

PUENTE Strategic Plan

July 2024 to June 2027



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Message from PUENTE's Chief Executive Officer



We are excited to present PUENTE's strategic plan for fiscal years 2024 – 2027. Throughout our organization's rich history, we've consistently showcased our adaptive prowess in meeting the educational needs of the diverse communities we serve. This blueprint is not just a culmination of decades of multi-generational, community-centered programs and services, but also a strategic maneuver propelling PUENTE toward unprecedented success in the foreseeable future.

The educational and social service landscape is in a perpetual state of flux, demanding nimbleness and innovation. The entrenched disparities and fissures in our societal framework disproportionately affect the very populations PUENTE champions. What's truly novel is the burgeoning public consciousness and accompanying political resolve to fundamentally overhaul how we uplift the most vulnerable among us.

The forthcoming pages articulate the outcomes of this collaborative effort, blending continuity with fresh perspectives to shape PUENTE's trajectory. Our priorities are firmly anchored in a commitment to heightened family and community engagement, integrated supports, enhanced extended learning, and collaborative leadership informed by data-driven decision-making. Additionally, we've outlined strategies for forging stronger bonds with external partners and allies, strengthening our organizational capacity, and fostering intentional communication and outreach to our communities.

This plan will guide PUENTE in navigating these changes and serve as a compass on our journey to more inclusive, integrated, coordinated, whole-person, and responsive educational services. It provides us with new strategic priorities, focuses resources, aligns system-wide goals, and identifies desired key outcomes. We're dedicated to fortifying our internal infrastructure and processes to sustain our momentum well into the future. This strategic plan will guide PUENTE's operations and investments as we march towards our collective aspirations and desired educational outcomes.

The phrase, "Come, Connect, Complete" aptly characterizes PUENTE in many ways. We support our clients in establishing a strong foundation, fostering learning, and thriving throughout their life. This involves engaging with services, establishing connections, and successfully navigating each phase of their development. More importantly, PUENTE emphasizes growing in complexity and depth, deepening our roots in the community.

I want to thank our students and family members, board members, community partners, and other valuable advisors for their input to this strategic plan. We chose to engage in this process during a time of significant change, and I want to give special thanks to our staff for their dedication and perseverance. We extend an invitation for you to join us as we continue our steadfast mission to uplift the lives of children, youth, and families in Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles, and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome Greening". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white rectangular background.

Jerome Greening
Chief Executive Officer
PUENTE Learning Center

Overview of Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process centered around three guiding principles:

- What does PUENTE do well?
- What does our community need?
- What are the next big educational challenges that PUENTE is best suited to address?

In the period March-July 2024, PUENTE's staff leadership, executive team, members of the Boards of Directors, and key community partners engaged in an extensive strategic planning initiative. Facilitated by Health Management Associates (HMA), an external consulting firm specifically engaged for this purpose, the staff leadership and executive team convened multiple times over a five-month period. Together, they reviewed data, deliberated on critical insights, and collectively crafted a strategic roadmap for the organization.

To inform the development of the strategic plan, HMA collected and analyzed data on:

- Programmatic service utilization and metrics of success
- Family and community engagement
- Integrated support services, including key external partners and referral agencies
- Prior annual reports and other relevant documentation

These data were further informed with a series of stakeholder engagement activities including:

- Interviews and focus groups with program staff and leadership
- Interviews with community partner organizations
- Focus groups with families, students, and volunteers

The pages that follow showcase the resulting strategic plan intended to serve as a comprehensive roadmap for PUENTE to effectively steer and align its efforts over the next three years (Fiscal Year 2024-27). It offers calculated guidance on prioritizing attention and resources based on current assets and needs, tailored to the evolving social service and educational requirements of the Boyle Heights and East L.A. community. Recognizing the limitations of resources, strategic planning identifies key areas where targeted investments can maximize our impact, especially considering our new role and responsibilities as a Community School.

