



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 -2024





MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

Reflecting on the results of PUENTE Learning Center’s 2023-2024 program year, we are deeply moved by the progress and stories of our students and their families. It is our work to meet students where they are and walk alongside them as they pursue their educational goals, leading to self-sufficiency and civic engagement.

One of the most enduring aspects of our founder Sister Jennie Lechtenberg’s vision for PUENTE is our commitment to actively listen to our constituents. This core value continues to shape our approach. We have heard the call to deepen our connection to students of all ages. In this report, you will read about the story of Mirna, a charter elementary school parent and adult education student whose experience at PUENTE inspired her to enroll in community college.

We’re also excited to share news about improvements we’re making to our facilities. Our comprehensive renovation project is designed to ensure the Richard J. Riordan Building remains up-to-date and inviting for decades to come. These changes will help us better accommodate the needs of our community. We’re eagerly anticipating the grand reopening of our newly upgraded space in the coming year.

With our broad community of supporters by our side, PUENTE continues to provide high-quality educational options for Boyle Heights and beyond. Our preschool received a Tier 5 designation from Quality Start Los Angeles, the highest rating possible. PUENTE Charter Elementary was recognized as a high-performing school, in the top 19% of LAUSD-authorized charters. Our College and Career Program students achieve remarkable outcomes, with high school seniors 53% more likely to enroll in college compared to their peers statewide.

Thank you for standing with us as we create a brighter future for our students and their families. Education has the power to change lives, and—through our collective efforts—we’re helping students reach their full capabilities while addressing long-standing inequities. We are grateful for the vital role you play in our work.

In partnership,



Jerome Greening
Jerome Greening
 Chief Executive Officer



Chun Wong
Chun Wong
 Board Chair

MEET MIRNA

PUENTE has impacted multiple generations of Mirna’s family. That impact started with her son and older daughter who attended PUENTE Preschool and are now successful adults, and it continues with her daughter Mikaela who graduated from the same preschool program and is now a third grader at PUENTE Charter Elementary School. As for Mirna, while her children have been learning in their classrooms, she has advanced her own education through PUENTE’s classes for adults, studying English as a Second Language (ESL) and achieving her High School Equivalency certification.

Since moving to Boyle Heights from Sinaloa, Mexico, Mirna has faced numerous challenges as a single mother of three. She often found herself prioritizing her family over her own educational aspirations.

As her children grew and built their own successful careers, Mirna decided it was time to pursue her own goals and enroll in ESL classes. “I have always wanted to move forward,” she explains, “but there’s no way you can grow if you don’t speak English in this country.” A memorable setback—being denied employment due to her limited English—became the catalyst for change. That rejection transformed into motivation, marking a decisive moment in Mirna’s personal journey.

Under the guidance of Mr. Navarro, an encouraging ESL instructor at PUENTE, Mirna transformed her determination into achievement. “He helped me believe that I could keep going, no matter the challenges I faced,” she recalls. Today, Mirna confidently navigates between Spanish and English in her role as a community outreach worker—a testament to her perseverance.



Mirna’s educational momentum continued to build as she tackled her next goal: earning her high school equivalency. Supported by PUENTE’s test preparation classes, she successfully passed the HiSET exam—but she didn’t stop there. Now enrolled at Los Angeles Trade Technical College and pursuing a degree in community planning, Mirna speaks with conviction about her future: “PUENTE has provided me with the resources and motivation to continue my education. One day, I will graduate from college and proudly say that I did it.”

Her story powerfully illustrates PUENTE’s mission—empowering students and families to pursue opportunity. As Mirna pursues

her goals, she’s not just creating a brighter future for herself; she’s setting an inspiring example for her children about the possibilities that education can unlock. “Sí se puede,” she says with certainty. “You just have to believe that you deserve the chance.”



“PUENTE gave me that ‘Sí se puede,’”
Mirna shares. “You just have to believe that you deserve the chance.”

