	<p>WIDESPREAD ADOPTION</p> <p>Is there evidence of MBLT becoming the “new normal” across systems?</p> <p>Why does this matter?</p> <p>It is important that sustainable approaches are documented, communicated, and scaled up in a way that the goal of systemic equity is reached. Creating districtwide, statewide, or nationwide change does not happen by accident – rather, it requires intentional effort, collective ownership, communication, and changes to policy structures. This indicator attempts to capture the depth and coherence of MBLT work across governance levels and sectors.</p> <p>What are some possible ways to measure this indicator?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful MBLT approaches are identified and studied, and findings are made accessible. • There is evidence of MBLT programs becoming institutionalized across a district or state education system (rather than specialized at one site). • MBLT policies that reduce barriers to districtwide, statewide, or federal implementation are formulated, developed, and implemented. • Cross-sector collaborations create coherency and shared ownership across a district, state, or the nation.

FIGURE 2.
More and Better Learning Time System-Level Indicators

Findings

Partnering across the ecosystem

■ CORE GOALS AND VALUES

In order to exercise effective cross-sector collaboration to achieve large-scale social change, partners should first embrace a shared vision, values, and primary set of goals (Kania & Kramer 2011). Building on this framework, our initial interview questions sought to codify commonalities by asking interviewees to characterize the core values and goals that drive their approach. Four common themes emerged most often:

- Understand and address student needs (academic, social-emotional, well-being), including providing personalized supports.
- Provide equitable opportunities for students, prioritizing a focus on the highest-need students and communities.
- Cultivate substantive community partnerships and collaborations designed to meet the needs of students and their families.
- Build capacity at the district, school, CBO, and community level to implement, support, and sustain this work.

As a part of these core goals and values, partners categorized all three approaches as having the potential to benefit a wide range of students, seeking to increase the academic, social, and emotional success of all students with higher needs (defined as students with fewer resources and opportunities and students living in poverty). None of the approaches were said to be designed to attract or serve a particular “type” of student.

In terms of reaching that potential overall, however, the consensus is that partners are “not there yet.”

Participants identified several barriers. First, we heard that a lack of resources or structures impedes scaling

the approaches with fidelity from their current presence in a finite number of schools to the vision of serving all students across the district. Second, partners find it difficult to match their resources with student needs in an efficient, coordinated way. Some students receive duplication of services through better advocacy – “The ones who reach out for help get served quicker,” said one school-based staff member – while others find their access restricted due to work obligations or perceptions that their academic background limits entry to certain approaches. As one CBO staff member expressed, “I think these models are perfect for these communities that are most impacted by racial inequities, racial injustice. However, I think we have a long way to go in fully reaching and having an impact in the communities that need it most.”

Some efforts are being made at the organization/school/district level to increase the likelihood that all students are served, including advocating and organizing for district-wide initiatives that distribute resources more equitably, such as Wellness Centers, and implementation of the state’s Local Control Funding Formula.³ Overall, however, respondents were clear that vulnerable youth and high-need neighborhoods and communities could be better served by all approaches by creating, for example, more access to support services.

When AISR presented preliminary findings from this scan at an ecosystem partners meeting in June 2015, attendees suggested expanding the conversation to

³ The Local Control Funding Formula, signed into law in 2013, “is designed to be more equitable and transparent. It directs more funds to districts with low-income students, English learners, and foster children, and shifts more authority to local districts to decide how to spend the money.” Source: <http://edsources.org/publications/local-control-funding-formula-guide>



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include additional student support strategies such as restorative justice and other positive discipline practices and trauma-sensitive approaches. Partners anticipate that this alignment across approaches that are often seen as disconnected will help teachers better understand and integrate multiple support tools for serving their high-need students and communities.

■ CBO RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

While a healthy, aligned ecosystem features strategic, deliberate collaboration across ecosystem partners, collaboration within a particular sector or stakeholder group can be an equally complex proposition requiring careful attention. A number of CBOs support the community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhood approaches in Los Angeles, providing training, coaching, technical assistance, and additional capacity at both the school and district level. The need and desire for alignment, coordination, and collaboration across these approaches exists both systemwide, in considering how to best support students in the broad landscape of LAUSD, and very concretely in individual schools, where more than one approach may be present.