Who We Are

Our Mission

We are PUENTE: **P**eople **U**nited to **E**nrich the **N**eighborhood **T**hrough **E**ducation. Building bridges to learning and opportunity in Boyle Heights and beyond.

PUENTE's vision and core values reflect the organization's deepest beliefs and highest aspirations as we work towards our mission.

Our Vision

A brighter future where the transformative power of high-quality education unlocks the full potential of every student, addressing and disrupting inequity and injustice for children, youth, and adults.

Our Values

The values that guide our work:

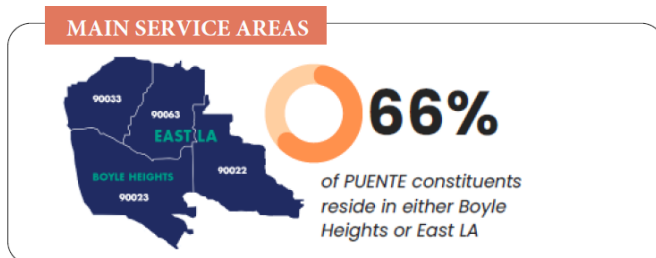
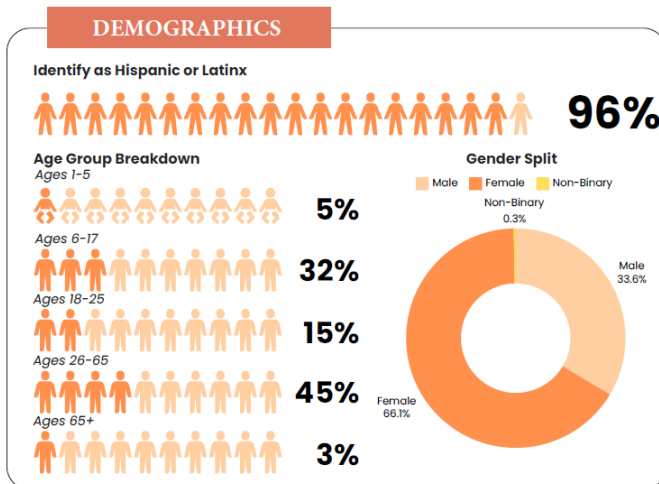
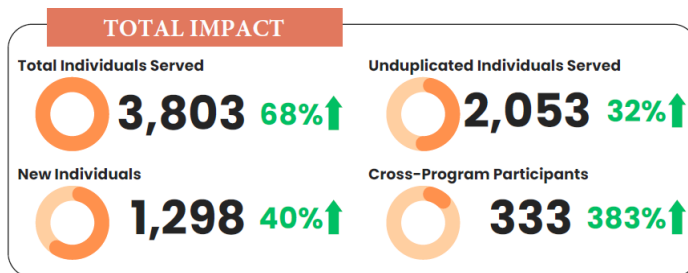
- **Educational Excellence** – We believe access to an excellent education is the gateway to opportunity. We strive to deliver the highest quality education for student achievement through innovation and continuous self-improvement in our teaching and service delivery.
- **Collaboration** – We believe that schools, families, and community members are essential to quality education and student success.
- **Equity** – We believe that education should prioritize the needs of underserved students to foster equity for those most impacted by systemic racial and economic injustice.

Who We Serve

Each year, PUENTE welcomes more than 2,000 individuals eager to enhance their lives through education and community engagement. Committed to respect and empowerment, PUENTE provides many ways for people of all ages to participate including preschool, charter elementary education, college and career programs, adult education, and community services.

Since its inception in 1985, PUENTE has touched the lives of over 120,000 students from Boyle Heights and beyond, serving as a driving force for educational equity and social justice. PUENTE fosters a powerful home-to-school connection and an inclusive learning environment that connects family and community members to an array of educational and support services. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, PUENTE continues to empower individuals, promote community cohesion, and cultivate future leaders.