WHO WE SERVE

2,053

Children, Youth,
and Adult Students

67%

of PUENTE
students and
families live in
Boyle Heights or
East Los Angeles

96%

Latino Student Body

4,990

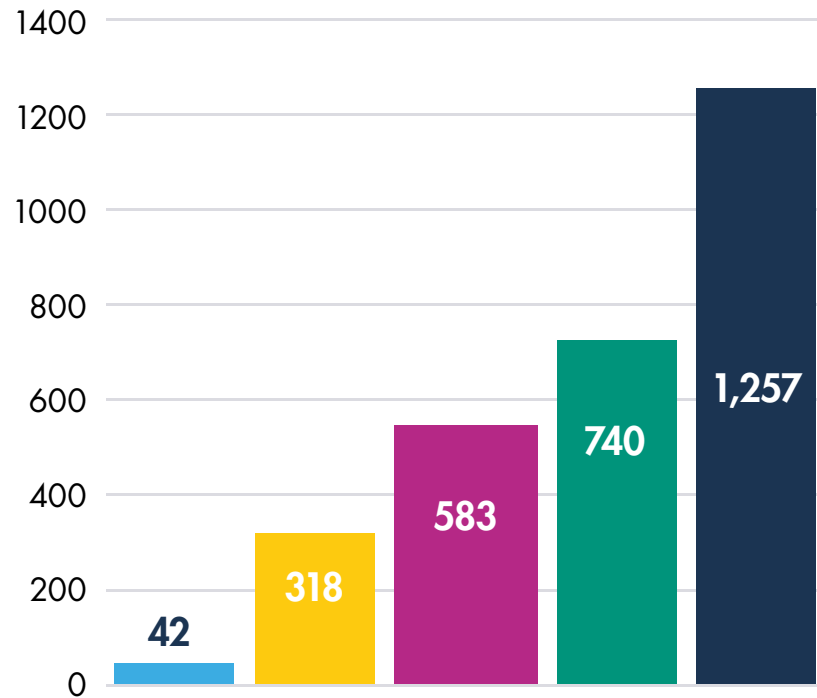
Community Service
Touchpoints

115

total Zip
Codes Served

88%

of PUENTE students and
families live in areas of
concentrated poverty*



Numbers Served

By Program

- Preschool
- Charter Elementary School
- College & Career Program
- Adult Education
- Community Services

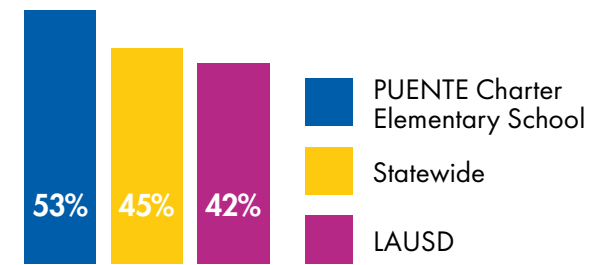
*The PUENTE Service Area—including LA City Council Districts 1, 13, and 14 as well as LA County Service Planning Area 6—has some of the highest levels of unemployment, food insecurity, and homelessness in LA County.