System level

In asking leaders and staff of CBOs to describe how they collaborate with other organizations supporting these new approaches, we heard that while in some cases there is general awareness but minimal overlap, there have also been intentional efforts to build understanding, alignment, and joint capacity for support. For example, the Center for Powerful Public Schools, which supports Linked Learning, is providing professional development to organizational and school staff from the Youth Policy Institute (YPI), which supports the Promise Neighborhoods approach. This collaboration is designed to build understanding of Linked Learning, develop common goals and language, and help YPI staff to better support the Linked Learning approach where it co-exists in Promise Neighborhood schools. Community organizing and advocacy groups such as InnerCity Struggle, Community Coalition, and Proyecto Pastoral also are valuable partners to the organizations providing technical assistance and support for these approaches, as they apply targeted pressure and demand at the policy level as well as support on-the-ground implementation in the schools and neighborhoods where they are rooted.

While these partnerships are promising, we heard of two distinct challenges that serve as barriers to increased collaboration and alignment. First, CBOs' intensive focus on implementing the specific approach that they support – including the need to devise and meet specific goals, targets, and metrics – leaves them with limited time and capacity to focus on working across approaches. One CBO staff member said, “We all have really high targets. . . . The amount of time required to support our own staff towards meeting those targets does not leave enough time for collaboration.” One side effect of limited collaboration is that data that could help partners better understand and enhance how students are served across the system is not regularly shared. A CBO staff member noted, “[I know which students are served by my approach.] But I don't think that, as an ecosystem, we have the mechanism to know which students are being served from other programs.” Without an understanding of which students are and are not being served, students who are less proactive in seeking services from or inclusion in these approaches, or who aren't referred by adult advocates, may not access the supports that can help them to be successful.

The second challenge centers on what one participant called, “the whole territory thing,” and the tendency to feel “threat and competition” at the prospect of greater alignment. Partners from many different organizations described the three approaches as fundamentally complementary, with shared goals and values, but one CBO staff member pointed out:

There is more of a need to hold to your brand, to retain your brand identity, because there is a sense that if you don't do that, you will get lost in the funding world or in the world of being recognized as whatever you bring to the table.

This same participant noted that rather than being encompassed by an overarching framework, the approaches “are seen as competing initiatives. They are not seen as a continuum of an initiative that's about shifting the way we do business in schools.”

School level

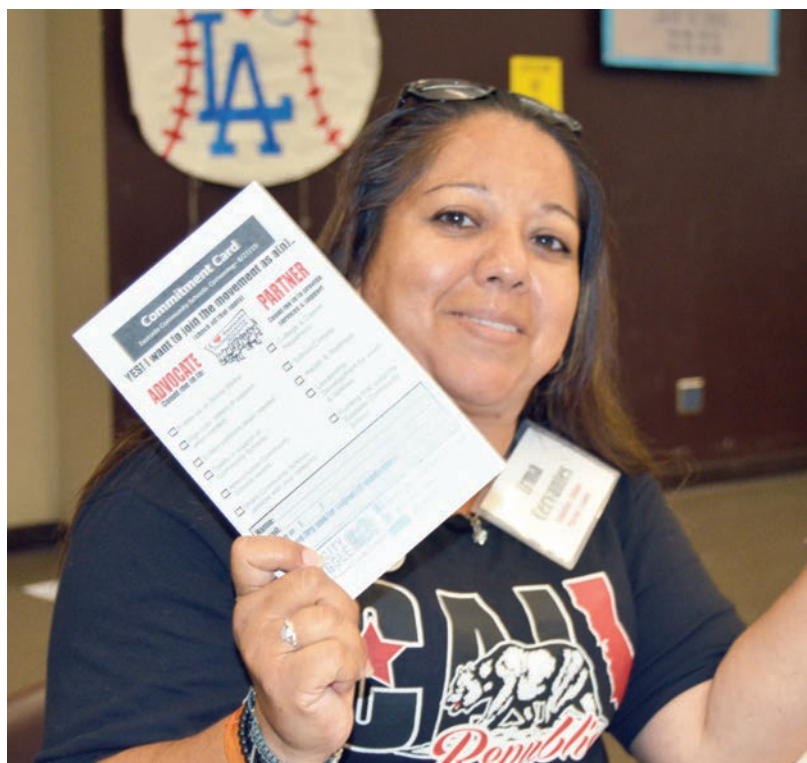
Participants also described successful efforts to coordinate and align across approaches at the school level. All three approaches have school-based staff supporting implementation, and we heard examples of these staff coordinating, collaborating, and leveraging resources to support one another. One community schools coordinator said, “I work much more directly with my counterparts [supporting other approaches] and advising and often supporting them in any way that both of us deem appropriate.” College and career readiness is one particularly salient area of intersection for all approaches, and one where school-based staff often have complementary rather than overlapping roles, making collaboration easier. For example, a Promise Neighborhood college and career ambassador may plan college field trips that support the goals of Linked Learning, while a community schools coordinator may build students' career skills via resume workshops and mock interviews.

