



*500 Lucas Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
213.250.4800 phone  
213.250.4900 fax*

***PARA LOS NIÑOS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HOLDS  
SECOND GRADUATION SINCE BEING CHARTERED IN 2002;***

***GRADUATING CLASS OF 2008 WILL INAUGURATE NEW  
PARA LOS NIÑOS MIDDLE SCHOOL***

At a time when charter schools and the LAUSD are at odds over shared facilities, and state funding for education overall is precarious, the Para Los Niños Charter Elementary School not only continues to produce model students, but in fact will now also expand into the education of middle school children.

Chartered by the Los Angeles Unified School District since 2002, the Para Los Niños Charter Elementary School last year celebrated its first class of graduating fifth graders, sending the 14 remarkable students off to public middle schools where the number of students averages around 2,000.

This year's exceptional graduating class of 33 fifth graders will serve as the foundation of the newly approved **Para Los Niños Middle School**, scheduled to open in September. For the first year, 60 sixth graders will be housed on the elementary school campus. The middle school will later have its own permanent home in the downtown area, and will ultimately serve 350 students, grades 6-8.

"Today is a joyous day for the children of working families in and around Downtown Los Angeles," said Gisselle Acevedo, President and CEO of Para Los Niños, which provides educational and family support services to 3,500 children and youth each week and 5,000 families every year at 24 sites throughout the region.

"I could not be more proud of the growth and achievements of this graduating class, and am pleased that we can now provide them with a continuum of top quality and personalized education. Our middle school's mission is to provide a rigorous, supportive and interdisciplinary arts and sciences curriculum in a nurturing and safe environment. We will build upon the successes of our elementary school to develop a middle school that cultivates and celebrates the potential within each child and equips students with the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to pursue excellence in high school and college and succeed in a multicultural world."

Joining the students, families and faculty for this distinctive occasion were two special graduation speakers, both of whom serve as extraordinary role models for the young people: award-winning actor, producer and East L.A. Classic Theatre co-founder **Tony Plana**, and President of the Los Angeles School Board, **Mónica García**.

García, who represents the district in which both schools are located, emphasized the importance of providing working families in the Downtown community with top quality educational opportunities. "Para Los Niños is committed to ensuring that inner-city students are afforded an exemplary education, including a smooth transition from elementary and to high school, improved achievement, preparation for college-track high school coursework, individual attention in small classes, and programs that support fluency in English and Spanish. I am very excited about the successes of the elementary school and the promise of this new middle school."

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In 2006 and 2007, the Para Los Niños Charter Elementary School exceeded its growth targets on California's Academic Performance Index, with a cumulative gain of 124 points – more than six times the cumulative state goal of 19 points for those years.

The school is located at the Para Los Niños Family Learning Complex, which houses comprehensive educational and family services for 480 children from infancy through fifth grade, including a child development center, the elementary school, before- and after-school programs and family services. This year, the campus celebrated the opening of a new state-of-the-art playground, fully stocked high tech library, and a health care clinic for the children and their families.

For additional information about the middle school or enrollment, please call (213) 239-6605 x221.

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*Para Los Niños opened its doors in 1980 in response to the plight of children living in Skid Row hotels. Initially, 45 children received care at the agency; today, in our 28<sup>th</sup> year of operation, Para Los Niños assists 3,500 low-income children and youth challenging neighborhoods.*

*The agency's core services include early child development and education, a Charter School (K-5), after-school enrichment, youth diversion and delinquency prevention, youth workforce services, and a life skills training and academic assistance program for transitioning foster youth. In addition, Para Los Niños offers support to at-risk families, including child abuse prevention and intervention, mental health services and comprehensive family support. For more information visit [www.paralosninos.org](http://www.paralosninos.org).*