Infographic data from FY 2023-2024 ([Link](#))



What We Do

PUENTE Learning Center is celebrated for its multifaceted role as a nonprofit educational institution. Renowned not only for its academic offerings but also as a vibrant community hub, it creates a welcoming environment for students and families alike. Committed to nurturing holistic development and active societal participation, PUENTE empowers individuals to achieve their full potential and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

With a diverse array of thoughtfully curated programs and initiatives, PUENTE fosters a culture of ongoing learning, resilience, and civic duty. Together, they warmly invite stakeholders to join in this journey toward shared advancement and prosperity. Our multigenerational approach to education is organized into the following programs and services.

Preschool

PUENTE Preschool provides high-quality early education for 45+ children aged 3 to 4 years of age with a part-day preschool Monday through Friday, with morning and afternoon sessions. Students work towards state DRDP (Desired Results Developmental Profile) goals to become Kindergarten-ready.

Elementary Charter School

PUENTE provides 300+ children grades K-5 with a high-quality education. Our intellectually-enriched and stimulating environment build skills and confidence, especially for English Learners, and we thoroughly engage parents to provide a strong foundation for success.

College and Career:


PUENTE's College and Career Program closes the opportunity gap for over 500 youth aged 14-24, nearly all of whom (95%) are Latino from low-income households. PUENTE's College and Career Program addresses the opportunity gap by helping youth graduate from high school, enter and continue with postsecondary education.

Adult Education

Through courses of study to improve language and academic skills, obtain technical training, and increase employability, PUENTE gives over 1,000 adult students each year the opportunity to become more self-sufficient and excel.

Across programs, PUENTE is committed to a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) grounded in Equity and implemented to provide a multi-generational approach to education that is culturally responsive and relevant. We must close opportunity gaps and do our utmost to dismantle systemic disparities for the population of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles.

MTSS help us organize our work so that it is intentional. It helps us understand when our efforts are directed at all students or for the entire community (Tier 1), when they are more targeted in nature and designed to intervene strategically to address an emerging or moderate need (Tier 2), and when an intensive focus of specialized support and case management is warranted (Tier 3). We are applying MTSS to all populations (children, youth, and adults) and across a variety of needs (academic, behavioral, and health).

