

NEW SCHOOLS • BETTER NEIGHBORHOODS

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INSIDE:

PROJECT UPDATES
2

BOYLE HEIGHTS
REV. JIM CONN & EDUARDO GARCIA
3

ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH SMALLER SCHOOLS
JUDY BURTON
4

PARAMOUNT PRE-K SEATS
MICHAEL BISHOP
5

COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
MARTY BLANK
6

HEALTHY PLACE-MAKING
DR. NEAL KAUFMAN, M.D.
7

NSBN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JOHN HURTADO
BACK PAGE

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School Bond Passes, But Families Want More Than Just New Seats Built

Measure Y, the fourth LAUSD school bond in six years, appeared on the Nov. 8 ballot and won with 66 percent of the vote. It authorizes a \$3.985 billion bond for the construction of



Maria Casillas

new classrooms and upgrading of campuses. What remains uncertain is this bond's priorities - whether these new schools will be designed as smaller, neighborhood centered, joint-use facilities that serve both children and families. NSBN spoke with **Maria Casillas**, director of *Families in Schools*, to better understand Measure Y's value. Ms. Casillas endorses the need for more school seats but remains skeptical about the district's capacity and commitment to effectively connect LAUSD schools with the children and families they are meant to serve.

Maria, you have long been involved in encouraging school reform and better relations between public schools and the children and families served by them. With billions of dollars already approved by voters for new and modernized school facilities, is your work becoming easier? Are school districts successfully meeting the dual challenge of building more classrooms and engaging neighborhood fami-

continued on page 14

L.A. Mayor Villaraigosa Lauds NSBN's Efforts

Although the mayor of Los Angeles has no official direct jurisdiction over education in the city, **Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa** has made it known that he wants to see improvement in L.A.'s schools - even if it means wresting formal control away from the school board. As he continues that campaign, he remains outspoken about the kinds of innovations that the region's schools should be pursuing. In this exclusive piece for NSBN, the mayor discusses the need for building small, community-centered schools and the essential role that organizations such as NSBN can play in establishing and planning these neighborhood schools.



Antonio Villaraigosa

Iwant to commend New Schools Better Neighborhoods for their dedication and hard work on behalf of children and communities throughout this city.

NSBN's commitment to tackling the tough issues surrounding California's urban school districts is real and has been relentless. By contributing to the development of new school facilities that are small, joint-use, community centered and function as anchors to neighborhoods, NSBN is helping us invest in the future of our children as well as this great city.

continued on page 8

LAUP/NSBN Collaborate to Bring Pre-K to 'Hot Zones'

When created in 1994, the goal of the **Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)** Initiative was to make high-quality, voluntary preschool accessible to every 4-year-old in Los Angeles County by 2014. NSBN was asked in 2005 by First 5 LA to assist LAUP with the development of new models for community- and school-based childcare centers in the areas of greatest need. NSBN's collaborative and joint-use models are being applied to the creation of new preschool seats through a memorandum of agreement with LAUP and funding from First 5 LA. **Gary Mangiofico**, PhD, is LAUP's Chief Operations Officer.



Gary Mangiofico

As chief operations officer for LAUP you have the challenge of making high-quality voluntary preschool accessible to every 4-year-old in

L.A. County regardless of the family's income by 2014. Today, only half of L.A. County's 4-year-olds have access to any preschool at all. How is LAUP approaching filling the demand for access and equity throughout the county?

LAUP has established three primary organizational units to tackle meeting

continued on page 10

NSBN PROJECT UPDATES

NSBN serves as a catalyst and third-party intermediary to front-fund, convene, and manage collaborative, stakeholder master planning of smaller, joint-use, and community-centered schools in Los Angeles County and throughout California. With funding from First 5 LA and others, NSBN seeks to showcase for state and local decision-makers the civic and educational value of leveraging over \$10 billion of state and local facility bond proceeds with park, library, UPK, philanthropic and housing funds to build not only better schools but healthier neighborhoods. Here are some NSBN project highlights:

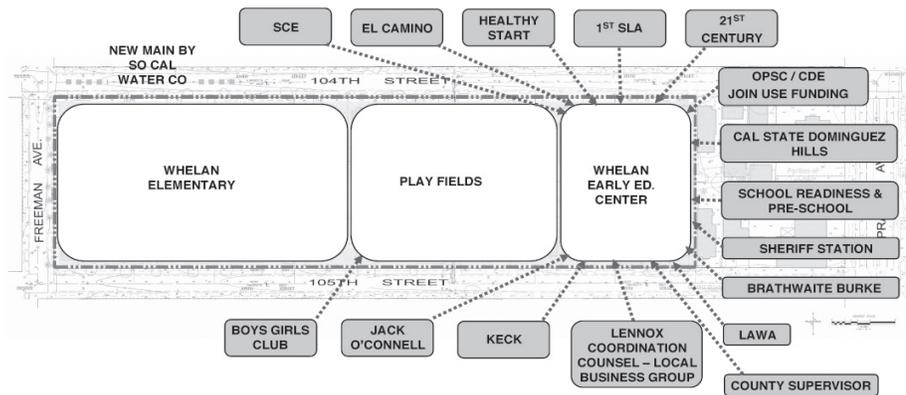
Lennox Elementary School District

The Department of the State Architect approved this winter the building plans for the Lennox site which will result

holders participated in the more than six-month process which culminated in a plan whose major components were adopted by LA Unified School District. Construction will begin soon on this model project. The Community of Friends Affordable Housing development has broken ground.

Santa Monica Blvd Community Charter School

The Santa Monica Boulevard School, now a charter school within the LAUSD, has been an integral part of its Hollywood neighborhood since 1910, evolving with the changing populations. The school is beginning to plan and raise funds for a campus building project, and NSBN is working with administrators and



NSBN facilitated a joint-use, pre-K facility plan for Whelan Elementary in Lennox.

in three new pre-K classrooms with morning and afternoon sessions offered serving 120-128 new students. On Jan. 18th, Lennox School District received the Notice to Proceed for the School Readiness building. All the buildings are expected to be erected in April with completion by June. **Move-in** to the buildings will occur in July/August, with all services to commence in August for the 2006/2007 school year. The grand opening for the Keck-funded facilities is scheduled for August.

Los Angeles Unified - Westlake

The Westlake community, just west of downtown L.A., is celebrating the completion of a successful collaborative master planning effort spearheaded by NSBN. Instead of just settling for a new Primary Center for grades K-2, the community will have additional open space, affordable housing, a Boys & Girls Club and an early education center. Parents and community stake-

holders to bring new services and facilities for the community into the project. NSBN was successful in finalizing a design plan for SMBCCS that allows a new partnership with the Los Angeles Free Clinic to offer students and their families access to free healthcare on-site at SMBCCS with referrals to an expanding LAFC facility located within walking distance of the campus. Eventually, a referral and appointment desk, as well as an insurance assistance program, will replace the on-site medical care as the clients become more acquainted and comfortable with the clinic. Simultaneously, NSBN received a grant from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation that will fund a healthcare assessment program and study of the impact of healthy school design on academic achievement.

continued on page 21

Want everyone to know about your joint-use project? Send updates to Director, Attn: Joint-Use, New Schools • Better Neighborhoods, 811 W. Seventh Street, Suite 900, Los Angeles, CA 90017.

NEW SCHOOLS BETTER NEIGHBORHOODS

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NSBN PROJECT PROFILE

NSBN Helps Save & Expand Much-Needed Boyle Heights Preschool & Community Center

In Boyle Heights, the community's need for a new high school, housing, and an MTA station appeared to endanger an important community preschool facility until the parties, with assistance from NSBN and the support of then-Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa's and then-LAUSD Board President Jose Huizar's offices, worked out a collaborative planning process. **Rev. Jim Conn**, an urban strategist with the United

Methodist Ministries and **Eduardo Garcia**, CEO of Plaza Community Services, discuss NSBN's community planning process, which has led to a signed memorandum of understanding, the completion of negotiations between LAUSD and the United Methodist Ministries, and an agreement between LAUSD and Plaza to temporarily relocate the preschool to the adjacent Utah St. Elementary School campus.

Reverend Conn, you've been the catalyst from day one for NSBN's community planning effort with Plaza Community Center in Boyle Heights. You asked for help because the land held



Rev. Jim Conn

by one of your United Methodist Churches is being taken by LAUSD for a new high school. Describe the relocation challenge that the church and pre-K childcare provider Plaza brought to NSBN to help creatively resolve.

Jim Conn: The United Methodist Church has historically been concerned with low-income neighborhoods and the children and families who live in them. For nearly a century, the church has owned property in this Boyle Heights neighborhood and provided a variety of human services in this community. Most recently, this site has become the home of Plaza Community Center's childcare program, a program for families who do not have the income to pay for private childcare services.

When LAUSD moved to build a new high school campus in Boyle Heights and take this piece of property for its development, we were very concerned for our ability to continue providing early childhood services for these families. We knew we needed help to avoid being relocated out of Boyle Heights; and we knew we needed to reach out to some of the civic organizations in the community, like NSBN, to assist us. NSBN responded quickly, positively and very professionally, thank God.

The development process has moved forward, and LAUSD is taking the Church's property. How has the "taking"

negotiation with LAUSD progressed, and what will the Church do with the resources derived from the forced sale to LAUSD?

JC: The Los Angeles District of the United Methodist Church owns the property, and the church district has committed that whatever revenue is received from the sale of this property to LAUSD will be committed to providing human and child-

"It's a marvelous plan, and it far exceeds our expectations. We were originally thinking just about how to replace the childcare center, but there are some possibilities here that would enable us to provide more services and have a larger presence."

-Rev. Jim Conn

care services through the Plaza Community Center, in and for this neighborhood. The church's commitment has been there from the beginning, and it continues. So when a sale is complete this spring, that money will be held for a future facility for the Plaza Community Center in Boyle Heights.

The schematic relocation plans that have evolved from NSBN's collaborative planning process in Boyle Heights involve the creation of a large community center, with multiple services and child-

care, two-and-a-half blocks east of the new high school. Is this proposed plan consistent with the church's promise and values?

JC: It's a marvelous plan, and it far exceeds our expectations. We originally were thinking just about how to replace the childcare center, but there are some possibilities here that would enable us to provide more services and have a larger presence in that neighborhood. This neighborhood is being revitalized and rebuilt. There are going to be many more families in this immediate community that are going to be in need of these kinds of services, so we're really excited about the prospects. But it's way beyond our capability to implement.

