

# The College-Ready **PROMISE**

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## **Five California Public Charter Networks Receive \$60 Million to Promote Effective Teaching and Prepare More Students to Succeed in College**

*Grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Will Support The College-Ready Promise as Part of a Groundbreaking Effort to Boost Student Achievement*

LOS ANGELES—A coalition of five California public charter management organizations will receive \$60 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to increase effective teaching so that more students graduate college-ready. The first-of-its-kind partnership—known as The College-Ready Promise—was named one of the foundation’s Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching sites because of its innovative plan to reform how teachers are recruited, evaluated, supported, retained, and rewarded.

The College-Ready Promise includes organizations with a strong track record of successfully serving low-income and minority students: [Alliance College-Ready Public Schools](#), [Aspire Public Schools](#), [Green Dot Public Schools](#), [ICEF Public Schools](#), and [Partnerships to Uplift Communities](#). These five organizations operate 85 public schools and enroll more than 28,000 students, primarily in Los Angeles County. Aspire also runs schools in East Palo Alto, Modesto, Oakland, Sacramento, and Stockton. Collectively, they have earned a reputation for excellence because more than 75 percent of their graduates over the past two years are attending four-year colleges, well above the average for the state.

“Our organizations are united behind a common mission to give all students an education that prepares them to succeed in college—that’s the promise we make to our students and their families,” said Judy Burton, spokesperson for The College-Ready Promise and president and CEO of the Alliance College-Ready Public Schools. “With the support of the Gates Foundation, we will work together to advance effective teaching, attract and retain the best teachers to work with the highest-need students, and dramatically increase the number of college-ready graduates.”

In California, only about 1 in 3 high school graduates in 2008 completed the courses required to gain admission to a four-year college, according to the California Department of Education. College-readiness rates are even lower for minority students. In today’s economy, a college education is increasingly a requirement for a good job.

“California’s charter schools have always been laboratories of innovation, and I am looking forward to seeing how The College-Ready Promise uses this generous grant to further teacher effectiveness and student college readiness,” said Governor Schwarzenegger. “We all know that today’s kids are the future of California, and that is exactly why I am pushing for education reforms that will help ensure our students are prepared to compete and succeed in the global economy.”

Over the next several years, members of The College-Ready Promise will design and implement new practices to recruit, train, evaluate, and compensate teachers and principals. This plan includes four key elements:

- New career paths that reward highly effective teachers with higher pay and allow them to remain in the classroom as master teachers and mentors;
- Professional development opportunities that provide targeted support to help teachers improve their practice and meet the needs of their students;

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- A year-long teacher training academy to make sure new teachers are better prepared on the first day of school—as well as training and support for principals to strengthen their leadership and make sure these initiatives are implemented with integrity; and
- A fair, transparent, and meaningful evaluation system to identify effective teachers based on multiple factors, including growth in the academic achievement of their students.

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa praised The College-Ready Promise for its focus on supporting classroom teachers and school leaders. “Effective teachers make significant contributions to student academic achievement,” said Mayor Villaraigosa. “But to be successful, teachers need the right training and support, as well as opportunities to learn from each other. The College-Ready Promise has developed a bold and innovative plan to provide teachers and principals with the tools they need to help students graduate ready for college.”

One of the most innovative aspects of the plan is the development of new career paths for highly effective teachers. Teachers in most school districts across the country have few options for advancement. They can earn significantly more by becoming an administrator, but this requires giving up classroom teaching. Under The College-Ready Promise plan, highly effective teachers will be able to choose from three career paths—a master teacher, a coach or subject specialist, or an administrator—each with similar levels of compensation. These options will allow highly effective teachers to share their skills and help other teachers advance along the career path.

While the broad outlines of the teacher evaluation system and career path are detailed in The College-Ready Promise proposal, teachers and principals across the five organizations will be integral to the design and implementation of the new practices. “This is a great opportunity to rethink the way we attract, retain, and develop teachers,” said William Heusler, a teacher at Green Dot Public Schools. “I believe that America’s educational system is in need of a fundamental and significant change, and I am hopeful that public charter organizations in California can be pioneers in that effort to ultimately improve our schools and benefit our students.”