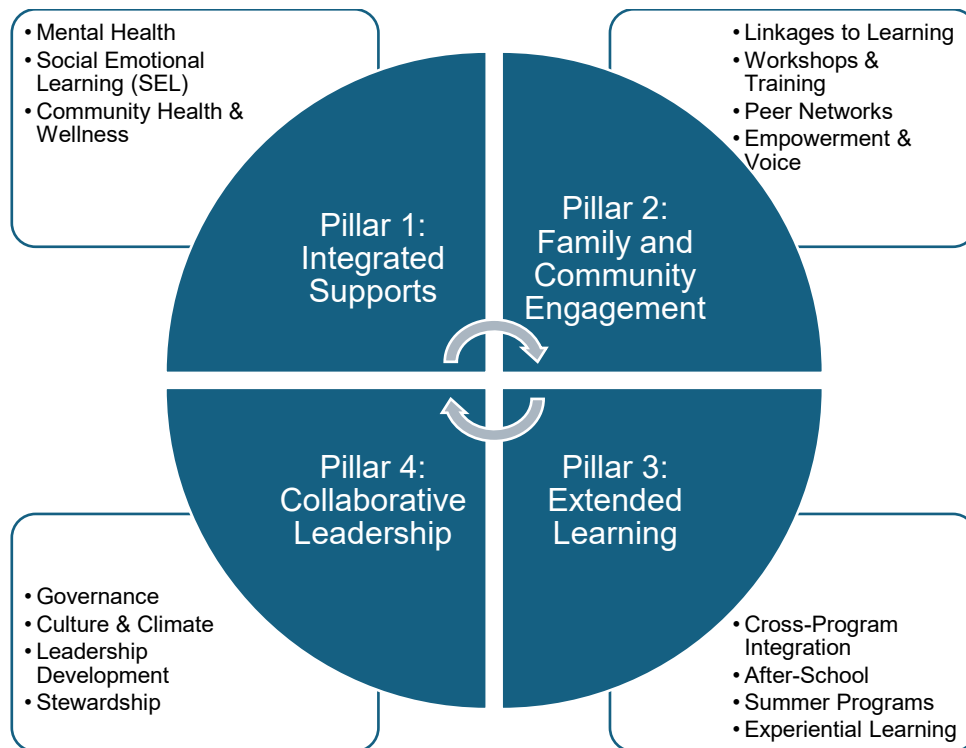


MTSS Tier 1 (All)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universal approaches to inform, educate, and screen.• Proactive best practices to lay a foundation for success
MTSS Tier 2 (Some)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted interventions to address mild and moderate needs with supportive programs, services, and resources.
MTSS Tier 3 (Few)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intensive services and supports, including referrals• Specialized case management for acute and overlapping needs.

How We are Organizing to Meet the Challenge

Our strategic plan seeks to accelerate PUENTE’s ability to combine a whole-person educational approach with integrated community-based services and supports. This holistic approach ensures that education is interwoven with the creation of safe and nurturing spaces, not limited to the confines of the school but embracing the broader contexts of health and community interactions.

Our strategic priorities are organized around a framework of pillars for ensuring organizational coherence and alignment across the multiple programs, services, and partnerships, with three cross-cutting pathways or categories of work shown below.



Cross-Cutting Pathways



3 Year Plan by Pillar (Goals, Strategies, Metrics)

Pillar 1: Integrated Supports

Pillar 1 is centered on removing barriers to learning. By embedding Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and implementing early identification and universal prevention strategies, we want to expand equitable access to mental health and showcase opportunities for enhanced community wellness and wellbeing. Simultaneously, PUENTE is committed to developing strategic partnerships and referral systems so that people with mild-to-moderate and more serious health concerns can obtain help in the community. With this pillar, PUENTE is demonstrating its commitment to serving vulnerable populations and closing disparities and gaps to whole person health and human services.

Strategies and Activities

1.1. Outreach and Communication: Raise awareness about SEL, Mental Health, and other community wellness services and supports.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Deliver culturally appropriate messages about SEL, Mental Health First Aid, and early identification, across all PUENTE programs and across different platforms and media, aimed at destigmatizing and normalizing asking for help.	•	•	
b. Provide educational workshops and trainings for staff, families, and community members to deepen community-wide understanding of the different MTSS tiers and range of prevention, early identification, and wellness services that PUENTE provides.	•	•	
c. Publicize referrals and partnerships PUENTE has with community-based organizations providing access to primary health care, more acute mental health services, and wraparound supports (e.g., housing, legal aid, food, etc.)		•	•
d. Develop materials and deliver training on key topics that deepen staff and community understanding of the relationship between mental health and academic, behavioral, and absenteeism outcomes.		•	•

1.2 Partnership and Collaboration: Enhance and expand relationships with local partners to increase integration and access to whole-person health, wellness, and wellbeing programs and services.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Inventory and solidify partnerships with a select group of 3-5 external organizations and agencies most aligned with PUENTE’s mission and committed to working collaboratively to receive referrals and provide these services.	•		
b. Work with external partners to strengthen information sharing and case management to ensure coordinated and integrated whole person wellness.		•	
c. Evaluate the influence and impact of strategic partnerships in relation to agreed upon metrics and outcomes.			•

1.3 Capacity and Infrastructure: Invest in systems and structures that allow PUENTE to respond flexibly to community needs while also providing an assessment of organizational impact.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Convene a multi-disciplinary group of PUENTE staff representing all key program lines to plan and pilot initiatives related to early identification, prevention, and crisis response in advance of informing and training staff across the organization.	•		
b. Refine and improve systems for documenting participation and tracking impact so that PUENTE has more and better information on which to base programmatic decisions.	•		
c. Develop and implement closed loop referral systems that track how many people received services following referrals to external partners (i.e., did they get services and have their needs met).		•	
d. Explore and assess emergent opportunities that expand access to school-linked health with sustainable funding streams (e.g., CYBHI) and new flexibilities that allow schools to blend and braid funding for these purposes.		•	•

