



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is LA's Promise?

LA's Promise is a nonprofit organization currently working to radically shift the education, health and social outcomes for thousands of youth in one South Los Angeles community. LA's Promise operates public schools on a performance contract with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

The vision of LA's Promise is to prepare every child in one South Los Angeles community to be college-ready, healthy and successful in life.

LA's Promise is the first community-based nonprofit in Los Angeles to participate in the operation of non-charter public schools.

2. What is LA's Promise Neighborhood?

LA's Promise Neighborhood, an 8.2 mile enrollment zone in South Los Angeles, is undergoing transformation, anchored by LA's Promise, a nonprofit with a deep connection to the children, families and history of this community. 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 away, sits John Muir Middle School, the primary feeder to Manual Arts High School.

Together these three schools and their feeders represent the promise of a college-ready education and a successful life for every child who lives nearby. There are approximately 150,000 residents in LA's Promise Neighborhood and slightly over 20,000 youth between the ages of 12-18. The average student population is approximately 80% Latino and 20% African American.

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?

The LA's Promise approach looks at School Turnaround and School as Hub as the two major components of its Neighborhood Turnaround model. LA's Promise manages and turns around traditional LAUSD schools, creating a cohesive family of personal schools to serve every child in LA's Promise Neighborhood. Additionally, LA's Promise turns neighborhood schools into community hubs that offer services and opportunities all day long.

Our work is driven by 6 initiatives:

- 1) School Culture Transformation
- 2) College Preparedness
- 3) Efficient School Management
- 4) Integrated Services
- 5) Resource Management
- 6) Parental Engagement

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.

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 60 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, Community Coalition and the American Heart Association are among LA's Promise Partners.

15. What is LA's Promise's role at Manual Arts? Who is in charge? LAUSD or LA's Promise?

LA's Promise manages Manual Arts High School on a performance contract with the Los Angeles Unified School District. Under the supervision of Dr. Rupi Boyd (LA's Promise Superintendent of Instruction), Principal Robert Whitman and a four-person LA's Promise support team, continue to provide day-to-day organizational, managerial and instructional support to the school. LA's Promise staff adds value in the areas of instruction and coaching, parent and community engagement, college access and health services.

LA's Promise was awarded 100-year old Manual Arts in 2009 via iDesign, the district's efforts to improve student achievement and graduation rates with Network Partners. LA's Promise launched a large-scale turnaround effort implementing hallmark programs such as Go For College, Health and Wellness, 7 to 7 and Promise Parents. With a newly designed Freshman Prep Academy and a clear focus on quality teaching, curriculum and assessment, Manual Arts has seen increases in student proficiency, 3 percent and 5 percent for ELA and Math, respectively. Current LA's Promise supported projects also include free health screenings for all 9th graders - a program piloted in the Spring of 2011 – a newly designed teaching garden, - in partnership with LAUSD and the American Heart Association- planning phase of work with Prop 84 - making Manual Arts a

green campus, and the addition of several private and community resources.

In the spring of 2011, LA's Promise worked aggressively to move Manual Arts from three tracks to a one track, traditional school thereby providing 22 additional instructional days for students and ensuring students received adequate and timely test preparation. There are currently 3,200 students on campus.