

A young boy with dark hair and black-rimmed glasses is sitting on the floor, reading a book. He is wearing a red polo shirt and a red wristband. The background is a library with bookshelves filled with books. The text "PARA LOS NIÑOS" is written in a large, dark blue font, and "strategic plan 2015-2018" is written in a smaller, red font below it.

PARA LOS NIÑOS
strategic plan 2015-2018



Dear Friends,

We are celebrating a remarkable milestone: Para Los Niños was created 35 years ago to empower children and their families to overcome the challenges of poverty. What began as a daycare center in a Skid Row warehouse serving a few dozen children has grown into one of the most beloved nonprofits in Los Angeles. The executive director of a major foundation said, “If you’re serious about ending poverty you must invest in Para Los Niños.”

Over the past three decades we’ve adapted to the changing needs of the most vulnerable children and their families. For much of our history we provided social services, after school programs and childcare. More than a dozen years ago we opened our first charter school, and we now operate three schools with some 1,200 students K-8. We added Head Start to our early education program, and now serve 700 children birth through five years at 8 sites. We serve our students, their families and the larger community through mental health and other programs that strengthen and empower families to make a positive change.

We are pleased to present highlights of the Para Los Niños Strategic Plan, outlining our focus on quality schools and integrated services to families and communities. Government funding alone can’t remove barriers to learning caused by poverty and trauma. That’s why we’re forever grateful to our loyal supporters who make our work possible. We look forward to sharing our progress, triumphs and challenges in the coming years.

With gratitude,

Marjorie E. Lewis

Marjorie E. Lewis
Board Chair

Martine Singer

Martine Singer
President & CEO

PARA LOS NIÑOS AT 35

Today, one in three children in Los Angeles lives in poverty with that number rising to one in two in many neighborhoods of the central city. These children face daunting challenges: rampant hunger, exposure to domestic violence, drug abuse, homelessness, unsafe communities, and low-performing schools.

Years of research have made clear the direct connection between childhood poverty and social dysfunction, ranging from poor health outcomes to higher incarceration rates. Dozens of studies have reported that poor kids are more likely to have learning disabilities, language delays, behavioral problems, and to contract diseases such as asthma and diabetes. They are more likely to drop out of high school, or even grade school. Women more often have babies in their teenage years. The Children's Defense Fund says the path to prison is often paved in these years. And, most important, neurologists have found virtually incontrovertible evidence that high levels of stress experienced from birth to the age of three can actually damage brain architecture and cause life-long health problems.

The total cost of this tragedy to America is estimated to be \$500 billion a year in lost productivity, higher crime rates, and raised health expenditures. That cost in California alone has been estimated at more than \$75 billion annually.

“Los Angeles is the poverty capital of the nation.”

—Mayor Eric Garcetti,
March 2015



Our Beginning

As the name implies, Para Los Niños was created to empower children and their families in Los Angeles to overcome the challenges of poverty. Some 35 years ago, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an editorial that began:

“To be a child on Skid Row is to grow up in a run-down, overcrowded hotel, locked into a small room during the day to avoid the harm of playing in hallways and alleys amid broken glass, derelicts, rotting garbage and even human excrement. There is no way to escape the poverty.”

Para Los Niños was created in response, and what began as a daycare center in a leased warehouse on Skid Row serving a few dozen children has grown into one of Los Angeles’ most respected and effective charitable organizations. After more than three decades, Para Los Niños has empowered more than 50,000 impoverished children and their families.

Where We Are Today

Today, the Para Los Niños model for empowering children to break the cycle of poverty employs five key components:

Early Education

Some 800 children, ages 6 months to five years, are enrolled in 8 Early Childhood Education centers where nearly 75% of the children enrolled are showing significant improvement in English Language, Literacy and Social Emotional Development in just one year.

Community Charter Schools

More than 1,100 children are enrolled in three community-based charter schools serving grades K-8. Students receive a quality education, a range



“Compounding the struggle for many of the impoverished children served by Para Los Niños is the challenge of learning English. Children who can’t read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade are 4 times more likely to drop out of high school. In California, 95% of English learners can’t read by 4th grade.”



of wraparound services, access to after school programs that provide enrichment and tutoring and a sanctuary that offers nutritious meals to students of working parents.