OUR IMPACT

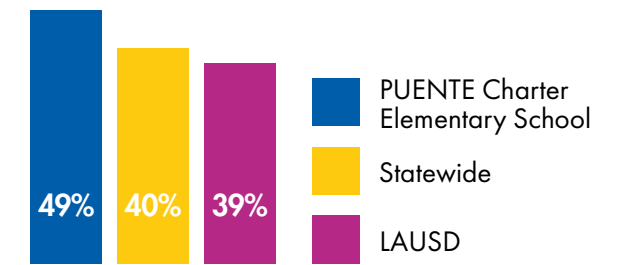
How PUENTE Compares

Elementary School Grade-Level Proficiency Rates

English Language Arts

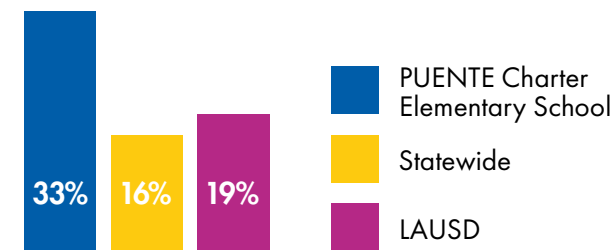


Math



*2023-2024 CAASPP exam, compared with elementary schools statewide

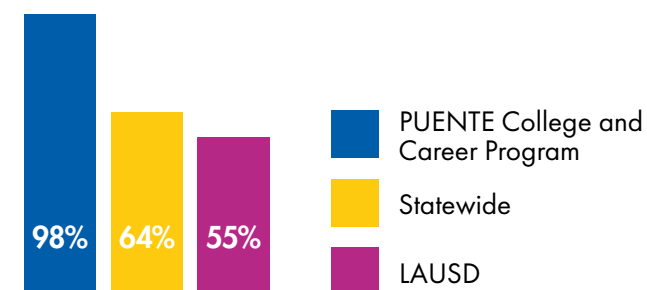
Re-Classified Fluent English Proficient



PUENTE achieved the 95th percentile for English Learner Re-Classification

**2023-2024 ELAC exam, compared with elementary schools statewide

College Enrollment Rates



PUENTE College and Career Program students have been enrolled at prestigious institutions like [Columbia](#), [Northwestern](#), [USC](#), [Boston College](#), [UC Berkeley](#), and [UCLA](#).

WHAT WE DO

Building Bridges to Education since 1985, for Boyle Heights and beyond



Preschool

- California State Preschool Program site
- Play-Based Emergent Curriculum
- Part-Day Sessions, Morning and Afternoon
- Health Screenings
- Dental Exams
- Parent Engagement Workshops



Charter Elementary School

- Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Project-Based Learning
- Arts and Fitness Enrichment
- Parent Resources
- After-School Program
- Summer Bridge Learning



College & Career

- Mentorship
- Case Management
- Campus Tours
- Financial Aid Counseling
- Scholarships
- Paid Internships
- Career Exploration Workshops



Adult Education

- English as a Second Language
- High School Diploma
- Career Skills
- Citizenship Test Preparation



Community Services

- Food Distribution
- Health Screenings
- Vaccinations
- Know-Your-Rights Workshops
- Resource Fairs



A NEW OPPORTUNITY

PUENTE Charter Elementary School (CES) was privileged to be selected for a California Community Schools Partnership Implementation Grant.

This grant positions PUENTE CES as a model for innovative education. The substantial funding of over \$1 million, spread across five years, underscores our school's dedication to tackling deep-rooted educational inequality.

Principal Brenda Meza emphasizes PUENTE CES's holistic approach, stating that "we offer wide-ranging support services to ensure students' success in school and in life." Ms. Meza stresses the importance of removing obstacles to learning in order to unlock a child's full potential. PUENTE integrates various support services within the school environment including health and dental check-ups, food distributions, vaccinations, and social service referrals.

According to Principal Meza, the grant funding will enable the school to expand on PUENTE's comprehensive educational strategy. Our "Whole-Child Approach" encompasses the use of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, integration of Socio-Emotional Learning, and teaching methods that are sensitive to trauma experiences.

Through this Community Schools Grant, PUENTE aims to enhance student outcomes and work towards our vision of a more equitable society.



JOSE'S JOURNEY

Born in Mexico and raised in Boyle Heights, Jose's journey to higher education was far from straightforward. As an undocumented, first-generation college student at California State University, Los Angeles, he faced significant obstacles that threatened to derail his academic dreams.

Financial challenges were constant. Without access to on-campus jobs and limited off-campus options for employment, Jose struggled to cover basic educational expenses. Even with tuition covered by student financial aid, purchasing school materials became an uphill battle. "It felt like I was always playing catch-up," he recalls.

Jose found the support he needed when he discovered the PUENTE College and Career Program, which provides targeted assistance for students like Jose to persist through college towards graduation. Through scholarships, mentorship, and hands-on experience, PUENTE has helped Jose stay in school, build career skills, and keep pushing forward despite the odds.