The issue of role clarity and risk of confusion for school staff emerged as a primary challenge when multiple approaches are present in a school. One CBO staff member noted:

You know, it's nice that everybody is working towards the same goal. . . . And it also presents some logistical challenges at times. So when you have, for example, [coaches/coordinators/counselors representing multiple approaches] on site, sometimes there's confusion as to, well, who is really responsible for what? And there's confusion among staff as to, who do I go to for which of these things? And sometimes there's even a little bit of jockeying for position among the people who are there on site.

Also, because the approaches are largely context-specific and flexible, the coordinator/coach role may vary from site to site within the same approach. For example, the duties or role of a community schools coordinator may look different at different sites depending on a school's needs.

Though the majority of school-based staff supporting implementation of these approaches technically work for and are salaried by CBOs (and in some cases, the LAUSD central office), we heard instances where they take a more holistic view of their roles – primarily identifying with or working in broader service of the schools where they are based, rather than maintaining a narrower focus on a specific approach. As one staff member said, “I know I don’t work for the school, but I feel like I do.” A few school-based staff shared that a competitive or territorial orientation may occur more at the organization level, where there’s more on the line politically, while staff working in schools tend to “figure it out.” As one participant said, “I think on the campus level, the street level, we just want to do our jobs and kind of move forward.”



InnerCity Struggle

■ DISTRICT AND CBO COLLABORATION

Figure 1 shows a bidirectional arrow running between “external” ecosystem partners and the school system. In Los Angeles, we heard examples of how schools and the district are both supporting and being supported by the work of partners engaged in the implementation of community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhoods.

CBOs supporting approaches and district work

CBOs and technical assistance providers support both LAUSD and specific schools primarily through added resources, including staffing, as well as coaching and capacity building. For example, the Center for Powerful Public Schools works closely with the district’s Office of Linked Learning to train and develop Linked

Learning instructional coaches, some of whom are hired by the Center and some of whom work directly through LAUSD. All coaches are engaged in a community of practice that meets regularly to coordinate efforts and share best practices and challenges. These coaches work with lead teachers and others at the school level and were praised by one participant for being “innovative thinkers” but “also willing to get down and dirty.” The Center has also partnered with the district in writing grant proposals that support LAUSD’s Office of Linked Learning (outlined in the following section, District Supports to Approaches and CBOs).

As mentioned above, school-based staff funded by CBOs add important capacity at the school level; these include community schools coordinators staffed by the Los Angeles Education Partnership, work-based learning coordinators from five organizations, including the LAUSD central office, who are trained and mentored by the United Way and support Linked Learning implementation, and coordinators such as college and career ambassadors from YPI who support Promise Neighborhoods. Coordinators may bring in and work with a range of partners from the community, including local business and industry representatives, health and social service providers, colleges and universities, and others that provide comprehensive supports to students. Some CBO partners were clear that their role is one of support that is designed to make schools more self-sustaining, which is “the only way that any reform is really going to stick around.” One CBO staff member said, “[We think about our role as] one about building capacity and systems, and not running things. So our mission, really, is to build infrastructure in schools.”



Center for Powerful Public Schools

Some school-based staff spoke of having very close relationships with school leaders and serving as partners who help to enact a principal's vision. One participant said of his/her role, "It's a lot of connecting with [the principal] and sitting with her, and making sure that [my work is] in line with what she wants."

Another noted,

There are some principals with whom we share . . . cell phone [numbers.] We're on the phone texting or calling each other four or five or six, seven times a week, in addition to regularly scheduled meetings, progress meetings and assessing, evaluating our successes.

The ability of partnering CBOs to be in a school on a consistent basis, moving beyond "good working relationships" to feeling more integrated into the school's staff and leadership structure, was named as ideal by several school-based staff. One CBO partner, however, named a benefit to maintaining an inside/outside role:

It wasn't part of my role and responsibilities, but I was really coaching my principal most of the time. And mainly being a thought partner . . . so I think it's a great asset that he was able to have someone else, an outsider of the district, to get their perspective and feedback.

District supports to approaches and CBOs

When asked to identify school system supports that work well, CBO participants spoke largely of deeply committed individuals aligned with the priorities and values of both the approaches and the CBOs. Individuals who work at the district's central office, school board members, and leaders and staff of schools were all named as being valuable resources, supports, and champions.