Pillar 1: Key Indicators and Metrics of Success

Service Delivery and Use	Staff and Family Satisfaction	Other Key Milestones
<p>Involvement at least 20% of Preschool and Charter school families and 100% of staff in Pillar 1 training by Year 3.</p> <p>Increase the number of Preschool and Charter school screening and other early identification 15% by Year 3.</p> <p>Reduce Charter school chronic absenteeism by 10% annually.</p> <p>Reduce Charter school student disciplinary referrals by 10% annually.</p>	<p>Improve annual survey perceptions of...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Array of integrated support services and programs available • Ease of accessing services • Extent to which these services are culturally and linguistically responsive 	<p>Establish MOUs with 3-5 key partners focused on Pillar 1 services and support by the end of Year 1.</p> <p>Publicize the MTSS for mental health and wellness to the PUENTE community by the end of Year 2.</p> <p>Conduct and present a summative evaluation of Pillar 1 impacts by the end of Year 3.</p>

Pillar 2: Family & Community Engagement

Pillar 2 is based on the need to provide culturally relevant and responsive programs and services that meet the needs of PUENTE’s multigenerational community. We want to engage our families and community members in ways that inform, train, and connect them to a range of opportunities. We want to strengthen and extend PUENTE’s role as a true “community hub” and access point for growth, learning, and personal development for all ages and stages.

Strategies and Activities

2.1 Outreach and Communication: Focus on reinforcing messages that reinforce PUENTE’s multigenerational approach to education and link people to new opportunities for engaging directly in PUENTE’s offerings.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Revise the content and organization of the PUENTE website and Parent Square app to provide clearer access and direct linkages to site-based cross-program resources and upcoming activities; provide parallel materials in paper (analog) formats.	•		
b. Leverage Pillar 1’s Integrated Services emphasis (e.g., food distribution, wellness trainings, etc.) as opportunities for enhanced outreach and interaction with families and community members who may be less familiar with PUENTE’s range of programs and services.	•	•	
c. Identify a common set of topics and training modules for use with families and community members that can be tailored and adapted by each PUENTE program.		•	•
d. Develop and deliver a calendar of quarterly “integrative” events that bring together staff and participants from all PUENTE’s major programs in the evening or weekends for social interactions that promote fun, thematic, hands-on learning.		•	•

2.2 Partnership and Collaboration: Focus on relationship-building and expanded opportunities for quality social interactions among PUENTE staff, families with children, and community members.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Continue and expand use of student-led conferences and SEL as vehicles for showcasing how families can understand and authentically participate in the education of their children and extended family members.	•	•	
b. Convene and organize peer networks of families and community members interested in discussing and exploring educational and social issues, as well as assuming a leadership and/or volunteer roles within PUENTE.		•	•
c. Plan and prioritize interactions with families that showcase how they can support academic and social emotional learning, reinforce norms for social interactions and behavior, and promote regular school attendance.		•	•

2.3. Capacity and Infrastructure: Provide tools, resources, and facilities improvements that reinforce PUENTE as a community hub to gather, learn, and grow alongside responsive staff and supportive community partners.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Provide training and professional development for staff on expectations for family and community engagement, and best practices for doing so.	•		
b. Enhance and improve the physical layout and use of visual displays and data in PUENTE’s facilities as a means of engaging with and communicating with students, families, and community members.		•	
c. Plan and develop an on-site Community Center where families and community members can access information and resources, troubleshoot issues, receive training, and get connected to services and supports within and external to PUENTE.		•	•