In affiliation with UnidosUS's Avanzando through College initiative, PUENTE provides \$500 student stipends each school year to help cover basic needs such as textbooks. Moreover, PUENTE's services extend beyond financial assistance. The organization's comprehensive approach includes cohort learning, one-on-one case management, and financial literacy workshops. "As a first-generation student, I didn't have anyone to show me how to budget or save," Jose shares, "so those sessions were eye-opening."

Through PUENTE's summer internship program, Jose's involvement quickly evolved from participant to leader. During his first summer internship, Jose was a teaching assistant at PUENTE, as part of the CASA Program from UnidosUS. Jose gained valuable skills in curriculum development and engagement. By his second summer, Jose was the team leader for the entire cohort of CASA participants—a testament to his growth and potential.



"The staff members at PUENTE are always there for me," Jose explains. "They make time to check in, provide feedback, and help navigate the challenges of being an undocumented student. Now more than ever, their encouragement makes me believe in myself."

These experiences have done more than support his education—they shaped his professional identity. Jose has developed critical leadership skills, improved his public speaking, and gained confidence for his future career as a civil engineer.

Jose continues to face significant pressures in his final stretch of college. Yet, thanks to PUENTE, he feels prepared.

Jose's story represents more than individual achievement. It's a powerful illustration of how targeted support can transform educational barriers into opportunities. Through organizations like PUENTE, students can not only survive complex educational systems but truly thrive.

As he moves closer to graduation, Jose carries with him the skills, confidence, and support that will propel him towards his goals.

"PUENTE has helped me in ways I never expected," Jose reflects. "From financial support to internships, workshops, and mentoring—it's all been a huge part of my success so far."

FACILITY RENOVATION

In 2023-2024, PUENTE Learning Center advanced its extensive renovation project, which has a budget of over \$10 million.

The upgraded facility, slated for completion in 2025, will feature:

- Improvements to meet current occupancy codes
- Enhanced exterior features, including cutting-edge seismic dampers, external staircases, new walls, and an updated building type
- Transformation of 8,000 square feet on the second floor into new classroom space



“This project goes beyond just a physical expansion,” says PUENTE Vice President of Finance and Administration Angelica Castro. “It represents a strategic investment to ensure PUENTE remains a top-quality educational option in the community for many years to come.”

Throughout the renovation process, PUENTE Learning Center has maintained full operations. To accommodate the ongoing work, a temporary facility was set up in our parking lot, with outdoor spaces for children’s recess and two portable classrooms for adult students.

PUENTE Recognized by Congressman Jimmy Gomez



PUENTE Learning Center has been a respected educational institution in Los Angeles for close to four decades, focusing on providing services to those with the greatest need. Recently, the organization received significant recognition from Congressman Jimmy Gomez’s office in the form of an \$850,000 federal grant. This funding, managed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, is designated for PUENTE’s facility renovation project. Our organization is grateful to be considered a reliable partner by the U.S. House of Representatives in their shared goal of enhancing California’s 34th Congressional District.

STRATEGIC PLAN

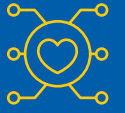
During 2023-2024, PUENTE Learning Center finished implementing its three-year strategic plan. As we reflect on the past three years, PUENTE has made significant progress in our five strategic priority areas.



Family Engagement



Community Outreach



Partnerships and Networking



Continuous Improvement



Stewardship and Sustainability



2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS



STEM Entrepreneurs Win First Place

A team of four high school students from the PUENTE College and Career Program showcased their skills at the UnidosUS Conference in Chicago in July 2023. Their performance earned them 1st Place in the Lideres STEM entrepreneur competition, where they were evaluated by a panel of FedEx executives.



LA Big 5K

Team PUENTE hit the pavement at Dodger Stadium for the LA Big 5K in March 2024, with 113 participants raising over \$23,000.



“High-Performing” Charter School

PUENTE Charter Elementary School was recognized as “high-performing” by the California Department of Education, a designation received by just 19% of LAUSD-authorized charter schools.