Linked Learning has the most concrete structural presence within LAUSD, largely due to its Office of Linked Learning, which has a small administrative staff as well as instructional coaches and work-based learning coordinators who support school implementation. In addition to jointly spearheading the training and development of these staff, the Office of Linked Learning also provides outreach to schools to generate interest in Linked Learning and to deliver clear information and expectations for what the approach entails. This office also partners with the Center for Powerful Public Schools, United Way, and the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce in leading the Los Angeles Regional Coalition for Linked Learning, a network which includes other regional school districts and focuses on innovative collaborations between education and industry to increase workforce and skill development in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The Office of Linked Learning is an example of concentrated expertise and support for one approach, but the sheer size of LAUSD presents challenges to its developing broad understanding of any of the three approaches systemwide. Those district and school staff who have experienced the approaches directly may "get it," but what one participant described as "that siloing of things" within the central office and at the city level, a lack of integration between individuals and departments, and leadership changes at multiple levels prove to be barriers to the type of understanding and championing that could increase the presence and effectiveness of these approaches throughout the district. Partner organizations and district staff spoke of targeted efforts to increase the understanding of certain individuals within the system, particularly instructional directors, area superintendents, and others who directly support schools that implement the approaches.

Strengthening the ecosystem: Areas for growth

In discussing both the successes and challenges in supporting work across the community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhoods approaches, participants at the school, district, and CBO levels articulated three major areas of need:

- “Big picture” vision, strategy, and collaboration across ecosystem partners;
- District prioritization, support, and investment in approaches; and
- Recognizing and sharing best practices.

If addressed, these areas of need could help create and enhance district-wide systems and structures that support aligned work across the three approaches, focused on equitable education reform.

■ “BIG PICTURE” VISION, STRATEGY, AND COLLABORATION ACROSS ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS

For increased alignment to be possible, interviewees across all roles and approaches expressed the need for a facilitated network addressing “big picture” strategies – articulating a common vision and goals, mapping resources and supports, and identifying gaps and coordinating or collaborating to address them. One CBO staff member said:

No one knows what anyone else is doing. And everybody is so busy doing their own thing, that you . . . aren’t necessarily aware of other people who are either duplicating your effort, or [if] there are gaps in what’s being done. You know, you don’t necessarily have a bird’s-eye view of the landscape or the ecosystem to know where there are gaps, where there are overlaps, where things could be strengthened or better aligned. So, until you get everybody together in the room and ask

these questions, or you do what you guys are doing, by surveying various people around it, you don’t really know. . . . We’re all doing our own thing.

Several participants emphasized that having a superintendent or city leader charging partners to convene would be “anywhere from helpful to necessary,” but that neutral facilitation would be key to moving forward on common agendas:

Because to invite alignment, you have to believe in it, and you have to invite people to a facilitated conversation that is led by a third party, in a very neutral way, that can really help people see the alignments and with no politics, just really get to the facts.

While there are some existing networks that could potentially be used for this purpose, it was unclear if there are any that are not already weighted toward a particular approach and that could provide a neutral ground in which all partners could engage on equal footing.

At the June 2015 ecosystem partners meeting, several participants noted the importance of thinking critically and inclusively about the partners and leaders who should have a voice at this table. Having the perspectives of teachers and others working to implement the approaches in a school site, as well as family and community members who can speak to on-the-ground context and conditions, was seen as critical.

In our interviews, participants spoke of the potential role that funders can play in helping to promote collaboration and eliminate competition among ecosystem partners:

If funders have the vision to require coalitions and collaborations, then it will happen. But if they don’t, and they fund lots of little things, then you might have little things going on that are great. But you’re not going to have a big system that works well.

The need for an overarching vision, strategy, mapping, and coordination exists at the school level as well, particularly when multiple partners are working to support students. We heard examples of school-level ecosystems that have worked to develop “coordinated, supplemental roles” for partners, and which may serve as a model for the larger system. (See Promesa Boyle Heights sidebar for further details.)

■ DISTRICT PRIORITIZATION, SUPPORT, AND INVESTMENT IN APPROACHES

While we heard some promising examples of district-level supports for community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhoods – and collaboration with the partner organizations working to implement them – there was consensus that there is still much work to be done for these approaches to expand, become more effective, and have a systemwide impact for students who need them most. Ecosystem partners expressed a desire for LAUSD to exhibit greater understanding and ownership of the approaches and to embrace external ecosystem partners, so that partnerships feel authentic and not like a “forced marriage.” This includes connecting the approaches to an overall plan or vision for the district to ensure that approaches are “more seamlessly integrated, . . . [that] we’re coming alongside, not working in isolation,” as well as embracing partners not just as service providers but in shared decision making. One district staff member called for:

a strategic plan developed in collaboration with partners, [to be shared] with the new superintendent so s/he can see the work and continue to support the work, and to bring her/him in to know who community partners are and what their respective roles are.