The College-Ready Promise plan also reflects a growing national focus on promoting teacher effectiveness. Guidelines for education funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act encourage states to develop plans to measure teacher effectiveness and ensure that effective teachers serve the neediest students.

“This initiative represents the best of what entrepreneurs bring to public education: an innovative approach targeted at one of the most critical levers in student success—teacher effectiveness,” said Ted Mitchell. Mitchell is CEO of NewSchools Venture Fund, a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that has supported The College-Ready Promise entrepreneurs, and is also president of the California State Board of Education. “Through efforts like this one, entrepreneurs are changing the lives of children in underserved communities here in California and across the country, as well as fueling an important national conversation about what it will take to close the achievement gap so that all students are prepared for success in college and in life.”

In addition to supporting the development of the teacher evaluation system, career path structure, and principal and teacher training, the seven-year grant will fund the development and implementation of common data systems to support the initiatives across the partnership. The proposal to the Gates Foundation requested \$60 million to support a project cost estimated at \$76 million. The College-Ready Promise will pursue additional funding from public and private sources, including federal teacher quality grants and philanthropic support.

“Today is an exciting day for our organizations, but the real work is just beginning,” said Judy Burton. “We are committed to bringing in more partners to support this project and sharing our lessons broadly. We also need to enact supportive policies in California, including equitable funding for all public school students, so that more schools and networks can replicate practices that promote teacher effectiveness.”

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Earlier this year, the Gates Foundation invited members of The College-Ready Promise to submit an application as part of the Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching initiative. In August, the organizations were selected as finalists for the grants. For more information about The College-Ready Promise, visit: [www.thecollegereadypromise.org](http://www.thecollegereadypromise.org).

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## **About the Alliance College-Ready Public Schools**

The mission of the Alliance, a nonprofit charter management organization, is to create a network of small, high performing public schools that establish the foundation for college success in students who live in high poverty communities in the Los Angeles area. The Alliance currently serves over 5,500 students in 16 middle and high schools. The vision is to open 20 public charter schools by 2010 and to grow to 50 schools over the next five years. The Alliance, led by CEO Judy Burton, is headquartered in the Frank E. Baxter Education Complex located near Downtown Los Angeles, a facility that also houses two of its charter schools. For more information, visit [www.laalliance.org](http://www.laalliance.org).

## **About Aspire Public Schools**

Aspire Public Schools is a not-for-profit organization that opens and operates small, high quality public charter schools to prepare urban students for college. Aspire now operates 25 schools that serve over 7,600 students in six California communities—East Palo Alto, Modesto, Oakland, Stockton, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. Through personalized learning experiences, students learn and master skills needed for the rigorous work of college and post-student life. Founded in 1998, Aspire is focused on serving the most traditionally underserved communities across California, and preparing students from grades K-12 to succeed in college. For more information, visit: [www.aspirepublicschools.org](http://www.aspirepublicschools.org).

## **About Green Dot Public Schools**

Green Dot Public Schools is dedicated to changing public education in Los Angeles so that all children receive the education they need to reach their dreams. It currently operates eighteen public charter high schools in Los Angeles' highest-need communities. Each Green Dot school (branded "Ánimo" schools) vastly outperforms comparable traditional public high schools. For more information, visit: [www.greendot.org](http://www.greendot.org).

## **About ICEF Public Schools**

ICEF Public Schools (pronounced "Eye-ceff," for the Inner City Education Foundation) was founded in 1994 to transform the Los Angeles community by creating first-rate educational opportunities for its minority youth. ICEF currently operates 15 public charter schools, including three new schools which opened this fall, with the goal of preparing its students to attend and compete academically at the top colleges and universities in the nation. ICEF's flagship school, View Park Preparatory Charter High School, has now graduated three classes, with 100 percent of its graduates accepted to college. For more information, visit: [www.icefla.org](http://www.icefla.org).

## **About Partnerships to Uplift Communities**

Partnerships to Uplift Communities (PUC) is a non-profit charter school development and management organization that serves two high need communities in Los Angeles: Northeast Los Angeles and the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Their first school was founded in 1999, and they now operate a total of 10 schools. PUC's mission is to uplift the communities they serve through the creation of high quality charter schools that graduate all students prepared for college success. For more information, visit [www.pucschools.org](http://www.pucschools.org).