Mr. Garcia, the relocation of Plaza Community Center's childcare program as a result of displacement by the new East L.A. High School motivates your involvement in NSBN's collaborative planning process with the church, the mayor and Council offices, the school district, and city departments such as CDD and HACLA. How happy is Plaza with NSBN's planning efforts to date?

Eduardo Garcia: I'm happy to report that we have, thankfully, gotten more people on the same page regarding the need for Plaza's pre-K program. The LASUD now has a pretty solid understanding of how long Plaza has provided services in this area and how Plaza desires to stay in this area surrounding the new school and new housing. I think New Schools, Better Neighborhoods and the City of Los Angeles, both the mayor's office and District 14, have all recognized that the services should remain in the district and that we have larger dreams for providing services throughout the whole area that

continued on page 18

SMALL SCHOOL ADVOCACY

L.A. Alliance Encourages Building Much Smaller Schools With Parent & Community Involvement

The mission of the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, a nonprofit charter management organization, is to open and operate a network of excellent small high-performing 9-12 and 6-8 public schools in historically underachieving, low income,

overcrowded communities in Los Angeles that will significantly outperform other public schools in preparing students to enter and succeed in college. Alliance CEO **Judy Burton** explains how the Alliance's mission complements that of NSBN.

As the leader of the Alliance, whose goal is to create small secondary charter schools in the LAUSD, elaborate on the connection between school size and student educational success.



Judy Burton

We did a lot of research in deciding what kind of approach we would use to get different outcomes for kids. In looking at best practices across the country, particularly in high schools and middle schools, and particularly in the kinds of communities we serve, which are low-income, historically under-performing communities, small schools we found that where kids are able to personally connect with adults, schools are achieving significantly different outcomes including higher graduation rates, and more students consistently performing at proficient levels. The primary factor is that students get much more personalized attention in small schools. They're known individually. The faculty and all the adults on the campus know their families, so kids don't slip through cracks the way they do in a 4,000- or 5,000-student school.

That said, being small is not enough. Small schools have to offer rigorous curriculums, and they can do that more successfully, even with historically under-performing communities, because they're able to pay more attention to individual kids and their needs. Therefore, they can better accelerate their learning to help them meet grade-level appropriate expectations.

Part of the culture of Alliance charter schools, which you and other like charter school operators are promoting, is community and parent involvement in the design,

programming and operation of the school campus. Why is that input important?

It's a key element because even though we take tests to measure our success, parents still play a critical role in holding the school responsible and accountable for the academic progress of their children. Also, in small schools kids aren't just numbers,

"In small schools kids aren't just numbers, and neither are their families, so teachers are able to easily communicate with parents."
-Judy Burton

and neither are their families, so teachers are able to easily communicate with parents, know about things that may be getting in the way of a child's learning as well as being able to communicate with parents on an ongoing basis not just when there's a problem but to keep parents informed about how their children are doing, including when they're doing well.

For example, in small schools we spend a great deal of time educating our parents, who are primarily going to have first-generation kids going to college. We spend a great deal of time educating our parents on what it takes to get into college, what kind of financing is available. We are able to reach all of our parents, not just some of

them who might be interested, so it makes a big difference.

New Schools, Better Neighborhoods, with the support of First 5 LA has been working with school districts and parent communities throughout L.A. County on model ways to leveraging facility bond funds to respond to the full of array of family and student needs in urban impacted neighborhoods. These efforts have not always been warmly embraced by LAUSD. Why do suppose it has been so difficult for school facility managers to collaborate with parents, and to build smaller, neighborhood centered, community schools that include pre-K and family resource centers?

For the first round of schools designed before LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer came on board, plans were already underway, had already been approved, and were finding that apparently it wasn't possible to go back and change designs already approved by the state. But we are hopeful that in new designs being built by bond funds, there will be more attention to creating smaller schools. I think the district tends to look at seats, such as, "we need to provide 2,000 seats in a given community." The way we see it, it doesn't mean you have to have a 2,000 seat school. It could be a community center with four areas that could each be a 500 student school rather than making it one 2,000 seat school under one principal. So, it's going to take that kind of shift in thinking and understanding what successful schools need to offer that are different from the schools that aren't getting the results that we all need and want right now.

And what's at stake if Los Angeles doesn't expand it's mission to build more than just seats?

continued on page 9

PARAMOUNT USD

Paramount Unified Partners with NSBN to Provide Pre-K in Under-Served Neighborhoods

In the city of *Paramount*, cooperation and collaboration have become a way of life, but this L.A. County city still faces many challenges. As one of 34 communities designated as an “area of greatest need” for preschool seats in the county by Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), Paramount is working towards the goal of 58 percent service delivery rate for the district’s four-year-olds, from

the existing level of 17 percent. *Paramount Unified School District* is collaborating with NSBN to develop a long-term master plan for its preschool facilities and is working to develop temporary facilities in the short-term until the planning process for permanent ones can be completed. **Michael Bishop** is the Assistant Superintendent for Business Services and strong ally of NSBN.

The Paramount Unified School District is working with New Schools, Better Neighborhoods to identify and design additional pre-K seats for your school district. Elaborate on the need for such seats and why collaboration efforts are productive for the district.



Michael Bishop

I think we all understand the need. Preschool is a valuable resource for any pre-K student. I’m not an educator, but I believe

that the research supports ideas that a student’s preparation at the preschool level will help that student become a better achieving student as they accelerate through the grades K through 12. Unfortunately, we don’t have preschool opportunities on all of our campuses. We exist within a very high need, low service area and our work with NSBN, an organization uniquely focused on building pre-K seats in underserved neighborhoods, presents an opportunity for us to see if we can add capacity where capacity is needed.

As the one in charge of the facilities buildup for Paramount Unified, expand on the two pre-K projects that the district has identified and are collaborating with NSBN to plan.

Current projects are at Hollydale Elementary School and Alondra Elementary School. Those are two sites that, prior to the contract with NSBN and LAUP, did not appear to be preschool opportunities. New Schools, Better Neighborhoods assisted us in identifying those schools as being within a LAUP designated under-

served area and then getting our application submitted.

So, this collaboration is an opportunity to provide preschool programming on two campuses where we saw no opportunity to develop prior to our work with NSBN and LAUP.

Paramount Unified is also engaged in updating its facilities master plan for the district. Could you talk a little bit about this effort and how that plan takes early education into account?

The district currently is in the process of selecting and contracting with an architect to update the district’s current facilities master plan. The current plan was started in 1993, completed the next year, and was



NSBN is collaborating with Paramount USD to identify and plan sites for pre-K facilities.

the plan by which the district operated to get to where we are right now. The primary goal at that time was housing over-capacity enrollment. At this time we have different dynamics. That over-enrollment has been resolved by two things: additional housing and a decline in enrollment, which has occurred throughout California.

So, our goal in this round of master planning is to identify how best to use our campuses and how best to organize them to handle all of the educational responsibilities that we carry out. That starts with preschool and ends with secondary education and includes ev-

erything in between. NSBN, I should mention, has agreed to help support our efforts to include early education on more of our campuses.

How much demand is there for such preschool services in Paramount?

We’ve have 16 elementary sites and currently have preschool classes operating on six of them. When we complete three additional locations, that will bring the number up to six. That would have, in terms of physical sites, nine schools that do not have any preschool opportunities in an areas with high needs.

The district’s relationship with NSBN around preschool planning and devel-

opment in Paramount was preceded by a working relationship with First Five L.A. and New Schools, Better Neighborhoods at the Los Cerritos Elementary campus. Talk a little bit about the status of that project.

The previous collaborative effort was centered on the Los Cerritos Elementary campus. That’s a campus in a high needs area – the densest area that we serve – and it had two preschool classrooms funded by First Five L.A. The goal of the project for the district to create more permanent housing for those preschool opportunities

continued on page 19

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

Coalition for Community Schools Helps Lead Growing Movement for Smaller, Smarter Schools

Though the challenge of providing quality public education may find different solutions in different cities, the **Coalition for Community Schools** maintains that small, neighborhood-centered schools should be a priority for every city. CCS has worked in many cities to help districts and school advocates formulate strategies for building community schools and providing “conditions for learning” unique to each city and neighborhood. In the following interview, Coalition Staff Director **Marty Blank** explains the benefits of community schools and discusses the progress being made in implementing them throughout the country.

Marty, you have helped lead the movement for community schools across the country.

Why are community schools the centerpiece of your educational reform work?

What are benefits for communities, schools, and children and families across the country?



Marty Blank

Today, we tend to think of schools only in terms of their academic focus, particularly in the context of “No Child Left Behind.”

But if we go back to the history of schools, they’ve always been perceived as centers of the community, as places where families and community residents come together not only to support students but also to build a stronger community. I know from experience and from research that together, schools, families and communities are much more able to create all kinds of conditions that are necessary for kids to succeed.

We often talk about education as though only the academics matter; the benefit of a community school is that it strengthens the family so the family can not only create the economic conditions for kids to do well but also can participate and encourage their kids’ education. That way, the whole community provides important messages about how significant education is. People can come to a community school for adult education programs. They come for job training activities.

The community schools approach does not leave schools hanging out there by themselves trying to educate kids. You have schools, faith-based institutions, community-based organizations, and public agencies all working together saying that

the education of our children is a shared responsibility.

What are replicable models? Given the education politics of “No Child Left

What if a public school was designed to be the vital, pulsing center of a neighborhood



Behind,” is the community schools movement easily scalable?

We’re finishing a paper about community leadership and looking at 11 different communities, and we are beginning to see efforts moving toward scale. In Chicago, there are now 102 community schools, and that includes some regular public schools as well as charter schools. In Portland and Multnomah County, Oregon, there are 50 community schools out of 150 schools in the entire county, and there is great demand for more. Cincinnati has a school construction program akin to what is going on in L.A. – frankly, Cincinnati has some

of the worst facilities in the country – and they have a vision of turning every school into a “comprehensive community-learning center,” their name for a community school.

I would distinguish the models this way: The most typical community school model builds on a strong partnership between a school and an anchor institution that also has roots in that neighborhood. That anchor institution might be a community-based agency or a college or university that reflects the cultural characteristics of the community. It could also be a public institution like a recreation department or a health department.