A Re-Imagined PUENTE Schoolyard

PUENTE submitted plans for its Re-Imagined Schoolyard to support the development of our young scholars. The project includes natural elements, garden beds, a bike path, an open sports field, and an outdoor play structure. Construction is scheduled for completion by Spring 2025.



¡Servicio é Impacto!

PUENTE gathered its supporters and community for a magical benefit event in October 2023 at our campus. ¡Servicio é Impacto! raised crucial funds to support our mission and celebrated our three awardees – the Citi Foundation, Viviano Juarez, and the Riordan Foundation.



Preschool Receives Top-Tier QSLA Rating

PUENTE Preschool received a Tier 5 rating from Quality Start Los Angeles – the highest level attainable. PUENTE Preschool is the only Tier 5-rated early education center in Boyle Heights.



PUENTE NEXt

The PUENTE College and Career Program launched PUENTE NEXt (Navigating Education and Transitions) to empower first-generation college graduates as they navigate their entry into the workforce or pursue advanced degrees.



Volunteer Program

175 volunteers provided over 5,000 hours of service with PUENTE, finding a sense of purpose and supporting our mission through classroom assistance, after school tutoring, food distribution, mentorship, and more. Program partners included College Corps, Angeleno Corps, and the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

OUR SUPPORTERS

\$100,000 and above

California Department of Education
The Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation
UnidosUS

\$25,000-\$99,999

The Riordan Foundation
The Rose Hills Foundation

\$10,000-\$24,999

Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation
Citizens Business Bank
GPSN
Johnny Carson Foundation
Mizrahi Tefahot Bank
The Orinoco Foundation
Tito's Handmade Vodka
Robert Tuttle and Maria Hummer-Tuttle
U.S. Bank Foundation
Union Pacific Foundation
USC Good Neighbors Grant Program
Vernon CommUNITY Fund
The William C. Bannerman Foundation
William H. Hannon Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

Leticia Acosta
The Ahmanson Foundation
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Citibank
City of Los Angeles
Dollar General Literacy Foundation
ECMC Foundation
Lon V. Smith Foundation
The Chris & Melody Malachowsky Family Foundation
Mata Construction
The Snell & Wilmer Foundation

\$2,500-\$4,999

AvalonBay Communities
The Dominguez Firm
Sidney Stern Memorial Trust

\$1,000-\$2,499

Raul and Lisa Amezcua
Christina Benson and Kenneth Wells
Glenn Bozarth
Robert Davidow

James Drasdo and Wendy Drasdo
The Eli & Edythe L. Broad Foundation
Rich Erickson
Andrea Fox
Ajit Kittur
Morgan Stanley Foundation
Michael Penjoyan and Jen Penjoyan
Ramirez & Company, Inc.
Maria Solis-Martinez and Rufino Martinez
Bill Wolfe
Chun and Mei Wong

\$500-\$999

Adventist Health White Memorial
Beneficial State Foundation
Blue Shield of California
Angelica Castro
Eileen Chun
Deisi Gonzalez
Jake Higbee
Merilee Oakes
Roy E. Crummer Foundation
Joseph Steins
Zelda Zinn

\$250-\$499

Norma Campos and Jose Garcia
Jill Collins
Karla Estrada and Eduardo Jimenez
Google
Jerome Greening and Adolfo Prieto
Island United Church of Foster City
Karla Jimenez
Abigail Maldonado and Alfonso Delgado
Daniel Marquez and Mirella Saucedo
Ron Nessim and Paulette Nessim
Tyler Press and Lindsey Rostal
Rize Credit Union
Helen Sztrigler Weston and Richard Weston
Think Together
Delia Zavala

\$100-\$249

Hugo Almeida and Genevieve Almeida
Martha Armendariz and Jorge Armendariz
Francisco Javier Avila
Brynne Blumstein