Community Services

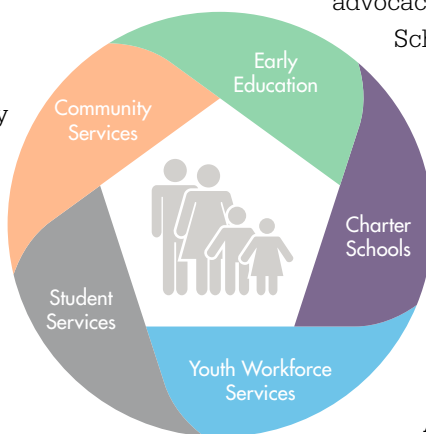
Parent engagement and community empowerment programs annually train nearly 2,000 parents on effective community and school engagement, leadership and facilitation skills, participation in school governance and childhood and family nutrition.

Student and Family Services

Student and Family Services works with more than 2,000 children and adults each year, focusing on preventing child abuse and strengthening families through mental health,

in-home counseling, case management, food and housing aid, clothing and utility assistance, and workshops on parenting, advocacy and survivors of domestic abuse.

Schools have Family Advocates and Family Resource Associates to help identify issues and manage student treatment. In addition, our middle school has a fully staffed Wellness Center to address student and family needs on campus.



Youth Workforce Services

Approximately 1,000 students, ages 14-24, are served through a Youth Workforce Services program that provides paid internships, job training and high school equivalency education.



RICARDO'S STORY

Ricardo came to kindergarten at Para Los Niños with a variety of emotional issues that led to frequent meltdowns in the classroom. He tore down bulletin boards, threw blocks, got in fights—he even bit the Principal one time.

Like many of the children at Para Los Niños, Ricardo was being raised in poverty by a single parent and he had suffered a lot of stresses in his young life. But we knew he was bright and we knew our approach could help. Teachers at Para Los Niños are trained to know how to connect with their kids and to anticipate their moods and behaviors. Our classrooms are organized in such a way to provide a sense of calm and order. We have mental health professionals on staff to work with our kids. We have programs to develop parental support.

Where We're Going

Para Los Niños has evolved deliberately from being a social services agency with schools to a community schools organization with wraparound social services. It is a change that allows us to more deeply provide our children and their families with the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty, but it presents more complex challenges in terms of integrating and delivering best-in-class services.

Knowing this, we undertook a strategic assessment of everything we do, a systematic process that involved extensive qualitative and quantitative research, intense analysis and varying forms of evaluation. The result is a Strategic Plan for the next three years that will refine and structure our services to ensure the most effective, cutting edge support services possible, and put in place ongoing evaluative mechanisms to ensure we stay optimally effective and true to our mission of empowering the children and their families in the communities we serve to break the cycle of poverty.

Social services agency... with schools

Community Schools with Wraparound
Services & Deep Community Ties

Our Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018

It took a couple of years of hard work, but with the help of a loving teacher, insights from Para Los Niños clinicians, and the involvement of Ricardo's mom, ultimately we were able to help him find his talents and a sense of purpose. By second grade, Ricardo was a different student. Composed, focused and able to tap into his true potential. He became the first student in the school to ever get a perfect score of 600 on the California Standards Test.



GOAL

Deliver a high quality education with effectively integrated child family and community support at each school and preschool.

OBJECTIVE

Continue to strengthen our schools' and preschools' educational approach through ongoing refinement of our constructivist, arts-infused pedagogy so that it continues to meet the unique needs of the families and communities we serve.

Strategies:

- Deepen relationships with partners such as the UCLA Lab School, the Coalition for Community Schools, LAUSD, similar charter networks and others.
- Prepare targeted teacher development to ensure each classroom successfully implements and fully maximizes the potential of our approach.
- Engage parents and families in our approach in ways that give them tools to support their children in our schools and at home.

OBJECTIVE

Maintain a sustained focus on achievement throughout our schools and preschools as defined by both testing and qualitative measures.

Strategies:

- Strive for strong performance on annual statewide assessments administered as part of the new Common Core Standards.
- Refine approach to help students whose skills and knowledge are not at grade level.
- Use system-wide software programs to monitor individual student performance and inform instruction.

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“Of the 410 students on Para Los Niños’ elementary campus, 99% are Latino and 96% hail from low-income families. More than two-thirds of the students are not fluent in English. But the school is proving demographics are not destiny. Its test scores are on par with many suburban public schools. And its curriculum relies on the sort of child-centered approach favored by progressive private schools with five-figure tuition.”

—Los Angeles Times columnist, Sandy Banks



OBJECTIVE

Create the central office structure necessary to support the education goals and needs of the charter schools.

Strategies:

- Recruit and develop talented leaders to staff the new charter home office department.
- Ensure the new charter structure has the required technology to successfully pursue its mission.
- Set up mechanisms for ongoing evaluation and refinement of the charter schools central office structure.