Obviously, schools should be focusing on their academic mission, but these community-based partners often have a stronger capacity to tap the assets and resources of the entire neighborhood. This “lead agency-school partnership model” has been pursued in many larger cities where strong, healthy community-based organizations and municipal or county agencies have the capability to play such roles.

Another model for developing community schools arises out of a community revitalization strategy. Proponents of this model listen to what parents and residents want to see in a new or rehabilitated school, or in an existing school building. They are working to provide a full array of opportunities and support that the community wants. They believe that having the community make decisions about the programming of school facilities is critical to building community capacity and getting people to use the resources that will be there.

It’s much easier to drop a program, regardless of type, into a neighborhood than it is to get people to really use it and to feel ownership of it. But I do not believe that the outcomes will be as strong in the long run.

In other places, leaders are looking at
continued on page 12

GOOD SCHOOLS, HEALTHY CHILDREN

Well-Designed Learning Centers Offer Immense Health Benefits for Families & Children

Neal Kaufman, MD, MPH is a professor of pediatrics and public health at the UCLA School of Medicine and co-director of the UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities, which is dedicated to improving society's ability to provide

children with the best opportunities for health and well-being, and the chance to assume productive roles within families and communities. Dr. Kaufman is also vice-chair of the First 5 LA Board of Commissioners.

The L.A. metro area, as well as much of urban California, is involved in making substantial urban neighborhood investments (tens of billions) in public facilities—mostly schools, parks, police stations, daycare

centers, and adult education. Many in public health have long asserted that healthy place-making ought to be on the agenda and part of the design considerations when such facility investments are sited and planned.



Neal Kaufman

Explain how you would define “healthy place-making.”

Healthy place-making revolves around the idea that the places where people live, work, learn, and play can have a profound impact on the individual's well-being. Not only do places have to be free of toxins and have clean air and water, but they also have to be where human relationships are nurtured and where individuals can get enough physical activity and exercise as part of their everyday activities. They're places where individuals have access to appropriate fruits and vegetable, and where people have the opportunity to just run into their friends and make social connections and have a sense of place. And the way that you design and site buildings and organize the activities in those buildings either inhibits those things from happening or enhances them. When it's done right, you have a place that promotes health.

The mission of First 5 L.A., on which you serve as a commissioner, includes promoting the quality of life and health of children, pre-natal to 5 years old, and their families. First 5 LA has now spawned

another organization, LAUP, which focuses on providing universal, voluntary access to pre-K education in LA County. Their missions involved facilities and place-making. Elaborate on the nexus

How do we respond to the epidemic of childhood obesity and diabetes



between healthy place-making and the missions of LAUP and First 5 L.A.?

First 5 L.A. and LAUP are not just about the creation of physical spaces or even the services that happen within them. They're both trying to improve outcomes for young children, and to produce a good outcome for children, they need to not only have a good physical place in which to live, a good school or good childcare center. They need to offer services that meet the needs of those families. They need families that are educated and know how to take care of their kids and address their needs. So, in addition to appropriate educational experiences in a preschool, it's also very

important for that preschool to be part of the community and the neighborhood. The relationships between that preschool and the other services in the community have to be strong for the families to meet children's' needs.

You bring a perspective, as a pediatrician, to this subject and interview. Comment, if you could, on how health care is increasingly becoming involved with the built environment?

If you think about what's happened in the country over the last 100 years, in the 1850s, we improved the health of the public by linking public health with the built environment. Cities were unhealthy places. There was poor sanitation, polluted air, limited physical activity; people were dying from communicable diseases, waterborne diseases, injuries, and healthy place-making – with open spaces, proper sanitation, safe food – resulted in healthier people. For instance, they moved the cemeteries away from the people; they had safe building conditions. All of that led to a marked increase in the health and welfare of the population.

But after the Second World War the paradigm of improving people's health was based on what most people call a medical model. The idea was that people had an illness, you would diagnose that illness as accurately as possible and then identify the treatment, whether it be surgical, medicinal, or high-tech. That treatment was facilitated by building up an extensive network of hospitals and physicians, and health insurance programs, and research into the biological basis of disease, and medications that would treat it. That became increasingly sophisticated, with ever more fancy pharmaceuticals and the like, and it made major progress in the treatment of diseases. But, still, the vast majority of

continued on page 16

Villaraigosa: Joint-Use Community Schools Are 'Crucial'

continued from page 1

NSBN's focus is on the building of joint use education facilities that by design meet the needs of our city's families and children. It promotes, among other priorities, the siting, planning and building of small, neighborhood-centered schools and pre-K programs that function, where possible, as community centers open at night and on weekends. NSBN-planned community schools are designed as joint use facilities that offer social services such as day care, health clinics, libraries, and recreation space.

Importantly, NSBN's work must inform LAUSD's mission: building 160 new schools in the next eight years ought to not only relieve overcrowded classrooms to serve a growing student population, but to position "schools as centers of our neighborhoods."

Again, NSBN is to be commended for advocating joint-use between schools and other services, increasingly whether they are libraries or recreational facilities. This strategy is crucial in the development of new schools, particularly in high-density urban areas.

We need creativity and innovation to site and develop new schools, growing vertical in our plans, designing smaller schools that serve the community needs at night and on weekends.

Having worked hand in hand with NSBN as the councilmember of the 14th District to preserve a community childcare center in Boyle Heights, I know firsthand what a difference a strong city partnership can make.

There has been tremendous progress made at NSBN's project in Boyle Heights. It is a model of collaboration from different sectors of the community leading to positive opportunities for the children. There has been a commitment from United Methodist Ministries to reinvest money from the land taken by LAUSD for a new high school back into the neighborhood. In addition, the Plaza Community Childcare Center has found a new home, while a brand new two and half block multipurpose community center gets designed and built. Councilman Huizar's office submitted a Proposition 0 grant application and community support has been widespread, especially from the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative. This is the type of collaborative, strategic thinking and planning that will help create

the environment that we need for schools and communities to succeed.

I believe in NSBN's fundamental vision of the need for strategic alliances in partnership with our schools. Identifying collaborative partnerships and securing resources, which can be focused on supporting leadership development and empowerment of teachers and principals is vital to our future success. Also, engaging parents in the classroom and in the school will involve them not only in their children's educational affairs but also within the community. I can't stress enough that

"NSBN is to be commended for advocating joint-use between schools and other services this strategy is crucial in the development of new schools, particularly in high-density urban areas."
-Mayor Villaraigosa

it is absolutely crucial that the community take an active role in the education of our youth. For that reason I support NSBN's joint use projects that connect schools, libraries, parks and other institutions.

Even with all of the talent and creativity in this city, we still face a daunting task ahead. Our public schools are in a state of crisis. According to a Harvard Study, approximately one-half of our 9th-grade students are not finishing high school. This number is even higher for Latino and African American students. Drop out rates are astronomical throughout Los Angeles and college is not even in the mind's eye for too many kids and their families. There are some fundamental questions that we need to look at as we work to improve our schools:

- How do we create the conditions that will allow every child to arrive at school each day able, ready and prepared to learn?

- How do we create the conditions that will support teachers so that they can focus on classroom management and delivery of instruction aimed at closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students?

- How do we create the conditions that will reduce the number of students who drop out or are pushed out during the middle school years?

- How do we take the myriad individual successful programs and create an infrastructure that will make them systemic, sustainable and scaleable so that every child can succeed in school?

The city of Los Angeles currently operates 95 programs that serve children of all ages. These 95 programs span 25 city departments and total \$290 million dollars in annual funding. This is a good start; the city is clearly committed to children, but I know we can and will do more. We must be more strategic and focused.

I intend to fight for and lead a fundamental reform of the Los Angeles Unified School District. I am talking about structural reforms demanding dramatic improvements in accountability and results. I recognize that these goals are big and will not be simple to execute. But with the help of many of our community members, such as NSBN, goals such as the security and well-being of our children in order to improve the education of Los Angeles will be realized.

We are not preparing our children for an increasingly competitive world -only a good education can prepare our kids to make good on their dreams, to secure their futures and to become productive citizens who can compete in a world that is amazingly complex.

Responsibility for our children's education starts with each one of us.

The future of our city lies with its children- and the strength of a city lies in the education it provides to those children. There is no time to waste when it comes to our children's future.

I have no illusions that there is a quick fix or a single path.

But the stakes are too great and the needs are too urgent not to start now. With the help of New Schools Better Neighborhoods, the promise of schools as centers of neighborhoods will turn from a dream into a reality.

Burton: Schools Must 'Nurture,' from Pre-K through 12

continued from page 4

A recent article in the L.A. Times about one of our 4,000-student high schools, in not even the most impoverished community, reported that roughly half of those students are not even completing high school, and fewer than half of those are going on to college. I think that's the result we're going to continue to see unless we change the current model of middle school and high school education.

The Alliance has focused on secondary schools, and you've just mentioned that middle schools are a community and

"From the very beginning, from preschool to kindergarten and on up, every single year is important so the kids don't fall behind."

-Judy Burton

educational challenge as well. Is there a nexus between early education and primary education and the outcomes that you're seeing in middle and high school? Will the Alliance schools be successful if early education is unavailable or done poorly?

We initially started focusing only on high schools, but we found that many of our 9th graders were coming to us with 3rd grade skills in mathematics and three or four years behind in reading, which prompted us to start kids into smaller middle schools that feed into our high schools. From the very beginning, from preschool to kindergarten and on up, every single year is important so the kids don't fall behind. By and large, when kids start out early and have early success and don't fall so far behind that they give up,

they're much more likely to be successful in middle school and high school and then be prepared for college or the workforce. But, that isn't currently happening. Too many students in Los Angeles fall behind in elementary school, enter middle school behind and by the time they get to high school, they are overwhelmed with trying to catch on things they should have learned in earlier grades.

We find that even though we were seeing improvement at the elementary level in L.A. Unified, when students go on to large middle school campuses, that progress does not continue. Kids fall behind in large impersonal middle schools and then go into high school and struggle even more. I think, also, with everyone being pressed to be accountable to meet their academic performance responsibilities, there's pressure to get it done, and in the middle of that we're losing kids and not nurturing them enough to succeed.

