



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is LA's Promise?

LA's Promise is radically improving the education, health and social outcomes for thousands of youth in one South Los Angeles community – LA's Promise Neighborhood. Through a robust school turnaround model, LA's Promise partners with a cadre of schools committed to ensuring that students growing up in poverty receive an excellent education.

LA's Promise Neighborhood is an enrollment zone that includes two large South LA high schools (Manual Arts and West Adams Prep) and one middle school (John Muir) operated by LA's Promise in a first-of-its-kind performance contract with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Within this zone, LA's Promise transforms chronically failing public schools, opens new schools and remakes schools into community hubs that offer comprehensive support services for students and families. By doing this, LA's Promise will prepare every child in LA's Promise Neighborhood to be career and college-ready, healthy and successful in life.

2. What is LA's Promise Neighborhood?

The LA's Promise Neighborhood is already undergoing transformation, anchored by our work. At the center of this transformation is one of the city's oldest schools, Manual Arts High School. Two miles north on Vermont Avenue, West Adams Preparatory High School opened in 2007 to relieve decades of overcrowding at Manual Arts. Just a mile and a half south of Manual Arts sits John Muir Middle School, the primary feeder to Manual Arts High School. Together these three schools and their feeders represent, if properly run and supported, the promise of a college--- and career---ready education, and a successful life for every child who lives in the area.

3. What are LA's Promise schools?

An LA's Promise school is a public school designed and managed in collaboration between LA's Promise, LAUSD and community stakeholders. There are currently three LA's Promise schools in LA's Promise Neighborhood - Manual Arts High School, West Adams Preparatory High School and John Muir

Middle School. Together these three schools and their feeders represent the promise pipeline of college-ready education and successful life for every child who lives nearby.

The city's first Partner School, West Adams Prep High School opened in 2007 to serve 2,500 students with a first-rate education, setting a new standard for public schools and anchoring a strategic revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood. In 2009, Manual Arts High School, a community school with more than 100 years of history, joined LA's Promise via LAUSD's newly created iDesign Schools division. In 2011 LA's Promise won the right to manage John Muir Middle School through LAUSD's Public School Choice initiative, bringing our total enrollment to 8,000 students.

4. Is an LA's Promise school a charter school?

No. All LA's Promise Schools are non-charter public schools, operating within LAUSD. Unlike charter schools, LA's Promise schools are open to every student in the neighborhood, offering the best resources and opportunities. There are no lotteries or applications to attend an LA's Promise school. LA's Promise adheres to all existing union contracts.

5. How does LA's Promise work with schools to improve teaching and learning and improve social and health needs?

At each school, LA's Promise's supplies staff educators to supplement the work of LAUSD faculty while working in coordination and communication with them. LA's Promise educators provide curricular support to all students outside of minimal class time requirements and additionally support students in improving general learning strategies, closing gaps in specific subjects, and simply staying on track with homework and studying. Starting this academic year, LA's Promise will expand on its guiding principals practices with STEAM, an innovative, multi-model blended learning approach supported by linked learning pathways centered on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.

Building school work force capacity is instrumental to our approach. LA's Promise strategically invests in the human capital at each school site by providing the ongoing professional development and support necessary for our teachers to become entrepreneurial, strategic, and visionary thinkers. □ LA's Promise also provides professional development to school leaders to help them ensure the implementation of research-based, state-of-the-art, best practices across all school sites.

LA's Promise installs an instructional support team at each school to work hand-in-hand with the administration and faculty to provide on-going, real-time support to teachers, students, and parents. For parents, LA's Promise also leads parent engagement activities at each school with an array of activities offered to help parents champion a college-going culture. Finally, LA's Promise's

operations team centralizes the management of services across different LAUSD departments, including operations, business services, facility, emergency operations, ITD, HR, and other areas. Our operations team manages LAUSD services to ensure efficiency, quality, and timely response to school needs and to simplify the process of a school requesting service.

Programs Include:

- a. Innovative education
- b. Go for College
- c. Teachers and Leaders
- d. 7 to 7
- e. Partners
- f. Promise Parents

By placing highly qualified educational leaders directly in the school site to manage these key areas, LA's Promise is able to get deep into the school's core operations and accelerate reform.

6. How does LA's Promise measure success? How is LA's Promise evaluated?
LA's Promise believes in relevant, transparent and consistent use of data. LA's Promise publishes annual data to document the success of its schools. This information is shared publicly with the school community to ensure that data is used to continuously drive its progress toward improvement. Indicators measured include school attendance, CST proficiency rates, CAHSEE pass rates, graduation rates, college matriculation rates, school safety, parent involvement and other factors.

LA's Promise is held responsible by LAUSD for the success of the school.

7. What has been your success at the schools you have been working with?
LA's Promise sets aggressive and transparent academic goals in three areas- retention, college-readiness and college matriculation. LA's Promise has produced early and dramatic gains at both of our high schools. These schools have some of the highest attendance rates, 93%, in all of LAUSD. Test scores are also increasing. Over a three-year period, West Adams saw an 18% increase in its Academic Performance Index and a tripling of 4-year college attendance rates, from 9% to 30%. Over a two-year period Manual Arts saw a 6% increase in its API and a 60% reduction in incidents of violence and student suspensions.