OBJECTIVE

Develop a best-in-class approach for early education instruction and professional development.

Strategies:

- Continue to refine and adapt the Creative Curriculum used in our Head Start Centers so that it seamlessly integrates with the constructivist pedagogy used in our charter schools.
- Further integrate the Creative Curriculum used in our four Head Start early education centers into our state-funded preschools.
- Enrich and codify teacher development training at each of the centers through mentoring, coaching, partnerships and new resources.

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OBJECTIVE

Right-size state preschools to ensure full enrollment and staffing, and geographic concentration in locations that feed into our charter schools.

Strategies:

- Close sites that do not feed into the charter schools.
- Consolidate sites where enrollment and community demographics cannot justify continued operation.
- Pursue opportunities to expand our Head Start program in the areas from which our charter schools draw students.

OBJECTIVE

Create a replicable model for expansion of the charter schools and preschools in the coming years.

Strategies:

- Explore partnerships with other school operators serving children in poverty and interested in pursuing our approach.
- Look for opportunities to replicate our model regionally and nationally and to expand our own network of schools in the coming years.
- Ensure quality 9-12th grade options for our 8th graders.

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OBJECTIVE

Continue to develop and integrate social services into the Para Los Niños early education through 8th grade experience.

- Continue to integrate social services and personnel on charter school campuses and at early education sites.
- Phase out programs and locations that, despite their merit, do not fit into Para Los Niños' vision of education, social service integration and community impact.
- Expand existing, and create new, partnerships that will help us achieve this objective.

OBJECTIVE

Support and advance collaboration, efficiency and accountability across Para Los Niños to support the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

- Continue to develop collaborations, relationships and systems of support among Student and Community Services, Early Education and Charter Schools, further clarifying roles and responsibilities for those who work across program areas.
- Optimize support from the Board of Directors for the schools and preschools.
- Develop a fundraising strategy to address school and program needs and a future growth strategy.

CONCLUSION

With more children in poverty than ever before, this is a critical point in time for Para Los Niños. Over the last three and a half decades, we have come to deeply understand the enormous challenges these children face and more importantly, we have experienced success in empowering them to overcome these challenges.

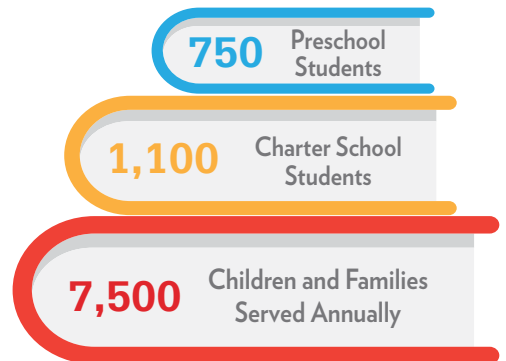
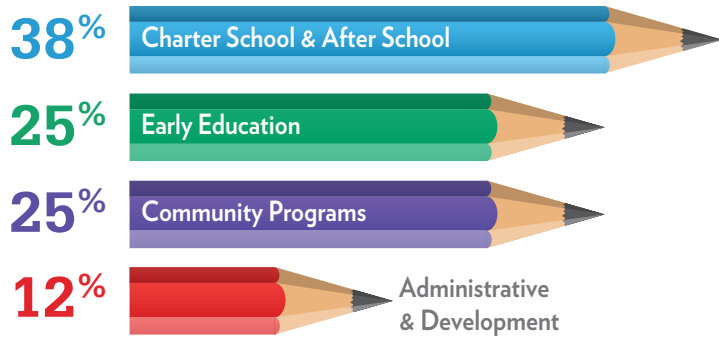
Our model of providing children in poverty with the educational tools, social services and community support they need to create lives of prosperity is proven. However, changing times and demographics will always demand we continually re-assess and refine what we do to meet the realities of the moment.

Needless to say, implementing our approach child-by-child is hardly easy. Giving children in poverty and their families everything they need to change their circumstances is complex, difficult work and it will always be so.

Nonetheless, we firmly believe our Strategic Plan for 2015 – 18 will give us the necessary structures, efficiencies, resources and strategies to continue to build upon our 35-year track record of success in transforming the lives of some of the most deserving children and families in Los Angeles. We are forever grateful to the partners, funders and other supporters who make our work possible and look forward to sharing our progress, triumphs and challenges in the coming years.



Where Your Investment Goes



95% PLN students who qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch



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