NSBN is working with the Boyle Heights community and Plaza Community Center on an early education facility project that's the outgrowth of the building of East L.A. High School No. 1 at 1st and Mission. The objective is to create a family friendly community center in the neighborhood adjacent to the new high school. Clearly there are successful multi-use campuses in LAUSD, the Elizabeth Street Learning Center and Foshay are example, which include pre-education through adult education on a campus. Why is the latter the model for new educational facility planning?

I think it takes training and support for teachers and administrators to look at things differently. I have been personally involved in the development, financing, and implementation of K-12 schools that have been very successful. I'll use the Foshay Learning Center as an example of a model similar to the Elizabeth Street Learning Center. Even though it's a large school, each component within the school is a small school: small elementary school, small middle school, and a small high school all with the focus on building a family concept so that kids are nurtured

from pre-K all the way through 12th grade, and both teachers and parents are able to follow a child's education without significant gaps. Achieving academic results still requires an effective instructional program and high expectations at each level.

Lastly, the lead article in this NSBN newsletter is a ringing endorsement by Mayor Villaraigosa of NSBN's community planning efforts to site, design, and build neighborhood-centered schools in Los Angeles. You serve on the mayor's

"I think the mayor really gets it, and all of the people on the mayor's education council have focused on looking at what works for kids."

-Judy Burton

task force that is dealing with school governance. What's the promise and outcome of this work?

I think the mayor really gets it. All of the people on the mayor's education council have focused on looking at and defining what works for kids. Across all five council committees there is a common thread of working with parents, working more personally with kids in our schools, having higher expectations and not looking at schools in isolation, but looking at schools as centers of communities so that all needs that kids have are met, not just in the classroom but also looking at the supports that children need to be healthy citizens and to be connected with the community. We're not just looking at schools as completely separate entities from the rest of city services and the community.

Areas of Greatest Need for Pre-K Are LAUP's Priority

continued from page 1

L.A. County's sizeable need for pre-K for all 4-year-olds: a planning group, a development group, and an operations group.

The planning group is heavily involved in looking at community assessment, needs assessment. Additionally, they are evaluating LAUP's programs and researching other programs and services that we might incorporate into our programs. LAUP's board is committed to incorporating this research into facilities development. They have identified special initiatives to create a quality standard of practice in new pre-K

"We're looking at projects from the very simple, such as additional classrooms, to very significant projects that might involve construction and/or rehabilitation of buildings."
-Gary Mangiofico

centers, and our planning group is developing demonstration projects incorporating these initiatives. For example, one of those looks at program development in the area of special needs children at the pre-K level. Another is a child and family literacy project with an ELL [English Language Learners] component that we're creating in collaboration with libraries and one of the national library associations. Given the population of Los Angeles County, we feel that diversity needs to be respected and honored, so we want all of our work to be anchored in linguistic and cultural competency.

The development of new pre-K seats is the second organizational piece of our efforts. It is the area where we probably integrate the most with New Schools Better

Neighborhoods, and we have subdivided this task into three categories. One is the area of capacity-creation – looking at macro planning, macro demographics, macro urban assessments about needs and services and the sheer volume of children that we want to account for by 2014. It requires some pretty intricate planning.

The second area is the actual facilities creation. We're looking at projects from the very simple, such as additional classrooms, to very significant projects that might involve construction and/or rehabilitation of buildings. We also have our "jump-start" group, which is working with providers as we develop their facilities to be sure that they are in fact ready to be appraised in our five-star rating system before we take them into our actual assessment phase.

Our third large group is our operations group. That group is subdivided into two areas. One is the actual operations group itself, which is our quality and operations management group. They work with our providers and do the assessments, in terms of our five-star ratings, assign that star rating, and then work on an ongoing basis with those providers who achieve a rating of three or better to continue to enhance quality and develop their programs and staff.

In addition, we have a special services group, which has basically all the program content specialists. They work with our staff both internally and in the field as well as with experts to establish the standards and best practices that we programmatically want to see in an LAUP program. This could be in the area of English-language learners, health and welfare, family engagement, special needs, and various curriculum content areas as well as child outcome assessments.

Research clearly shows that the children who attend quality preschool programs are more likely to succeed in school and beyond than those who do not. But, as LAUP notes, only half the 4-year-olds in L.A. County currently have access to such programs. Please elaborate on LAUP's plans and efforts to develop new pre-K seats and on the partnerships, both

public and private, you are forming to meet the needs of families and children in Los Angeles. What do you look for in these partnerships? What does LAUP want to create over the next ten years that requires such partnerships?

We have several goals for these partnerships. One, as you pointed out, is that it's a very large county, and it's a very ambitious goal to create the opportunity for all four-year-olds to be able to voluntarily attend pre-K. At a macro level, we're looking at

"We expect through collaboration with our partners that we will be able to create a more integrated plan for pre-K facilities creation in Los Angeles County."
-Gary Mangiofico

how to create synergy and coherence in the county for creating a blueprint and a map of actual facilities creation. Where should they be? Under what circumstances? With what providers? With what partners to actually run those centers? We're a mixed-governance model, and we want to offer parental choice, and that requires a variety of settings and programs.

Certainly other people are working in this area, such as NSBN, which is modeling community and civic collaboration and joint use, and/or other entities that control access such as LAUSD and their building program. We expect that through collaboration with our partners that we will be able to create a more integrated plan for pre-K facilities creation in Los Angeles County.

continued on page 11

Mangiofico: LAUP Benefits from Partners Like NSBN

continued from page 10

Another critical piece is leveraging expertise. When an organization such as NSBN, who has its own core competencies, comes along, then I think it's not only to the advantage of the county and providers to use that expertise, but it also lets us leverage our dollars. So it allows us to be more fiscally prudent. Rather than re-create or be redundant in development of certain capabilities and expertise, it becomes both more cost-effective and, at the risk of speaking too abstractly, a better return of expertise that you get on your investment rather than having to create yet another entity with that expertise.

Let's focus on the communities within L.A. County that LAUP has identified as in greatest need of additional preschool seats. What are LAUP's criteria for identifying those communities and neighborhoods?

We assessed needs through the master planning process. Originally the master plan referred to the areas of greatest need as "hot zones." We have since taken that data and expanded it into four tiers that describe service rates and the need for the development of additional services. We are concentrating our focus on Tier I and Tier II at this time. Those represent approximately 34 zip codes throughout the county. A Tier I zone is where the need is greater than 1,000 children who are not being serviced and the service rate is less than 50 percent. A Tier II would be where the service rate is less than 50 percent but where the need is between 500 and 1,000 children. We don't want to do it just on a pure percentage basis because percentage doesn't necessarily reflect the actual number of children who aren't being served in a given area. We're trying to go into areas that have the actual largest raw need as well as the lowest service rates. Interestingly, we have seen that boosting API scores is highly correlated to providing services in those areas.

Are there model partnerships that offer guidance on how to cost effectively modernize or build new preschools

seats? Clearly, LAUP's partnership with NSBN and LAUSD offers promise, but what do you hope to learn from such efforts?

We are looking at a couple of different models. I think joint use, which NSBN has expertise with, provides an opportunity to leverage square footage. It lets us participate with other entities who may be developing a facility where there's need for a quality preschool in that area but where that need in and of itself does

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not warrant a sole-use building. We're working ourselves and with our partners with individual municipalities and communities, meeting with both elected as well as community leaders and childcare professionals on the ground to help us understand.

Through a greater understanding of what actually transpires in the community, we can make our best decision as to how to support joint use projects. One has emerged in relation to schools, one in relation to a community center; a couple in relation to nonprofits that have other buildings on their campuses that could incorporate development. And then we're also looking for the structures that can accommodate classrooms and create healthy environments for children.

Since this interview will be read by a number of these organizations and public officials, elaborate on LAUP's capacity to create incentives for other stakeholders and providers to form joint use pre-K partnerships?

That occurs at two levels. One is the actual facilities development monies in and of themselves. We have elected to target and accelerate development in the areas of greatest need first, the Tier I and II zones. Our board chose last year to allocate a substantial portion of our operating budget to that development. Organizations that are looking at creating facilities can apply with us under a variety of auspices for obtaining funds to help construction and development of a building, perhaps retrofit it to get that building to the point where it can get a certificate of occupancy. We probably wouldn't be inclined or able to fund an entire joint use or raw construction project, but we can certainly go into things such as matching grants and/or pooling of funds. If an entity has funds to build, for instance, a large community center but didn't have money that could be specifically dedicated to a preschool, we would be able to work with them to build out the portion of that structure that would be devoted to preschool.

The second is in the area of operating. LAUP will not actually operate schools but rather serve as a shared-services and support entity to providers. But under the auspices of that, we can facilitate the expansion of existing providers, bring existing providers into areas, and/or get providers into the business of operating preschools and fund those operations. In addition, we have a workforce development initiative that recognizes that when we build these facilities, someone has to come in and actually teach.

Furthermore, I think that entities who look at this, particularly municipalities and others who are interested in economic development, see perhaps secondary or tertiary gain to their economic planning by the fact that employers would be looking at cities who have demonstrated a commitment to providing preschool

continued on page 17

Blank: Schools Need to Provide ‘Conditions for Learning’

continued from page 6

data and looking at needs and offering a variety of services and support.

The Coalition for Community Schools sees all these as good models, but we’re trying to use a blended model where we apply the good principals of community-building and community development, good social work practices, as well as good education practices. There are probably schools in Los Angeles that have many of these characteristics.

Marty, as a panelist and special guest at

“It’s much easier to drop a program . . . into a neighborhood than it is to get people to really use it and to feel ownership of it.”

-Marty Blank

NSBN’s symposium in July, you heard Mayor Villaraigosa speak authoritatively, along with former assembly speaker Hertzberg—the author of California’s \$25 billion school bonds—in support of building community centered schools. Has a political foundation for building community schools thus been laid in L.A.? Are the new schools being planned and built representative of what you’re seeing in the rest of the country?

I believe NSBN’s portfolio of work has laid a solid foundation on which Mayor Villaraigosa, Mr. Hertzberg and others can now build. NSBN knows how to do this. What’s necessary now is a stronger commitment from civic and educational

leaders. I definitely heard the mayor endorse NSBN’s work, and his support offers real promise.

The mayor used the term “conditions for learning.” How does the community in Los Angeles – not just the school district, because learning is about more than just what happens in school – create these conditions? I was particularly pleased with that phrase, because here at the Coalition for Community Schools, we talk about the conditions for learning as what it is that the community schools do. We have five conditions. They can be found in our report, *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*, but it is even more important for each community to define its own conditions.