The Boeing Company
Samuel Bonilla
Nataly Cruz and Gerardo Conde
Juan Fierro De Lira
Margaret Echeverria
Mario Echeverria II
Barry Eng
Alexis Flores
Rosa Fonseca and Luis Fonseca
Aura Fuentes and Daniel Mejia
Michael Gitlin
Ken Gonzales
Miguel Gonzalez
Keith Gregory
Andrea Griego
Monica Higuera and Hermelindo Sanchez
Javier Ibarra
Patrick Kenealy
Barb Kipreos
Lara Lightbody and David Lightbody
Mark Mabray
The Marroquinn Family
Jasmine Medrano
Brenda Meza
Carlos Alberto Ortega Tirado
Irene Ortiz
Margarita Padilla and Enrique Padilla
Arturo Perez
Maria Elena Pinedo
Christen Press
Rebellion Ninety Nine
Guillermo Rincon
Irais Rodriguez
Claudia Ruf
Maria Salcido
Jorge Sandoval and Barbara Sandoval
Josh Schneiderman
Mary Ann Scovel
Bill Serumgard
Chris Steins and Mindy Steins
USC Credit Union
Marisol Valencia
Sheng Vang
Michele Wolfe and Cesar Guzman
Michael Yung
Ignacio Zamudio
Fortune Zuckerman and Ken Fry

\$50-\$99

Regina Aguilar
Katie Alheim
Lea Armendariz
Esteban Barajas
Judith Cabrales
Sandra Cabrales
Oscar Cabrales and Sandra Cabrales
Patrick Conlon
Cynthia Corrales
Simon Cortez
Lauren Coyle
Maria De Casas
Dana Dean
Ji Di
Maria Esparza
Claudia Flores and Jorge Lara
Tom Foskarino
Julieta Garcia
Erik Gomez
Carmen Gomez
Cindy Gonzalez and Luis Orozco
Connie Gonzalez
Raul Guerrero
Chris Hiromura
Danielle Hom
InBalance Acupuncture PT
Teresa Kohli
Brenda Kolb
Andy Lippman
Lizbeth Madrigal and Daniel Solano
Maria Ocampo and Danny Aceituno
Ricardo Orozco
Jeiry Ortiz and Nicolas Hernandez
Brittany Parker

Jose Quintana
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Patricia Reynaldo
Maggie Robinson
Ariana Rodriguez
Walter Rodriguez
Mary Ronau
Jason Rubio
Hilda Ruiz
Hermelindo Sanchez
Elvia Sarabia
Elizabeth Stewart
Joe Taraszkiwicz
Hillary Teibbs
Anthony Tiscareno
Yajaira Valencia
Thomas Weinlandt
Matt Wells and Julia Cherlow
Jesus Wocinco
Lory Yeh
Eileen Yip

GIFTS IN-KIND

\$100,000 and above

LAUSD, Division of Adult and Career Education

\$25,000-\$99,999

AmeriCorps VISTA
Los Angeles City College

\$10,000-\$24,999

Microsoft

\$2,500-\$9,999

Food Finders

La Jolla Tortilleria
Los Angeles Fire Department

\$1,000-\$2,499

Gustavo Castellanos and Lilia Lopez
Rize Credit Union
USC, Office of Civic Engagement

\$500-\$999

City of Vernon
Office of Miguel Santiago, California State Assemblyman, 54th District
Snell & Wilmer
Sysco

\$100-\$499

The Home Depot
Laughing Frog Yoga
Kendra Scott
UCLA Athletics

\$50-\$99

Jovenes
Karla Estrada and Eduardo Jimenez
Malibu Wine Hikes
Ashley Ramirez
Santa Barbara Zoo

Thank you also to those donors who have chosen to remain anonymous.

This list recognizes those who contributed \$50 or more to PUENTE Learning Center between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. Every effort has been made to ensure that the list is complete and accurate. If errors or omissions have occurred, please accept our apologies and contact the Advancement Department at 323-780-5312 or donate@puente.org to report corrections. Thank you.

Give Monthly for Greater Impact

Go further with your support by joining PUENTE Partners, our recurring gift program. Provide reliable, timely gifts that help create brighter futures for students and families in need. Show your personal commitment to a better world where everyone has access to learning and opportunity.