In the 2010-2011 school year, West Adams achieved the second highest API point gain in all of the LAUSD high schools...and Manual Arts achieved the eighth highest point gain in the district – an 84-point gain across both schools. Neither of these schools are where we want them to be yet, but the huge gains made during our tenure give us hope that we are on the right track.

Prior to LA's Promise partnership with John Muir, the campus was a chronically underperforming school. Thirty-eight percent of the students had poor attendance², 68% of 8th graders scored below basic in mathematics and 35% scored below basic or far below basic on the 2011 California Standards Test (CST).³ Research shows students passing Algebra by 8th grade have a much better chance of success in high school and beyond. Last year, 37% of John Muir 8th graders enrolled in Algebra 1A or 1B. Of those enrolled in Algebra 1A or 1B, 60% passed with a "C" or better.⁴

In alignment with LA's Promise mission and the objectives of PSC 2.0, changes in policy and practice have shifted the mind-set, behaviors and culture of the John Muir school community. In 2011 LAP selected Dr. Nisha Dugal to serve as Principal. Dr. Dugal began her tenure by working with her team to: i) develop common formative assessments to ensure that teachers are implementing data driven instruction, ii) increase parent and community engagement by offering workshops and hosting community events, iii) create a welcoming and safe learning environment for all students. Although final results from the 2011-12 CST are not available until August 2012, LA's Promise and the team at John Muir are looking forward to a significant jump in the school's API.

In one year's time, Dr. Dugal's leadership, and the hard-work and commitment of her faculty and staff, have garnered promising results:

- The number of students with proficient attendance has increased by 13%⁵
- 8th grade enrollment in Algebra 1A and 1B has nearly tripled from 37% to 100%.
- Student suspensions have decreased by 75%.
- Successfully recruited, selected, and placed and trained 59 new teachers to lead its turnaround efforts.
- Instituted school uniforms campus wide.
- Beautified the campus through two campus clean-ups with partners such as CityYear, AEG, and Tree People.
- Through a partnership with the American Heart Association (AHA) and Community Services Unlimited (CSU) over 100 volunteers built a Teaching Garden this past spring.

8. Are LA's Promise schools like schools in the Mayor's Partnership for LA Schools?

Like the Mayor's Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, LA's Promise is a "Network Partner" in LAUSD's iDesign Schools division. iDesign Schools is a newly formed division created by LAUSD as an alternative support system for schools interested in using greater decision-making authority as a strategy for increased academic achievement. Schools adopt an external organization (Network Partner) to manage day-to-day operations and facility reforms at the school. However, LA's Promise has also been operating a school prior to the

creation of iDesign. With West Adams Prep, LA's Promise became the city's first community based organization to operate a non-charter public school.

9. To whom is LA's Promise accountable?

LA's Promise is accountable to the LAUSD Superintendent and Board of Education through a five-year performance contract. LAUSD administers an annual score card to document the success of LA's Promise and the schools it operates. Additionally, LA's Promise reports to its own Board of Directors, that closely monitors overall progress of LA's Promise and its schools. Most importantly, LA's Promise is accountable to the students and families of LA's Promise Neighborhood.

10. What role do parents play in an LA's Promise school?

LA's Promise believes that parents are key partners in achieving a school's vision. Our schools thrive with support from engaged parents in paid and volunteer roles to assist with the school's daily operations. Parents support our schools by chaperoning field trips, supervising safety, providing clerical support, leading campus tours, assisting with uniform sales and much more. Additionally, parents serve on numerous committees that make key decisions about critical issues including school safety, school policy and budgetary items.

11. How is LA's Promise funded? How does it raise money?

LA's Promise is privately funded through the generous support of corporations, foundations and individuals. At this point, LA's Promise does not receive public funds of any kind.

12. Does LA's Promise take dollars from schools? Does it invest money in schools?

No. Nearly 80% of the LA's Promise budget is direct, program expenses invested in our schools.

13. How long will LA's Promise be invested in our schools and communities? What is your vision for LA's Promise and its schools?

LA's Promise is committed to the long-term success of the students and families that reside in our LA's Promise Neighborhood. LA's Promise founders have worked in South Los Angeles since 1995. The organization's vision is to support the development of the whole community around its partner schools, so that all children who live nearby will have the opportunity to go to college, and live a healthy and successful life.

LA's Promise portfolio of schools will soon span K through 12th grades, ensuring choice and equity to serve the community's diverse educational needs and building a college-ready pipeline for all the neighborhood's children.

14. Who are some of your community and non-profit partners?

LA's Promise places emphasis on meeting each student's academic, social, physical and emotional needs. Over 80 screened partners providing over 200

services work together with LA's Promise to address the comprehensive needs of the school community. LA's Promise rigorously screens all potential partners and manages to clear service agreements. As a result, partners deliver the highest quality programs to students and families in LA's Promise Neighborhood.

826LA, Brotherhood Crusade, City Year, Community Coalition and the American Heart Association are among LA's Promise Partners.