Los Angeles Education Partnership

Community-based partners also discussed the difficulty of navigating district bureaucracy. The district’s current organization is seen primarily as an accountability structure, but could be more effectively utilized as a support system with some intentional shifts, a view expressed by both district and CBO staff. While it may not be feasible to have a dedicated district office for each approach, having a point person for each who can serve as a liaison for CBOs and help them to maneuver through various district structures and departments was seen as a potentially helpful strategy. Improved communication and integration between central office staff working with particular approaches, potentially facilitated by the point person for each, is

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also key, especially when considering how to best support schools that house more than one approach. We did hear about some growing collaboration between district departments, particularly around supporting health and wellness initiatives.

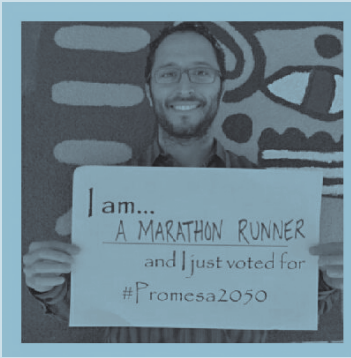
Finally, in addition to prioritizing the approaches themselves, ecosystem partners stressed the critical importance of using an equity lens to guide the growth and expansion of these approaches and ensure that they're reaching the students and neighborhoods that can most benefit from them. One participant said, "The district isn't doing their own part to make sure that . . . efforts are increasing and growing in areas that need it most."

Schools, particularly those taking on approaches that infuse the support of multiple partners, have their own educational ecosystems, and in our interviews we heard examples of concentrated efforts to develop relationships, coordination, and alignment across multiple partners to better serve students and families in a school community. Strategies used, structures developed, and lessons learned from these school-based efforts can be used not only to inform other schools taking on similar efforts, but in thinking how to better align the larger Los Angeles ecosystem.

One such example is Promesa Boyle Heights, which has:

galvanized parents, youth, educators, local organizations, and key stakeholders to achieve a common vision: To ensure all children in [the Boyle Heights neighborhood] have access to effective schools and strong systems of family and community supports to prepare them to succeed in school and become dynamic and engaged citizens of the twenty-first century.

Promesa Boyle Heights, which is supported by the lead agency Proyecto Pastoral and over twenty additional partners, received a planning grant through the federal Promise Neighborhood initiative. Though Promesa did not receive federal funding for implementation, the collaborative work and community support built throughout the planning process led to partners remaining committed to the community transforma-



tion plan that they had developed, which included implementing community school approaches, initially starting with Mendez High School and Hollenbeck Middle School. Mendez, Hollenbeck, and four other schools in the Boyle Heights school feeder pattern are managed by the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (PLAS), a nonprofit school turnaround organization representing a collaboration between the City of Los Angeles and LAUSD. PLAS is among the Promesa partners.

Using data, partners collaborated to develop a shared vision and goals, identify major schoolwide challenges and gaps, and develop strategies to address them. These strategies moved beyond simply providing direct services, and included working to “chang[e] cultures and practices in the school and the community that build the foundation for student success and family wellness.” Scan participants talked about ongoing, intentional efforts and structures to help partners work together and play “coordinated, supplemental roles” so that

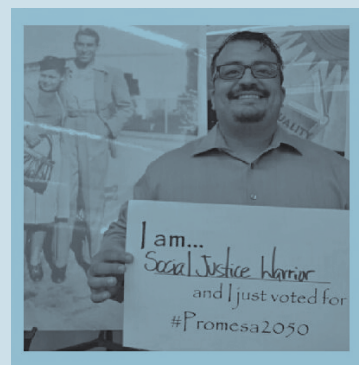
they’re focused not just on a particular case-load of students, but rather “have an ability to look at the school as a whole, and then how each partner is addressing the needs of the whole school in a more coordinated way.” This strategy was tied to an effort to “better organize how we work with each other to maximize our impact,” rather than to bring in new partners and resources. Partners focusing on academics and wellness meet regularly to identify needs and gaps and devise methods to address them, and there is a steering committee made up of the representatives of the twenty-two partner organizations and schools. Built into the partnership are structures for planning and reflection, so that “we’re learning and sharing what we’re learning in real time.”

A critical piece of Promesa’s work in Boyle Heights is honoring and utilizing the assets of the community. As one participant noted, [Boyle Heights] is often described by high rates of gang violence and poverty or bad infrastructure, but despite those things there is a history

of resident leadership and organizing that has brought about a lot of change in the infrastructure in our schools and in safety for our community. . . . Promesa Boyle Heights, it really stems from the community coming together and saying, “We need to prioritize our community, our young people, our safety, our health, our wellness.”