Giving monthly with your credit card is easy and convenient. We'll keep you posted on the progress we're making with regular updates, and we'll send you a year-end tax receipt.

Please give monthly at puente.org/donate or contact us at donate@puente.org to learn more.

OUR PEOPLE

At PUENTE Learning Center, our staff team is the driving force behind our mission to transform lives through comprehensive educational services in Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles, and beyond. We are dedicated to equality of opportunity, ensuring that every individual who joins our organization is empowered to reach their potential. More than just a service provider, PUENTE is a vibrant community committed to breaking down barriers and creating pathways to success.

Celebrating Commitment

STAFF TENURES

17%
10 years
or more

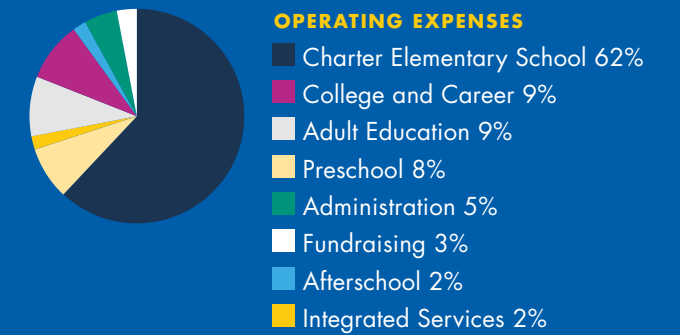
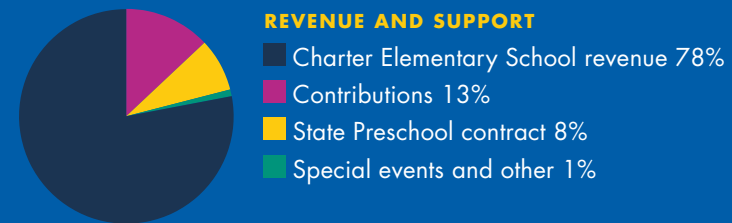
10%
25 years
or more

PUENTE takes pride in recognizing the commitment of our entire staff, and especially those individuals who have been with us for 10 years or more. Long tenures are a reflection of staff loyalty and the enduring value of our organization. As we continue to advance our mission, our dedicated team members are the foundation upon which we build our success.



FINANCIALS

During 2023-2024, PUENTE Learning Center achieved revenues of \$7.7 million dollars, an increase of 3% from last year. Operating expenses were \$9.5 million. A significant portion of these expenses were channeled towards programming with an ongoing focus to minimize overhead and administrative expenses. In addition, PUENTE invested \$5.9 million towards our facility renovation as we look forward to the project's completion in 2025.



Statement of Activities 2023-2024

OPERATING REVENUE

Contributions	\$ 1,063,354
Preschool Program	588,962
Special events	61,696
Charter School	5,966,966
Other revenues	7,693
Total operating revenue	\$ 7,688,671

OPERATING EXPENSES AND LOSSES

Programs and educational	\$ 8,756,631
Management and general	490,794
Fundraising	250,485
Total operating expenses	\$ 9,497,910

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS FROM OPERATIONS

\$ (1,809,239)

OTHER ITEMS CONSIDERED TO BE NON-OPERATING

Investment return, net	\$ 3,182,546
Interest income	10,401

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

\$ 1,383,708

Net assets at beginning of year	30,848,475
Net assets at end of year	\$ 32,232,183

LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors

Chun Wong, Chair
Business Advisor
Harris OnPoint

Jocelyn Rosenwald, Treasurer
Director of Acquisitions
Beach Front Properties, LLC

Lara Lightbody
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Brenda Meza
Charter School Principal

Angelica Castro
Vice President of Finance
and Administration

Dominic Armendariz
Director of Early Education

Tesa Marquez
Director of Human Resources

Matt Wells
Vice President of Advancement



“I am so thankful to PUENTE for the opportunity to learn English. They helped me have the confidence to meet my educational goals, and I got my high school diploma.

– PUENTE Adult Student



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Los Angeles, CA 90033
(323) 780-8900



www.puente.org