The city of Los Angeles—its residents, its community groups, the mayor, the city council, the school board—should try to work collaboratively to articulate what those conditions look like for the people of Los Angeles. And, if you build that set of conditions, you will begin to see that schools can’t fulfill all of those conditions independently. Purposeful school partnerships focused on results are essential.

The second thing the mayor said that was striking to me is that Los Angeles now spends \$290 million on services for children, youth, and families. We also know that L.A. County probably spends many times more than that. But let’s just stay with this \$290 million for a while, and let me compare that to what happened with our friends in Portland. In Portland, in order to fund their community school strategy, the city and the county took hard looks at how they were spending their existing funds.

They concluded that that money was being spent in a dysfunctional way. Services remained fragmented; organizations weren’t working together; people couldn’t find what they needed. And, they found that the model of community school was likely to create a much more effective, responsive, and efficient system of support for families. So, they redirected those dollars into their community school strategy. They are funding community-based organizations to be lead partners working with schools.

The third thing comment he made, which I think is so powerful in Los Angeles, is that NSBN has built partnerships that work. These partnerships leverage resources and create multiple benefits by tapping housing assets, early childhood assets, school assets and other community assets to create rich learning environments and more livable communities. L.A. could really lead the way in taking its community school/NSBN models up a notch, to a more systemic level, thus making it easier for neighborhoods to get these kinds of deals done.

“The city of Los Angeles—its residents, its community groups, the mayor, the city council, the school board—should try to work collaboratively to articulate what those conditions look like for the people of Los Angeles.”

-Marty Blank

The logic and persuasiveness of your remarks and commentary, suggest that the community schools movement is already at scale in older communities. But what typically stands in the way of building new community schools in the Sun Belt, e.g. Los Angeles?

First, federal, state and local dollars fund problems; they don’t fund visions and strategies. Health people own the health money, and the youth people own the youth money; the family people own the family money, and the school people own the education money. Getting people with funding streams drives people apart, not together.

continued on page 13

Community Schools Should Educate Young and Old

continued from page 12

Second, our academic institutions continue to work in single disciplines, and they don't understand the wholeness of children, families, and communities.

Third, our school districts have historically been isolated from general-purpose government. I know there has been talk in Los Angeles about the mayor's role with the public school system, but I agree with the mayor that building partnerships is the place to start. L.A. has many assets necessary to create community schools that build on the models such NSBN has built. But

"In a community school, strong linkages and relationships . . . make the transition from kindergarten to school much more seamless. It creates a different school culture that is much more welcomed by parents."
-Marty Blank

the assets for doing that sit in the city, the school district, the county, and in so many community institutions. Everything has been structured as silos. We must break down these silos to help our young people be successful.

The fourth thing that is missing is true cross-boundary leadership. We like to talk about networks of responsibility. Whether the city takes over the school district is less important to me than whether they find ways to work together and understand their responsibility to get better results.

Marty, as you know from your participation in NSBN's symposia, the First 5 L.A. commission—with funding from tobacco taxes—is helping to underwrite universal pre-K in L.A. County. You have

addressed in the past the prevalence of silo-like behavior by K-12 and early education providers. Connecting, therefore, pre-school and adult education to K-12 has not always been easily accomplished. Have the community schools you work with done a good job of integrating both into their new and remodeled neighborhood centered K-12 schools?

We see adult education as a major activity in many community schools. In many of the school districts, the adult education classes have been isolated downtown, but community schools allow them to receive an education where they actually live, and that's part of our strategy.

It's wonderful for people to get education anywhere, but when they do it at their kid's own school, it creates a deeper and more powerful relationship with the community and sends students a message about how important education is. Some of this adult education is happening where people have reached out to their community colleges, which are among our most entrepreneurial educational institutions.

The early childhood piece of this is also essential. Headstart, pre-K and child care are critical components. Many of our community schools are building stronger connections with early-childhood programs in the community. In a community school, strong linkages and relationships across age groups make the transition from kindergarten to school much more seamless. It creates a different school culture that is much more welcomed by parents.

What sort of progress have you seen lately, and who should be advancing this movement as it continues to take hold?

In the communities where we're scaling up, we believe we're getting close to what Malcolm Gladwell called "the tipping point." We have a few leaders who are bringing other people along, and they're beginning to get people to see that this is really the way schools should be. But, they've also realized that real change in any community, and certainly in a place like Los Angeles—with all of its complex-

ity, size, and diversity—that they have to move this agenda not only at the grass tops but also at the grass roots.

Participation at the grassroots will go a long way to determining whether the school built is contributing to the revitalization of that community or whether it is just a school plopped down among a bunch of houses and is another institution. Organizing these participatory processes is not easy, and public institutions often do it poorly. But community groups have the know-how, and their assets should be tapped.

"Real change in any community, and certainly in a place like Los Angeles with all of its complexity, size, and diversity, (means) you've got to not only move this agenda at the grass tops but you've got to move it at the grass roots."
-Marty Blank

Each community will decide how to approach the development of community schools. But ultimately we've got to work at both at the grass tops and the grass-roots levels because getting to the tipping point means expanding the ownership for this idea among more and more people throughout the community.

There will be inevitable tensions between the need for more space for kids and our desire to have schools that are really part of the community. But in the long run, we need to have centers of community and community support for our kids and if that means we slow down a little bit so we can talk, listen, and figure out what's best for our communities, that's where I would be. Let's get it right; and then we will see the results we all want.

Casillas: LAUSD Must Respond to Community Needs

continued from page 1

lies in support of learning? What more needs to be done to improve educational outcomes?

School districts need help in reaching out to parents and community leaders in order to gain authentic and sustainable support for public schools in general. There is a need for intermediaries that can convene and facilitate dialogue and collaborative relationships that encourage civic engagement in public education. Organizations, such as NSBN and the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative (BHLC) among them, create a new space for such conversations to occur in our neighborhoods. A space where relationships and trust across institutions promote the engagement of families in all critical aspects of community life. These structures are particularly helpful in high need communities, typically underserved by schools and other agencies.

Measure Y, LAUSD's fourth facilities bond, will fund the building of needed new elementary schools. Our young children are the hardest hit today because bussing little kids out of their overcrowded neighborhood schools is no fun for parents. Even with a drop in enrollment I believe we need more seats. I don't think we ought to have elementary schools larger than 1,000, and we have an enrollment in some of our schools, in particularly the southeast cities and the Pico-Union district, that have thousands of kids. So, we supported Measure Y.

However, we would be much happier if the superintendent and the district's facilities people would authentically engage families and better leverage the social capital which exists in our communities. We want LAUSD to be engaged in a conversation about what the whole neighborhood needs and how schools can be by design, help accommodate the needs of families. It is obvious to our families that it really does take a village to raise and educate a child.

Our schools are not always user-friendly to families and communities, and that's the part that I object to – that LAUSD's building program takes a cookie-cutter approach to education reform.

With NSBN-planned neighborhood centered, joint use schools as a model, we'd like to see schools designed and built to encourage neighborhood families to use the school campuses for Pre-K, for health promoting recreation, and for access to health care resources. We shouldn't have to fence the school off from the neighborhood after 3 p.m. or keep the kids locked in during the day and locked out after hours and on weekends.

Candidly, I had initially felt that I could

“There is a need for intermediaries that can convene and facilitate dialogue and collaborative relationships that encourage civic engagement in public education.”
-Maria Casillas

not support Measure Y unless Superintendent Romer agreed to certain conditions about the building program. But I worried that by voting no I might give the wrong message to the voters - that if leaders in these communities oppose the bond, then maybe voters would think we don't need these schools; that's really troublesome to me. I was caught between a rock and a hard place.

How have school reform and family advocates benefited from the district and state's accelerated school building bond program? What is better and what remains unaddressed after approval of billions of dollars of facilities bonds?

Now that Measure Y has passed, we need to ensure that new schools (and existing schools) embrace the vision of community schools, accountable to the parents and students in their neighborhoods as well as those education and political leaders who rightfully should be held accountable for the performance of the schools.

What's right about it is that when a district like LAUSD decides it is going to build schools and has the funds to do so, it does it. But it has done it like a big Mack truck coming through our neighborhoods. So we now know that they can do this.

But in hindsight, I'm not sure that they are the right institution to be siting and building our neighborhood schools. Frankly, the building program has distracted school leadership from the principal mission of the schools, which is to secure higher academic achievement levels for our students. At the same time that LAUSD is building schools, our middle schools and high school achievement levels have dropped off or have held steady. So, I think that building schools doesn't necessarily solve the problem of quality education, in particular for poor kids. That's one lesson.

My other concern is that in building these schools, we've not seen the kind of buildings that would allow for neighborhoods and families to more easily connect to their schools. I think they've used the same old mentality in building these schools and I'd like to see a better process, especially at the elementary level (if Measure Y passes). Parents tend to get more involved at the elementary level, and it gives the district a new opportunity to connect to families and to really figure out what communities need. They can find out how a new building can provide what those communities lack. For example, part of the building could be a health clinic, the libraries could be open without endangering the classroom space, a swimming pool or a park could be part of the joint use facilities.

I don't see enough of this type of school going up, either in the Valley or the inner-city. I mean they're building wall-to-wall schools. I don't see open space, and that's regrettable.

continued on page 15

School Reform Requires Both Civic & Family Leadership

continued from page 14

Let's press this point because Families and Schools represents an important Los Angeles coalition of inner-city and inner-suburban families. Why do you believe the public conversation about LAUSD's school building program has been so simplistically focused on seats needed instead of on the substantive children and family issues that you've just raised? Why has parental and family involvement in neighborhood centered schools sites not been a significant factor in debates about Measure Y's allocation of bond funds?

Parents and community leaders from underserved communities are beginning to mobilize around the more complex issue of student performance, and are learning how to advocate for necessary policy changes. The need for school facilities has been easier to understand by all the public and therefore has been an issue around which support is easier to gain. Problems related to academic achievement are more complex, and cannot be solved by simply by a building program.

However, the recent victory by many grass-root organizations in the adoption of a policy to ensure students engage in rigorous college-prep curriculum or substantive career/technical education coursework serves as an example of parents, students, and community leaders working together to be heard. LAUSD board members responded to this visible and persistent community action, and the Superintendent was a critical ally in this movement.