Pillar 2: Key Indicators and Metrics of Success

Service Delivery and Use	Family and Staff Satisfaction	Other Key Milestones
<p>Increase family and community participation in evening/weekend events by 25% by Year 3.</p> <p>Involve every household with enrolled children in at least one workshop, training, or social activity annually.</p> <p>Reduce Charter school chronic absenteeism by 10% annually.</p> <p>Reduce Charter school student disciplinary referrals by 10% annually.</p>	<p>Improve perceptions of...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and use of supportive and referral services • Welcoming facilities and culture of inclusion • Relevance and impact of training and informational sessions • Timeliness of response to requests for information or assistance 	<p>By Year 3, PUENTE Charter School will have a lottery for enrollment and be fully enrolled on the annual Count Day (the 20th day of the school year).</p> <p>Develop an on-site place for families and community members to gather and interact.</p> <p>At least one family peer network established and meeting regularly.</p>

Pillar 3: Extended Learning

Pillar 3 is our vehicle for integrating within and across the continuum of PUENTE’s programs and services. For example, the pre-school programs must integrate with the Charter School to ensure Kindergarten readiness. In addition, PUENTE provides extracurricular enrichment and other extensions of learning beyond the school day through after-school and college readiness programs, as well as adult education classes for educational and career development. We want to strengthen linkages and enhance the connectivity of these opportunities so that our entire community can participate in a more seamless, coherent range of educational and support services.

Strategies and Activities

3.1 Communication and Outreach: Engage and involve communities and partners in the assessment of need and formulation of innovations that address systemic issues in healthcare.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Provide training and informational resources on the MTSS framework and how it functions as an umbrella approach for PUENTE across programs.	•		
b. Develop and deliver a set of common trainings and workshops (e.g., SEL) across all major program lines, tailored and adapted to the needs of each key constituency at PUENTE (students, families, community members, and staff).		•	
c. Collect and present data that tells a cumulative “story” of key innovations and transformational change within and across programs to share with the larger community.			•

3.2 Partnership and Collaboration: Enlist and deepen relationships with partners well positioned to foster cross-program integration and support agency-wide success.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Facilitate and foster connections between external partners and family/parent networks and leaders.	•		
b. Work with external partners to strengthen information sharing and case management to ensure coordinated and integrated whole person wellness.		•	
c. Identify additional organizations and potential new partners with a proven track record of success within key areas reflective of community needs.			•

3.3.Capacity and Infrastructure: Expand opportunities and supports that encourage joint endeavors and ongoing sharing of data and information across PUENTE’s programs and services.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Explore the use of extended learning programs after-school and during school breaks for Pillar 1 (e.g., school-based mental health) and Pillar 2 (e.g., family training and workshops) programming.	•		
b. Identify and purchase (or upgrade) data management systems for tracking longitudinal quantitative data at the participant level.		•	
c. Organize twice yearly convenings of staff across programs to share updates on progress made, lessons learned, and key outcomes/milestones.		•	•

Pillar 3: Key Indicators and Metrics of Success

Service Delivery and Use	Family and Staff Satisfaction	Other Key Milestones
Increase cross-program referrals by 10% annually.	Improve perceptions of... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seamless service coordination and/or delivery. • Whole person health outcomes/impact • Access to data and information 	Conduct and present an evaluation of program and pillar impacts by the end of Year 3. Identification of 1-2 new partners to add to PUENTE’s “network of care”

Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership

Pillar 4 centers on strengthening a culture and climate at PUENTE conducive to collaborative problem-solving. We want to involve and cultivate leaders in shaping PUENTE’s direction and guiding implementation of our priorities. We want to consistently showcase a culture and climate that welcomes input, demonstrates transparency, and ensures accountability for agreed upon outcomes. In this way, PUENTE will continue to deepen its legacy and role as an organization committed to stewardship of community assets and resources.