Parents, youth, and teachers are thus key stakeholders in Promesa’s work, along with the schools and community-based organizations that provide services. As one interviewee noted when talking about the group of multiple stakeholders engaged in planning for a Wellness Center at Mendez High School, “What we have learned is just because you build it doesn’t mean that people will come. . . . You need residents at the table in the planning and advocating for it initially in order to support its success once it comes.”

More information on Promesa Boyle Heights: <http://promesaboyleheights.org/>.



■ RECOGNIZING AND SHARING BEST PRACTICES

For the community schools, Linked Learning, and Promise Neighborhood approaches to be scaled up equitably, ecosystem partners must understand what's working well and why and use this knowledge to expand effective practice throughout the system. The school district necessarily plays a central role in recognizing and sharing best practices, both in connecting schools with effective practices to their peers, so that they can engage in ongoing learning and continuous improvement, and in responding at a policy level in a way that enhances and expands success. One participant said,

The job of the district, being the entity that is supposed to help lift all boats, is to say, “Wow, that work at [school] is going so well, where else is this happening?” It's not about replicating necessarily what's happening there, . . . but saying, “Where else are there pockets of school/community partnerships that really undergird [approaches]?” . . . And then what can we do as a district infrastructure to bring those people together to support

their learning, and think about how we're structuring our staffing and our policy decisions at the district level to be supportive of what's going on at the school level.

Participants broadly agreed upon the need for district engagement in collecting and disseminating data, linked to outcomes, that supports the effectiveness of the three approaches and helps to make the connections to the ways in which they're contributing to the district's larger priorities. There was general consensus that this data must include, but also look beyond, academic measures.

Understanding where and why approaches have been successful can also help the ecosystem partners understand the conditions and factors needed for good implementation, and to create an implementation “roadmap,” both for schools themselves and to guide district support. One participant framed it as “really looking at what are the challenges that schools have in a systemic way, and then offering professional development that addresses, in a very systemic way, those challenges.” A focus on teachers, including the improvement of instruction and engagement in and ownership of the three approaches, was seen as a critical component of success.

Funders were also seen as having a role in taking best practices to scale. While foundation dollars themselves may be invested in pilots rather than expansion, as one participant said, “Where is the impetus or the requirement to make sure that the best practices are actually practiced?” The expectation, tied to funding, of a plan showing how pilot success is informing the larger system and can be expanded was seen as one possible point of leverage.



InnerCity Struggle

Limited fiscal resources were seen as a major barrier to the expansion of the three approaches, with one participant noting, “I mean, we have schools that want to [adopt the approach], but there’s just no funding.” At the meeting with partners, there was a call to increase transparency around school budgeting, particularly around whether the money generated by an individual school was aligned with the money spent at that school, or was off-balance due to the district practice of “norming” or averaging school budgets. One participant noted that while California’s new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) provides “an opportunity in terms of making sure that money goes to the populations it’s supposed to go to,” there are also challenges because, “you want to make the district accountable that the money is actually going where it needs to be.” Additionally, a school-based staff member interviewed for the scan said that even with the advent of the LCFF, there were questions about school budgeting:

Going to budget this year, our budget got worse, and we didn’t quite understand. . . . Teachers are keeping their jobs, but . . . people are barely scraping by this year. . . . I’m actually hearing that from my principal, that there is a lack of transparency on how decisions are being made and what formulas are being used and things like that.

Increased transparency and support for budgeting at the school level could potentially enable school leaders to access funds that could aid in the adoption or expansion of these approaches.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from both phases of our work, we make the following recommendations in three broad categories:

Increase communication

Participants identified a need for building clearer and more intentional lines of communication across district staff and offices responsible for supporting the approaches; between district and CBO staff; and between all partners, school-based practitioners, and grassroots community members – parents, youth, and other residents. Deepening communication will help ensure greater alignment of ecosystem partners’ efforts and provide increased opportunities to share best practices.

A clear first step in this area should be to designate a structure and neutral facilitator for a regular convening of ecosystem stakeholders. Through this convening, the emerging collaborative network can adopt a finalized version of the foundational vision and priority goals that have emerged as themes from this scan and use these to designate common strategies and activities to pursue within and across approaches. As the June 2015 meeting participants noted, having all the stakeholders on the same page communicating a clear, collective vision and roadmap for success will help build an effective, ground-up coalition and anchor the ecosystem through leadership transitions.