So, I think it's because district officials believe that since they are the public institution responsible for building schools - they are the only accountable agency - that they're the only people that matter. Most of these officials might drive the streets of LA, but they don't live in these communities and they may not understand them well enough. I think they've tried to understand by hiring a public relations firm and outreach consultants. But engaging families, especially the Latino community and the African-American community, is something that you do by building relationships, not just

by sending out a flyer and holding a big meeting.

And, knowing that the building of schools is a very long process that initiates in Sacramento, they might believe that regular folk and especially poor people won't understand all of that and that they somehow have to simplify what they tell us and what they tell our families so that we either don't become alarmed or we don't get in the way. Quite frankly, that's not the way that you build a constituency that's going to be loyal and supportive of our public schools.

Parents and community leaders from underserved communities are beginning to mobilize around the more complex issue of student performance, and are learning how to advocate for necessary policy changes.

-Maria Casillas

How would you describe the civic obligation of our neighborhood and elected leaders to weigh in on how school facilities are sited, programmed, designed and built?

The obligation of all our elected leaders is to make use of all the resources in the community to support families and their children and schools are a major community resource.

They obviously need, therefore, to use their influence more. Perhaps they even need to seek some form of authority to promote joint use projects and ensure inclusion of the voices of the community early on in the planning of facilities. It's also in everyone's best interest that the aesthetic quality of the school be prized,

and that the school serve as a safe anchor for the neighborhood. These schools don't exist in limbo. They exist in the city of Los Angeles or in the cities that the LAUSD represents. Public officials need to make sure that public funds are well spent, especially when this is the largest public works project since god-knows-when that we keep hearing about over and over and over. Every public and appointed official ought to be paying attention and ought to be wiggling in so that their voices and influence can be heard.

Non-profit leaders can't do it all alone, but we can help form coalitions with elected officials so that these things can happen. It's hard for us to be heard with the staff of 12, for example, that I have. But City Hall can influence what happens at LAUSD's board room. We influence policy at L.A. Unified only as much as we can make our voices heard among at least four people who will ultimately vote yes or no. We would like the board to pay attention and engage with us rather than just be consumed by the building of facilities and making relationships with developers and others who might some day be fruitful to them but not necessarily fruitful to us.

Is the vast size of LAUSD a factor in discouraging community schools and processes that encourage neighborhood, parental involvement?

The district is big but it can be organized in such a way that community and parental involvement are more than lip service. Structures around pre-K-12 grade feeder patterns (School Families) can help connect schools and their neighborhoods, and their voices can be channeled across schools and to the central bureaucracy. Decentralization so that neighborhoods are empowered and accountable can occur within the largesse of this district, but it will require capacity building and resource re-allocation.

Public accountability remains vague and frustrating when schools try to improve without the support and engagement of parents and members of the community. We need to imagine that each school family is a village and as kids go through the

continued on page 19

Kaufman: Urban Lifestyles Often Harm Public Health

continued from page 7

improvement in life expectancy derived not from medicine but from public health.

As we go into the 21st century, we face a very different issue. Individuals' life spans are increasing, but their performance spans are not. They're living to their 80s and 90s, but they're becoming increasingly debilitated or infirm as they age. And if you think about health as a "resource for living," as Dr. Lester Breslow describes it, you think about how to help the individual become able to do the things that they want to do. The best example would be to think about what we call "lifestyle diseases" – lifestyle

and to hold on to every ounce of fat, sugar, and salt. It turns out that some people are more capable of holding on to every ounce of fat, sugar, and salt, because their ancestors died when everyone else lived through the famine or other evolutionary struggle, such as the Middle Passage for African-Americans.

But if you look at Los Angeles, with an increasing proportion of ethnic minorities, of individuals whose ancestors were far superior at surviving famine, they then collide with an environment in which the average person gets almost no physical

positively affect the community's health. What explains this failure?

It was only 50 years ago when Lester Breslow first demonstrated that your lifestyle may impact your chances of getting heart disease. People didn't understand or believe it then, and I think we're in a similar denial now. People are so fixated on the notion that people simply choose their lifestyles. As if they choose to live in a neighborhood without any parks; as if they choose to live in a neighborhood where they can't get fresh fruits and vegetables; as if, after watching years of TV advertising high-sugar and high-fat foods, that they simply choose to eat them; as if they're making a personal choice not to be active and to eat too much. That's simply not the case.

Certainly there is some degree of freedom, and, of course, individuals make choices. But they make those choices in the context and limitations of their environment, and it's very difficult to convince people of that. But, I think the tide is turning. We have seen, with the epidemic of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, an increasing recognition, for example, that the health environment of a school has an impact. The banning of sodas in LAUSD was critical. The legislation in the state of California to get rid of junk foods and sodas was important. I don't know if people have gotten quite to the point that they understand the built environment component.

This idea of health impact analysis around the built environment has begun to take root around the country and here in Los Angeles. Elaborate on that methodology and its promise for creating an accepted nexus between the built environment and health-promotion behavior.

Health impact assessment is a methodology with a 25-year history in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada that helps decision-makers identify unintended health consequence from the way they build the building and get information in time to modify their plans. So, for example, if the stairs in a building meet the code for fire escapes but are unavailable for individuals to use them, individuals in that building will

continued on page 17



NSBN has collaborated on a redesign of Bodger Park in Lawndale.

choices colliding with genetics in a toxic environment, and they can be improved by modifying lifestyles, by healthy place-making, and by quality medical care.

Elaborate both on the health challenges of LA's families and children, and on how healthy place-making might be a significant contributor to better health.

We have an epidemic of individuals who, by lifestyle choices – the main ones being sedentary activities; consuming too much fat, sugar, and salt; and smoking, alcohol, and drugs – have so damaged their bodies that they're not able to maintain a healthy performance as they get older. Obesity may be the best example: We evolved to minimize the amount of activity it took to get us enough calories and to eat everything that was in our presence, because we might not have enough food the next day,

activity. They drive to work long distances, they sit at their desk, they come home exhausted after commuting, and they end up either working or falling asleep in front of the television, without expending calories. And getting food also takes no calories. In addition, their food is laden with hidden sugar, fat, and salt. So genetics and lifestyle choices collide with a toxic environment that makes it hard to be active and get the food that's right for you.

You make a compelling case for the nexus between the environment, health and the choices we make. Yet in the public policy arena, that nexus thesis has not won the day. As you say, we have significant epidemics among our young people, with diabetes, obesity, etc., and yet the choices about the siting and design of pre-K through 12 schools don't seem to take into account criteria that could

School Design Can Promote Healthy Kids & Families

continued from page 16

be less likely to walk the stairs. Now, you might say that walking the stairs is not big deal, but if you walk two or three flights every day, you actually burn a significant number of calories over time.

So you could have regulations that encourage accessible stairs. You could have sidewalks that encourage walking. You could have streets that discourage automobiles and encourage walking. By building the buildings and co-locating schools and parks and libraries, it increases the chances that children and the neighborhood will use those facilities and become healthier. So it offers a systematic, scientific way of analyzing the negative impact of a particular choice and trying to come up with a feasible method to improve people's health.

What are the kinds of innovative approaches to the design of the built environment that offer promise, both for building out preschool seats as well as primary and elementary school seats in L.A. County?

Any school or preschool, first and foremost, has to be a site where children feel comfortable and can get a good education. But if you think about that school a being

part of a neighborhood, where that school is sited is critical. So, siting a school in a place where, for example, the parents of a preschooler walk their child to school, they

*"We have seen, with the epidemic of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, an increasing recognition, for example, that the health environment of a school has an impact."
-Dr. Neal Kaufman*

not only get physical activity but also get to know their neighborhood. The size of that school makes a huge difference also. It has to be big enough so that it's cost-effective, but it also has to be small enough so that the

student feels comfortable and understands the environment around them.

The actual architecture or style of that school makes a difference. Schools that have both indoor and outdoor components allow students to recognize nature even when they're in class. Exposure to sunlight bouncing off leaves stimulates children's brains and actually helps brain development more than flat light going off a wall.

Having the school provide services that bring other people from the neighborhood to the school enhances that school's sustainability and also makes that school helpful to the rest of the neighborhood. So, for example, a preschool with a drop-in center for parents of children under four is more likely to be able to support that neighborhood. The school that links itself to its surroundings, both architecturally as well as programmatically – where the students go out into the community to learn about their neighborhood – increases the diversity of the children's experience and is much more likely to help them grow. And, finally, if that school is the center of the neighborhood, the neighborhood cohesion will maintain that school's function for much longer.

NSBN

LAUP Embraces 'Wide Variety' of Operational Proposals

continued from page 11

services and have the resources to make it happen.

What are you learning about how easy or difficult it is to develop these partnerships/collaborative relationships? Are there examples emerging that LAUP could share today?

We've actually found it very easy. There is a consciousness and awareness about the benefits of pre-K at this point. There's a general movement that realizes that investing in children is not just a good thing for children but also for the social fabric of a community. There's all kinds of research about return on investment, such as the RAND study that was recently released, that address those issues. We really haven't encountered any resistance or difficulty in forming relationships. If anything, our challenge

is to respond to all the interest, and we're working hard at that. Another reason why leveraging these partnerships becomes significant because entities such as NSBN or LAUSD also have relationships and can help us to further specific plans in a given area.

In terms of the type of projects that come forward, I honestly want to say that we want to reserve judgment on that. Currently we're seeing such a wide variety, and projects are so specific to each community. I know that there are perhaps models from a facilities creation or a macro level, but we want to be able to put services on the ground, and that means assessing each potential project area on its own merit. We love projects with green space and love projects where we can look at the environmental health and support children; that's ideal. But we also recognize that in some areas, land

use is limited, and that's another reason to look at joint use.

The array of possible preschool providers includes center-based preschools and family childcare providers. What operators might participate in this LAUP program?

The operators can come from a wide variety of settings. We are looking for providers from settings such as nonprofits, school districts, faith-based or private providers. We're looking for a mixed-governance model so that parents have choice. We want to be able to provide a range of services. Among the providers who can meet the criteria – licensing and due diligence and our quality assessment ratings – a varied background is something we encourage. We believe that lets the child development remain in the hands of the parents.

NSBN

NSBN Helps Plaza Pre-K Program Serve More Families

continued from page 3

is now being developed around the First Street corridor.