Strategies and Activities

4.1 Outreach and Communication: Establish common understandings and vocabulary for participation in shared decision-making through regular training and access to information and resources.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Provide training and informational resources on existing public data (e.g., Form 990, GuideStar, etc.) on PUENTE for staff and family/community members.	•		
b. Embed key accountability data (e.g., chronic absenteeism, English Learner reclassification, etc.) into regular communication and interactions with families and the community.	•	•	•
c. Provide training and workshops on budgeting and financial planning in the educational and nonprofit sectors for staff and family/community members.		•	•
d. Involve all Board members in agency development and fundraising, whether direct giving or indirect ambassadorial support that opens doors to potential funders and professional networks.	•	•	•

4.2 Partnership and Collaboration: Demonstrate an agency-wide commitment to empowering people as partners in collaborative leadership. Expand joint actions between staff and board members to advance PUENTE’s growth and stability.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Begin each school or fiscal year with a community-wide presentation that level sets for all by highlighting key accomplishments from the prior year, priorities for the upcoming year, along with potential changes tied to fiscal health and/or changing political conditions.	•	•	

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| b. Involve a wide base of staff, family, and community leaders in discussions about how data is informing continuous improvement. | | | • | • |
| c. Explore development of a leadership group or cadre to assist with fundraising and development, drawing on lessons from other schools and nonprofits. | | | | • |
| d. Leverage board, donor, and funder relationships to expand development revenue and advancement to average \$2 million in annual revenue over the next three years | | | | • |

4.3. Capacity and Infrastructure: Advance equity and inclusion by considering potential changes to agency policies and administrative processes.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a. Ensure that adequate time is allocated for understanding and vetting key issues prior to formal decisions, including potential revision and/or adoption of bylaws or other governance and/or board policies.	•		
b. Modify processes for annual employee performance evaluation to include an opportunity for each staff person to craft an individualized career growth plan with their supervisor, including mentoring and monitoring.		•	
c. Investigate best practices on distributed leadership and board development in comparable nonprofit and charter school settings to expand staff voice and interactions between staff and board members.		•	•
d. Conduct a Board assessment to review Board of Directors performance and adherence to best practices.			•
e. Present annual formative evaluations on progress implementing the four pillars of the strategic plan, with a summative impact evaluation by the end of Year 3 formally presented to the Board of Directors.		•	•

Pillar 4: Key Indicators and Metrics of Success

Service Delivery and Use	Family and Staff Satisfaction	Other Key Milestones
<p>Increase family and community participation in governance bodies by 25% by Year 3.</p> <p>Increase staff participation in governance bodies by 15% by Year 3.</p> <p>At least 30% of staff have a career growth plan.</p>	<p>Improve perceptions of...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School culture and climate • Access to information and resources • Commitment to data and continuous improvement • Agency direction and oversight 	<p>Achieve an annual staff retention of 80% or higher by the end of Year 3.</p> <p>Grow the size of PUENTE’s Board of Directors to 10 members.</p> <p>Ensure 100% compliance of Board members with our give-or-get policy.</p> <p>Achieve an average of \$2m in annual development and advancement revenue over the three years of the plan.</p> <p>By Year 3, PUENTE will have total net assets of \$35 million, with an annual operating budget of \$10 million and an operating surplus.</p>

Acknowledgements

PUENTE extends sincere gratitude to the Staff Executive and Program Leadership members, our Board of Directors, and Community Partners for their invaluable input into shaping the Strategic Plan. Your dedication and insights have illuminated our path forward, ensuring that our initiatives are grounded in collective wisdom and foresight. Together, we are poised to navigate the complexities of meeting the educational and social needs of the diverse communities we serve with clarity and purpose.

Your dedication and expertise have been instrumental in shaping our vision and guiding our mission towards excellence. Thank you for your continued support and contributions.

Staff Executive and Program Leadership

Jerome Greening, CEO
Angelica Castro, Vice President of Finance and Administration
Matt Wells, Vice President of Advancement
Michele Wolfe, Vice President of Programs
Brenda Meza, Charter School Principal
Dominic Armendariz, Director of Early Education
Tesa Marquez, Director of Human Resources
Diana Juarez, Charter School Vice Principal
Jasmine Medrano, College and Career Program Manager
Maria Esparza, Volunteer Services Manager

Board of Directors

Tyler Press
Jocelyn Rosenwald
Lara Lightbody
Scott Williams

Community Partners

Visión y Compromiso
White Memorial Community Health Clinic
Think Together