Conduct detailed asset mapping

We heard a clear call for time and space for partners to:

- understand the specific needs of the students, schools, and geographic neighborhoods and communities that they serve;

- map the resources available in the ecosystem across the three approaches, including human capital (teaching staff, school-based CBO staff, youth and parent organizers), services, and funding; and
- strategically connect available resources to student and community needs.

Without this asset mapping, partners will not have the data to scale in an equitable way those school-level practices that are working, and students throughout the system will not be served as well as they could be. A critical component of this process should be identifying ways to increase transparency around school budgets. For this transparency to be effective, multiple stakeholders at a school site, including school staff and parents, must understand the kinds of funding received by school sites, how funding is generated, and the students who are meant to benefit from various funding sources. For example, the Local Control

Funding Formula has created base, supplemental, and concentration grants for targeted groups of students. An equity analysis would highlight a lack of budget alignment at the school level and help to understand any gaps between how funding is generated versus how it is spent at the school level. If gaps exist, stakeholders can advocate for reprioritizing school budget expenditures into areas of greater student need. Participants in the June 2015 meeting pinpointed school budget transparency and equity analysis as their top priority moving forward.

Deepen focus on sustainability and scale

This last recommendation is geared largely toward funders. As previously stated, funders can, through their practices, either inadvertently create insularity and competition between partners or be strategic levers for system-wide thinking, capacity-building, and change. Funders should set clear goals with flexibility in how those goals are implemented across schools, as contexts change, and with metrics that take into account the whole child and system, beyond just academics. We also heard the importance of investing in not just pilots, but associated plans for scaling what is working and ensuring those strategies include community and teacher leadership, development, ownership, and empowerment. While funders must continue to support the work and expertise of individual approaches and organizations, a critical component of their investment must entail funding collaborative processes, not solely program- or approach-specific outcomes. Funders must understand the time necessary to build trust, relationships, and shared vision and goals required for effective cross-sector collaboration, and should signal that understanding by committing resources to these processes.



Center for Powerful Public Schools

Toward a Strong and Sustainable Ecosystem

Los Angeles is fortunate to have a range of committed partners working within well-developed and proven frameworks like the three approaches we studied, including a district committed to supporting best practices, and the Ford Foundation making a significant financial investment. In this scan, we looked at the theory of action and system-level indicators developed in the Time for Equity project and explored how the ecosystem partners could build on this promising foundation to further align and enhance their work.

The partners had much to say, calling for increased time, space, and funding to come together more intentionally and strategically to sustain and scale their best work. We hope that the recommendations from this study, informed by their insights, will help guide next steps toward increased communication, alignment, and investment among the partners. With support to develop into a true cross-sector coalition, stakeholders will have the power to create their vision for a sustainable ecosystem to ensure equitable education opportunities for students and communities across Los Angeles.

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Center for Powerful Public Schools

Ecosystem Partner Organizations

The following is a listing of Los Angeles ecosystem partner organizations that are engaged in one or more of the three approaches (community schools, Linked Learning, Promise Neighborhood) and that were interviewed as part of this scan.

California Community Foundation: The California Community Foundation (CCF) unites the power of philanthropy with innovative strategies to create greater equity, opportunity, and prosperity in Los Angeles County. They have served as a public, charitable organization since 1915, empowering donors to pursue their own personal passions and to collaborate in transforming Los Angeles. CCF stewards more than \$1.4 billion in total assets and manages nearly 1,600 charitable foundations, funds, and legacies. CCF provides funding support to several Los Angeles *Time for Equity* ecosystem partner organizations.

<http://www.calfund.org/>

The Center for Powerful Public Schools: The Center for Powerful Public Schools (formerly Los Angeles Small Schools Center) has been a leader in education since 2003. The Center provides technical and instructional support to schools and school districts in order to improve learning and teaching throughout the greater Los Angeles region. Their mission-driven approach responds directly to the critical needs of schools by leveraging best practices from applied research and strong partnerships with leaders in the field of business, philanthropy, and the public sector. As the first regional Linked Learning Center serving Southern California since 2010, Center staff are experts at working with school districts and schools to custom design and implement a Linked Learning pathway program.

<http://powerful.org/>

Community Coalition: Community Coalition works to help transform the social and economic conditions in South Los Angeles that foster addiction, crime, violence, and poverty by building a community institution that involves thousands in creating, influencing, and changing public policy. They bring community members together to build leadership, launch action campaigns, and create a unified voice for South Los Angeles, with the goals of transforming schools, strengthening families, and building a thriving community. Community Coalition's education work includes youth organizing, as well as advocating for policy changes such as college preparatory coursework for all students and infrastructure improvement. Community Coalition currently supports schools implementing both community schools and Linked Learning approaches.