Through this collaborative planning effort, will Plaza's pre-K program and seats be saved? Please elaborate, Eduardo.

EG: Yes! In the short term, we've been working closely with these same partners and more specifically with L.A. Unified School District to solve the temporary relocation of Plaza's First Street Satellite Center to Utah Elementary School, which is within walking distance of our facility

*"There's just a lot of value in a neutral party coming on board and bringing groups together that don't normally speak together in the design of schools and neighborhood centers."
-Eduardo Garcia*

- about a half-block east. That maintains the seats in the neighborhood and continue care with the families we are serving. We also provide a service to Utah Elementary School in that many of the same services that are offered at Plaza can be utilized by the extended families that Utah Elementary serves.

And in the long term, what are Plaza's prospects? Will the neighborhood families now served continue to be served?

EG: We've been able to identify something interesting about who is being served by Plaza. The zip codes that we have been serving in and around our First Street site are far more than one might assume. Not only do we serve the local zip code 90033, but we're also servicing some zones that we hadn't quite realized were significantly underserved by child-care providers in L.A. County.

I think that the fact that we're serving zones that have been termed "hot zones" by LAUP and the First 5 LA means that we have a chance to secure those much-needed facility and operational dollars for East LA. We expect new housing will be going up in Boyle Heights and that the need for infant child care and K through 5 seats must be continuously planned and provided.

What is the value of having an independent, third party manage the planning process for new educational facilities in neighborhoods like Boyle Heights.

EG: There is clearly value in having neutral facilitator - and we're talking New Schools, Better Neighborhoods now - when you are involving multiple organizations. NSBN has been able to facilitate the discussion across city lines, school district lines; they have been able to bring interests together to have the dialogue necessary so that jurisdictions can be massaged and cooperation can be brought to the table in discussing the kinds of services and the kinds of needs which best serve the children and families of Boyle Heights. There's just a lot of value in a neutral party coming on board and bringing groups together that don't normally speak together about the design of schools and neighborhood centers. That needed service is the value that I think has been brought to the table in this effort.

As noted, a number of community organizations have been added to the Boyle Heights planning process, such as the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative, and many others. What's the value added of having an array of community interests collaboratively plan new facilities for the children and families in Boyle Heights.

EG: Certainly we provide pre-K through 5 in Plaza Community Center, but there's a larger need for a wider scope of services. Bringing on more stakeholders is a way of addressing the needs for these wider services. I'm sure the Learning Collaborative is looking beyond what we're servicing and towards a continuum of care from the ages we serve to the ages of elementary and middle and even high school and beyond.

I think that's what we draw our strength from - having those agencies that work across each other's boundaries to provide a continuum of care. That's certainly something that we didn't anticipate but is now beginning to grow as a result of the collaboration.

The plan for the long term conversion of the two and half blocks east of the new Boyle Heights high school into a community center requires the support of newly elected Councilman Huizar and his predecessor, Mayor Villaraigosa.

*"I think that's what we draw our strength from - having those agencies that work across each other's boundaries to provide a continuum of care."
-Eduardo Garcia*

How have both contributed to the evolution and likelihood of success of the community plan's realization?

EG: I'm glad that Jose Huizar has been at the forefront of the education of the children in our neighborhood. He had been with the L.A. Unified School District and I'm pleased to see him take on that and other challenges in the City Council. I think it's a continuation of his efforts in the City Council seat and what we've started with Villaraigosa now in the mayor's office offers a wider range of support from LA Unified School District, City Council District 14, and all the way through to the mayor's office. Particularly when we're looking at expanding services, bringing in new services, and bringing in all the neighborhood communities, I think it's going to flow quite nicely as this begins to unfold in the next three to five years.

Casillas: School Officials Must Respect Poor Areas

continued from page 15

pre-K-12 pathway, all the adults important to their lives—both inside and outside of school—must be the village that shelters, guides, and supports them. Everyone has a shared responsibility for the performance of our schools, but if not given the opportunity to engage and relate, parents and community will continue to point the finger at the educators. It isn't fair, but that's the system we currently promote. Community schools are a better—and much more democratic—option.

I also sit on the County Board of Education, and I notice with superintendents and staff from these smaller school districts that they have relationships with their communities. It's sort of like old-time America. They are still challenged by an achievement gap, however, and that's probably because the universities churn out the same teachers for LAUSD as they do for them. Administrative development programs are still the same whether you are in a small district or a large district.

However, I would say that families are more engaged when districts are smaller and they have better access to the bureaucracy. Having said that, I'm not sure that the outcomes are as good as they should be. But for many of those districts, they are

undergoing, what LAUSD went through 20 or 30 years ago, this whole shift in demographics. For some districts, the demographic shift is still new. For others, for example Compton, it's just a community in neglect so the school can't be the savior all by itself.

You've stressed eloquently and often the importance of the relationship between neighborhood and school, between family and classroom; but in debates on the LAUSD school bond, even in the endorsement of the bond by the L.A. Times, there's little mention that such factors ought to be a central objective of a \$19 billion dollar school bond program. Collaboration, joint use, parental involvement seems irrelevant when pitted against a call for more seats/classrooms, or the efficiency of the building program. Why?

I think because there is still a mentality that Third World people – because we do have Third-World poverty here in Los Angeles – can't be engaged. Officials need to show more respect for poor people. While poverty is a horrible condition to be in, it doesn't necessarily mean that everyone who is poor and formally uneducated

lacks intelligence and lacks the will to attain something better for themselves and their children. They have not learned how to tap into the dreams and the power of love of some of these families. They haven't learned to tap into the power of allegiance and loyalty to this country that immigrants possess; and for the African-American population, their history in the public school system since the Civil War tells us they have never been treated as first-class citizens unless they fight for every right. For the Latino experience, they are so grateful to be here for the most part but I think officials underestimate and undercapitalize them.

We have to raise public consciousness about the merits of community schools as a way of improving both educational outcomes and our society. Above and beyond improving academic achievement, even though they go hand-in-hand, I think the bigger purpose of public schools is to promote civic development and to promote democracy. The ongoing development of a democratic society is in crisis. Some people get it and understand what's at stake, and people in power need to get that too. NSBN and organizations like the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative have much work to do.

NSBN

Paramount Planning Benefits from Early Collaboration

continued from page 5

and, in that permanent housing, to also provide space that could house other community-based services that will serve the school population and the neighborhood in general and also to provide opportunities for expanded community and recreation space in an enclosed facility. The city of Paramount was also a planning partner, it wants to turn a utility right of way that border's the school campus into a city park. That effort is in progress.

Returning the two pre-K planning projects, what is a central lesson of these collaborative facility planning efforts for other school districts in L.A. county that have the same needs and demand

for pre-K? Is this an effort that LAUP should use as a model for other like working relationships?

Not knowing what all those other working relationships are, I can only speak to this one. There is an opportunity to collaborate. The collaboration should start early, as early as possible, and should be incorporated into one planning effort instead of multiple or bifurcated planning efforts. That's when it becomes much more difficult. The hopeful result obviously is the ability to increase preschool programming opportunities.

Lastly, Paramount Unified, like LAUSD, extends beyond the city boundaries of

Paramount, and these two projects that you described lie outside the boundaries of the city. How does that change, enhance, or make more difficult the building by the school district of these pre-K classrooms?

I don't think it makes the process or the project more difficult. It just involves collaborating with parties from multiple municipal jurisdictions. Giving the turf issues that can occur between school districts and cities, the collaborating parties have to be creative and willing to look beyond prior differences to seize an opportunity or willing to accept the challenge of working together perhaps for the first time.

NSBN

Hurtado: NSBN's Community Plans Are Replicable

continued from back page

North Long Beach, Willowbrook, Hawthorne and, hopefully, Palmdale/Lancaster).

Due to our immediate deadline of June 30 to have sites ready for fall 2006 enrollments, NSBN is focusing on either renovation of existing buildings or use of portable structures with existing licensees and partners. However, we will generate realizable plans to assist the partners and community stakeholders to develop long-term, permanent structures that promote joint-use community education centers that can serve the full needs of neighborhood families and children.

In Willowbrook, for example, we're working with Century Housing and the Drew Child Development Corporation (DCDC) to immediately initiate phase I – temporary expansion of their 4-year old seats – on a new location on Imperial Hwy between Wilmington and Central Aves. These two partners, and, potentially, a third Drew Head Start will eventually occupy a two-story complex with as many as 200 preschool seats and the relocated offices of DCDC which are being displaced by the development of their current location as a new research facility at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science at King-Drew Medical Center, coincidentally one of my former employers which aided in the development of the relationship.

This project has been on the drawing boards for at least a dozen years with multiple partners but had never gotten to the point of fruition until NSBN offered its expertise and assistance in the planning process. NSBN will work with the parents of the DCDC and Drew Head Start program children and other community stakeholders to design the final facility through its traditional, fully inclusive, charette methods.

What challenges have you encountered during your tenure at NSBN?

NSBN has encountered many disheartened providers seeking to expand but lacking the resources and expertise to develop the necessary plans to submit to funders like LAUP and First 5 LA.

Similarly, we've realized that many parents bring their children with them to the areas in which they work or attend school despite the distance from home so as to be closer to them in case of emergencies. Thus, the current focus on certain communities based on zip codes doesn't always reflect reality, since in some cases over half of the children in areas not designated as "areas of greatest need" really come from other communities that do qualify.

Similarly, many of the communities that

"NSBN continues to believe important opportunities remain to leverage these facility bond resources –for the benefit of underserved neighborhoods, families and children."

-John Hurtado

have the greatest need are old industrial communities with limited opportunities to develop child care without taking property off tax-rolls (many providers, especially in these areas, are non-profits) or would require significant environmental remediation or would take away from existing housing or commercial stock. Other issues/challenges to be overcome involve the lack of awareness of the benefits of preschool despite First 5 LA's impressive educational outreach campaigns. But this applies not just to the immigrant or poor communities.

We've also encountered many providers interested in expansion but who operate in leased facilities without room either inside and/or outdoors for playground areas to expand within state

requirements. They sometimes also encounter staffing problems, such as insufficient staffing due to the limited number of licensable childcare workers. Other vendors, while located in designated communities have experienced population drops due to migration trends.

