

# LOS ANGELES DOWNTOWN NEWS

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## Not the Only Graduates

### *Skid Row Charter Elementary Reaches a Milestone*

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The CALS Early College High School is not the only Downtown educational institution with an inaugural graduation ceremony this week. Students near Skid Row will also take the walk, albeit with much smaller caps and gowns.

On Thursday, June 28, the Para Los Niños School's pint-sized ceremony symbolizes not just a coming of age for 14 students; it marks the end of the line for them in the Para Los Niños charter school program.

However, that may not be for long. Sending the students to far larger LAUSD campuses is not preferable, school officials say, and underscores the recently announced intention to open a Downtown Los Angeles Para Los

Niños middle school.

"We have provided these young people with an extraordinary education and we'd like to be able to continue with them through their middle school years," said spokeswoman Elena Stern.

The Para Los Niños elementary school, founded in 2002 to provide educational, psychological and after-school programs to underserved Downtown-area kids, has grown in fits and starts. In five years, the school at 1617 E. Seventh St. has ballooned from three small kindergarten classes to 260 students. With next fall's incoming class, that number will reach 390 — the school's capacity, said Stern.

She said a future middle school would likely be within a four-mile radius of the current school, because many of the stu-

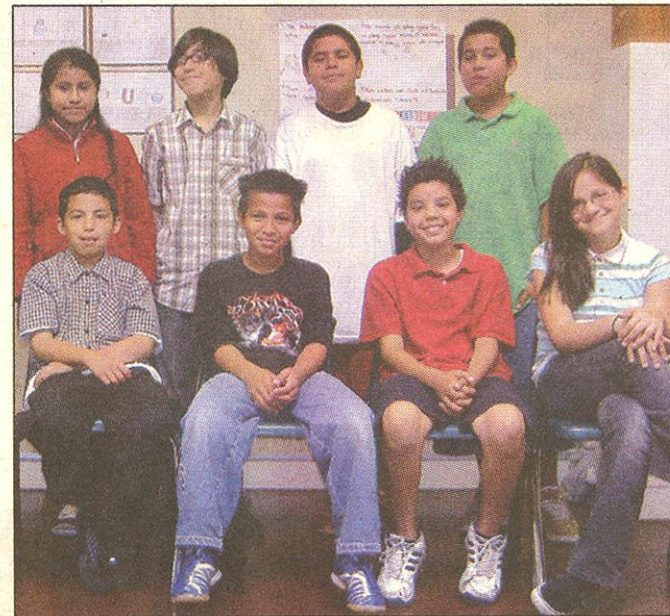


photo courtesy Para Los Niños

*Some of the Para Los Niños School's graduates. The charter elementary school was founded in 2002.*

dents' parents work nearby in the Flower and Garment districts.

The pre-teen grades right before high school represent a particularly formative age, said Stern.

"As we learn more and more about that

age group — the middle school age group — we really understand more fully that that is [when] children are making decisions about succeeding or failing."

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