<http://cocosouthla.org/>

Ford Foundation: The Ford Foundation supports visionary leaders and organizations on the front lines of social change worldwide. The Foundation believes that all people should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, contribute to society, and have voice in the decisions that affect them, and that the best way to achieve these goals is to encourage initiatives by those living and working closest to where problems are located; to promote collaboration among the nonprofit, government, and business sectors; and to ensure participation by men and women from diverse communities and all levels of society.

<http://www.fordfoundation.org/>

InnerCity Struggle: Since 1994, InnerCity Struggle (ICS) has worked with youth, families, and community residents to promote safe, healthy, and nonviolent communities in the Eastside of Los Angeles. ICS organizes youth and families in Boyle Heights, unincorporated East Los Angeles, El Sereno, and Lincoln Heights to work together for social and educational justice across all three approaches. They provide positive after-school programs for students to become involved in supporting schools to succeed, and have empowered students to reach their family's dream of college. The work of InnerCity Struggle demonstrates that youth and parents working together are a powerful force for improving their communities and making real change.

<http://innercitystruggle.org/>

Los Angeles Education Partnership: Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP) is an education nonprofit that works as a collaborative partner in high-poverty communities to foster great schools that support the personal and academic success of children and youth from birth through high school. LAEP's focus, from birth through high school, is to produce graduates ready for college, career, and life. LAEP partners with schools to share and refine educational practices. Some of their partner schools participate in intensive school-transformation services to build capacity, increase college and career readiness, and develop teacher-leaders. These schools also use LAEP's community school model to coordinate learning supports and health and social services to remove barriers to learning. LAEP's model for school transformation relies on mission-driven schools with grassroots teacher leadership and collaboration to raise student achievement.

<http://www.laep.org/>

Los Angeles Unified School District: Second largest in the nation, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) enrolls more than 640,000 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, at over 900 schools and 187 public charter schools. The boundaries spread over 720 square miles and include the mega-city of Los Angeles as well as all or parts of thirty-one smaller municipalities plus several unincorporated sections of Southern California. All youth achieving, the mission of LAUSD, is reflected in continued double-digit growth on the state Academic Performance Index (API), the upward trend in the graduation rate, progress in the pass rate on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), and other academic indicators.

<http://home.lausd.net/>

Proyecto Pastoral: Proyecto Pastoral at Dolores Mission is a nonprofit organization working in the economically and politically disenfranchised community of Boyle Heights to empower the community personally and socially by developing grassroots projects in education, leadership, and service. The organization takes pride in its commitment to a grassroots approach in which local community members play a critical role in the planning, design, and implementation of programs and services. Proyecto Pastoral is the lead and fiscal agent of Promesa Boyle Heights, a cradle-to-career collective impact coalition employing Promise Neighborhood and community schools approaches.

<http://www.proyectopastoral.org/>

UNITE–LA/Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce: An affiliate of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, UNITE-LA is a nonprofit established in 1998 that leads education reform and workforce development initiatives designed to benefit the Los Angeles Unified School District. UNITE-LA’s mission is to promote and support an effective public education system in Los Angeles, emphasizing business and community partnerships with schools, so that all students have access to education and training opportunities preparing them for high-skill, high-wage employment in a fulfilling career of choice, and the region’s economy and community thrives as a result.

<http://www.unitela.com/>

United Way of Greater Los Angeles: United Way of Greater Los Angeles is committed to creating pathways out of poverty, so that everyone who lives in their communities can have a better quality of life. They are focused on providing long-term solutions in the three interconnected areas which are the root causes of poverty: helping people have access to permanent housing with supportive services; helping students graduate from high school prepared for college and the workplace; and helping people become financially stable. The United Way is the “backbone organization” for LAUSD’s Linked Learning business and community engagement, and partners with LAUSD, Communities in Schools, and other organizations to oversee work-based learning coordinators for Linked Learning pathways.

<http://www.unitedwayla.org/>

The Youth Policy Institute: The Youth Policy Institute (YPI) transforms Los Angeles neighborhoods using a holistic approach to reduce poverty by ensuring families have access to high quality schools, wrap-around education, and technology services, enabling a successful transition from cradle to college and career. YPI is the lead agency for the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood, which focuses on integrating wrap-around services that include: prenatal and early childhood development, extended learning time, Linked Learning, technology initiatives, summer and bridge programs, college preparation, career development, dropout and gang prevention, and reconnections for out-of-school youth. For the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood, YPI also provides family support services and adult education classes.

<http://www.ypiusa.org/>





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