Note that the data used to develop the priority zones was generated three years ago and many communities, especially in areas with Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) have had significant population shifts due to complete closure of facilities for renovation/reconstruction or due to increased and affordable housing opportunities in the Inland Empire. In some areas, corridors of multiple licensed vendors are already competing for the same population but have waiting lists in adjoining communities where expansion isn't possible due to the reasons mentioned above.

What goals do you hope NSBN will accomplish in the years ahead?

We continue to develop long-term projects that involve the planning of new schools, preschool to college, and other facilities. With the latest passage of LAUSD's \$4 billion school bond, and with plans by Assembly Speaker Nunez to include more bond funding for schools in the state's 2006 infrastructure bond, NSBN continues to believe important opportunities remain to leverage these facility bond resources –for the benefit of underserved neighborhoods, families and children.

We expect and hope, therefore, to expand our collaborative planning work both in and beyond L.A. County (i.e., to San Bernardino, Orange, Ventura, and San Diego). We have even been asked to work in areas like New Orleans where communities must rebuild their infrastructure and where opportunities exist to build new community and family centered models with significant federal support. As in L.A. County, NSBN believes past inequities can be tackled through intelligent investment, planning and community engagement in design.

NSBN PROJECT UPDATES

continued from page 2

Boyle Heights- East LA High School

In the Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights, the community's need for a new high school and an MTA station appeared to endanger an important community pre-k program, until the parties, with the support of then Councilman (and now Mayor) Villaraigosa's office and the assistance of NSBN, worked out a win-win rather than an either/or solution. NSBN managed a community & stakeholder based, master plan process which resulted in a full service community center, including a relocated Plaza Community's early education program, on a site just east of the new High School. The signing of a MOU with NSBN and the continuing support of then LAUSD Board of Education President (and now Councilman) Jose Huizar; Rev. Jim Conn, an urban strategist with United Methodist Ministries; and Eduardo Garcia of Plaza Community Center, has allowed work to continue on realizing the Barrio Planners/ NSBN/ First 5 LA funded neighborhood centered master plan and design.

NSBN will be signing a Letter of Intent this month with both the International Institute of Los Angeles, another childcare operator located within Boyle Heights, and the Boyle Heights Learning Collaborative, a spin-off educational action group within the Roosevelt HS and new East LA HS feeder areas, to co-develop a new multipurpose, family friendly facility with preschool classrooms operated by both Plaza Community center and International Institute, as well as many other community-based programs. NSBN continues to work with the Mayor's Office, LA City Council District 14, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), the LA City Community Development and Engineering departments, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) District 7 to fund this ambitious project.

Hawthorne

NSBN, in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and the International Institute of Los Angeles are developing a master plan for an existing school site in Hawthorne. Once a "starter" school District (a small, three-classroom facility with only an office, bathroom facilities and limited recreational space) within the Lawndale Elementary School, the site was transferred to LACOE and currently operates as an alternative day school for

junior and senior high school students reassigned from other schools within the South Bay region of LA County. LACOE plans on expanding its current classrooms with a small addition while developing appropriate playing fields for its current student population.

Separately, LACOE plans on having one of its Head Start contractors operate a facility in one small portion of the Hawthorne facility and NSBN is working with the International Institute to operate a temporary childcare facility in another portion of the property with eventual relocation into a new subsidized housing development on the property that may include Century Housing. A Letter of Intent with International Institute for the preschool operation is pending while Century Housing is reviewing the potential for a long-term lease with LACOE before signing a similar document regarding the housing.

New Schools Better Neighborhoods

Watts- Willowbrook

NSBN, together with Century Housing and the Drew Child Development Corporation (DCDC), is developing short and long term facility plans for a new, 200 seat preschool (including space for DCDC offices that must be relocated from DCDC's current location at the Charles R Drew University of Medicine and Science Campus). This much needed community project, which was stalled for over 10 years due to land acquisition & environmental regulations, was facilitated by the recent transfer, with the help of LA County 2nd District Supervisor Burke's office, of adjoining property on Imperial Hwy near Central Ave. along the Century Freeway. In January, both Century Housing and DCDC signed Letters of Intent with NSBN for the planning of this new pre-school seat project. Another potential joint partner in the project is Drew's Head Start Project.

NSBN STAFFING NEWS

John Hurtado, M. Ed., joined NSBN as executive director in mid-September 2005. Previously, he had been Senior Director of Strategic Relationship and Resource

Development as well as National Parent School Partnership Director at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (**MALDEF**). Mr. Hurtado's expertise is in the development of educational programs and civic engagement, the latter a crucial role of NSBN in the design and implementation of projects. Previously, he had been with institutions that include Harvard University, UMass, the California School of Professional Psychology, Charles R Drew University of Medicine and Science, and the Academic Center for Excellence in the Health Sciences (Western University of Health Sciences/Loma Linda School of Medicine).

With NSBN, Mr. Hurtado will oversee daily operations, the completion of existing joint-use school/community development projects in Hollywood, Lennox, MacArthur Park, and East Los Angeles with the appropriate school districts, as well as pre-school siting projects within the "Hot Zones" in Los Angeles County identified by the First 5 Commission, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) and MALDEF. These "hot zones" are where insufficient preschool and early childhood facilities exist to meet the demand for care of 4 year-olds living in those communities. John also will assist in the development of new opportunities in other areas of Los Angeles County, Southern California, the state, and through BEST, nationwide.

Catherine Kersh, JD, joined NSBN in October on a part-time basis and on full-time basis this winter as a Project Manager. She brings five years experience in real estate/construction litigation at Cox, Castle & Nicholson LLP, Selman & Breitman LLP, and Harrick & Evans LLP. She is focusing on new preschool site development for the First 5 LA/LA Universal Preschool (LAUP) projects, as well as assisting with completion of the existing projects in Boyle Heights, Paramount, and East Hollywood (the Santa Monica Boulevard Community Charter School).

In January, former NSBN Executive Director **Lucy Okumu** was named Special Assistant to LAUSD Superintendent Roy Romer. Okumu most recently served as a legislative advocate for the district.

Tahirah Farris, formerly a NSBN project manager, left NSBN at the end of October to become a policy analyst for the Advancement Project.

New Schools Better Neighborhoods

New Schools • Better Neighborhoods (NSBN) was formed both to advocate for a vision of public schools as our vital community centers and to identify a course of regulatory reform to achieve this aspiration. NSBN is a project of the nonprofit organization **Community Partners**.

NSBN has emerged as California's independent, citizen-led forum committed to reforming existing approaches to school siting, design, and construction. We have established key relationships with State and local policymakers, educators, government regulatory agencies, business leaders, architects, planners, and community-based organizations to define and promote a 21st Century vision for California's urban school districts: **New schools should be centers of neighborhood vitality; likewise, neighborhoods and communities should serve as healthy centers of learning.**

The Goals of NSBN

- Create a strategy for including community dialogue and input as a component in determining the siting and design of public schools.
- Move from the outmoded "factory model" that has defined our public schools until now to a model of community-focused schools, anchoring our increasingly diverse communities.
- Understand how joint ventures between schools and other services (medical, recreational, libraries) can help make schools the centers of their community.
- Understand if and how we must change our statutes, regulations, and/or decision-making processes to implement this vision.

New Schools •

Better Neighborhoods

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NSBN LEADERSHIP

Commitment to Education and Civil Rights Brings Hurtado to NSBN

NSBN was pleased to welcome **John Hurtado** aboard last fall as its new executive director. With a wealth of experience in health care, education, and civil rights, Hurtado brings tremendous knowledge and a unique perspective to NSBN's ef-

forts. His most recent experience was at MALDEF, where he helped parents and children navigate the educational system. In his first few months at NSBN, Hurtado has commenced with several new projects and looks forward to many more.

You moved six months ago from MALDEF's staff to assume the position of executive director of NSBN-Los Angeles. What experience do you bring to your new responsibilities, and what drew you to this new education and community challenge?



John Hurtado

For the past two years, I managed a nationwide parental rights and advocacy education program at MALDEF which primarily focused on civic engagement while simultaneously informing parents about their children's and their own educational rights and concomitant responsibilities.

For 20-plus years before MALDEF, I was in higher education at Harvard University, the University of Massachusetts System, California School of Professional Psychology, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, and Western University of Health Sciences/Loma Linda School of Medicine.

I was drawn to NSBN because of its strong focus on civic engagement in the design of new schools, libraries, medical facilities, recreational sites and parks, and other community resources. These heavily urban, impacted inner-city and primarily minority communities are most in need of smart reinvestment, excellent schools, and family resources.

NSBN's focus on community involvement in smart growth planning and design of public facilities allows neighborhood stakeholders to avoid making either/or choices between schools, housing, jobs, and other opportunities. I'm a believer in NSBN's focus on the educational need to collaboratively plan joint-use pre-K facilities and schools, parks and community centers.

NSBN currently has the support of First 5 LA (the Prop 10 cigarette tax-funded program that seeks to enhance the educational opportu-

nities for children 0-5 years old) to assist the new LA Universal Preschool (LAUP) program develop new preschool seats, primarily for 4-year olds in the "areas of greatest need" – communities where the working poor live – they can't afford private daycare yet they earn too much for traditional subsidized childcare (e.g., Head Start). Specifically, NSBN is assisting LAUP develop 96 seats for 4-year olds in at least 4 sites including a school-based site within the targeted 34 communities (based on zip codes) where 4-year old population to licensed child care seats is less than a 58 percent service rate, which the overall goal for every zip code in LA County.

Why are you currently focusing on development of preschools?

While LAUP is using the traditional method of issuing requests for proposals (RFPs) for potential vendors to submit applications for funding support to develop new preschool seats, NSBN has been asked by First 5 LA to work with LAUP to develop new models in non-traditional communities where either no "traditional" preschool sites are available, there are no currently licensed providers, or existing providers don't have the financial resources to pay for expansions beyond the subsidies from LAUP.

NSBN is working with its joint-use development partners in LA County – Paramount USD, L.A. County Office of Education, Century Housing and the International Institute of LA – to identify potential sites, provide the up-front funding for initial site plan designs (enough to satisfy potential funders need for general design requirements), and assist in identifying potential funders beyond LAUP as well as pre-screening candidates for LAUP and then referring them to the LAUP for state license preparation assistance. NSBN is helping develop short-term solutions to immediately increase child care seats in the selected communities (Paramount, *continued on page 20*