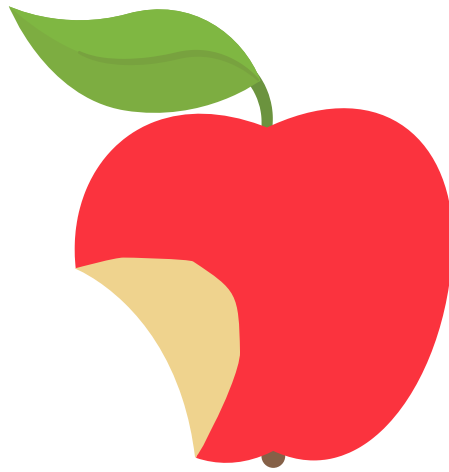
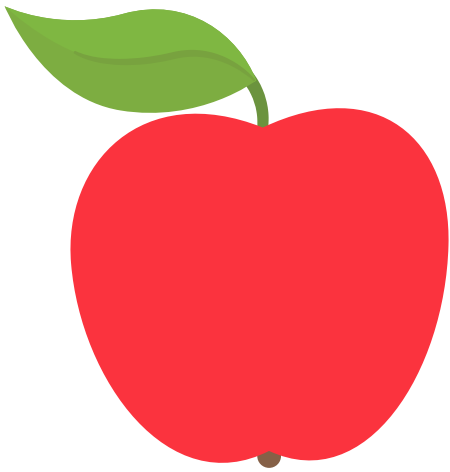


# BURNED OUT, PRICED OUT

SOLUTIONS TO THE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE CRISIS



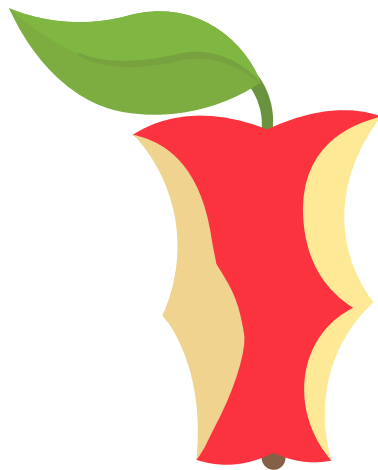
**UNCOMPETITIVE PAY**



**STUDENT LOAN DEBT**



**HOUSING UNAFFORDABILITY**



**BUYING SUPPLIES**



**INCREASED COST OF LIVING**

**UTLA**

**UNITED TEACHERS  
LOS ANGELES**

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## ABOUT UNITED TEACHERS LOS ANGELES

Founded in 1971, United Teachers Los Angeles is 35,000 educators united for equitable public education for all in Los Angeles, California.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the 1980s, public education has served as a political scapegoat for national failures. Leading politicians of both political parties in the United States have readily and eagerly demonized public educators. Not only have public school teachers been held responsible for the degraded conditions of communities created, in fact, by entrepreneurs, financiers, and the economic trends they dictate, but public school systems have suffered with the broader economic stagnation of recent decades. During the 1980s, public school teachers made 7.1% less than workers in jobs requiring similar education and skills. By 2021, under the influence of waves of “education reform,” this nationwide “wage penalty” had grown to 23.5%.

The 2008 financial crisis punctuated this trend with a historic wave of downsizing. In response, teacher-education programs gradually reduced enrollments by nearly half nationally and have never recovered to their pre-2008 levels. In the last half-decade, many parents and students reported no longer considering public education a feasible career. For the same reasons, labor retention in public schools is at historic lows: 44% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years.

Recognizing this situation during the “jobless recovery” of the late Obama and Trump years, districts, politicians, and education scholars all diagnosed a structural problem facing the nation: the so-called “teacher shortage.” This became all the more apparent with gradual recovery of school district budgets from the politically motivated austerity of the early years of the Great Recession. The demand for new teachers proved refractory: As young workers and the public became unwilling to further sacrifice for districts and politicians that treated teachers contemptuously as fungible, unworthy of conditions necessary to sustain lifelong careers, districts’ recruitment needs became entrenched by low retention.

This fragile situation was shaken into disarray by the coronavirus pandemic. In two months, public education nationally lost more than 700,000 jobs and recovered only 400,000 over the next two years.

These recruitment challenges coincide with historic state and federal commitments to support public education. During the emergency period of the pandemic, the federal government authorized and appropriated more than \$190 billion in funds for local school districts nationwide. Recently, the state of California increased its Prop 98 public-education fund by \$22 billion, about 25% more than its pre-pandemic level. Thus, an historic opportunity exists to begin to remake public education to retain educators with better salaries and working conditions.

But expending these funds to take advantage of the opportunity will be difficult if recalcitrant district leaders don’t acknowledge the lessons of the past decade: You cannot cultivate an experienced, talented workforce when you manage your schools as if educators are disposable and replaceable.

By defining how we got into this crisis of recruitment and retention in public education, this report shows the way to a future where public educators earn the dignity and prestige commensurate with their indispensable social position in our communities—raising and educating our next generation of workers and leaders.

## **DATA & METHODOLOGY**

This report draws on data from a survey of more than 13,000 UTLA members, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the California Commission on Teacher Certification. A complete list of sources is included in endnotes to the report.

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# The Educator Shortage

Across the United States, school districts are experiencing a shortage of experienced educators, and no magic well of trained educators exists in the labor pipeline eager and willing to subject themselves to uncompetitive pay in schools without the tools necessary to succeed. The conditions that produced this shocking crisis in an institution fundamental to the functioning of our society derive from efforts to remake public schools in the image of competitive businesses, part of a decades-long, politically manufactured opposition to expanding government investment in education.<sup>1</sup> Those efforts also have exacerbated a historical gender pay inequity that restrains salaries in a large majority-women profession.<sup>2</sup>

Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, academic articles and policy papers, like the Economic Policy Institute's "**The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought**" and the Learning Policy Institute's "**A Coming Crisis in Teaching**," persistently warned of an alarming national teacher shortage. As the pandemic has raged over the past two and a half years, these crises have moved from warning to an acute, everyday reality.<sup>3</sup> Veteran educators are retiring in massive numbers.<sup>4</sup> Early and mid-career educators are burned out, pushed to their breaking point.<sup>5</sup> And the educator labor pipeline is running dry.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, students and educators are experiencing massive interruptions in the learning environment.

Educators in Los Angeles work at the bleeding edge of this social crisis. According to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the district does not pay enough for beginning teachers to afford rent in any Los Angeles neighborhood. This is not just the reality for beginning educators. A survey United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) conducted in June 2022 revealed nearly 60% of veteran educators with 20 or more years of experience cannot afford to live in the community where they teach. And, an astonishing 28% of UTLA educators are working a second job. Given the conditions in LAUSD, nearly 70% of educators have seriously considered leaving the profession altogether.<sup>7</sup>

This volatility can be fixed. The following report lays out the declining state of the educator labor pipeline, the material conditions educators face, and the state of retention in the profession. The report ends with policy recommendations designed to attract and retain educators. First, they must be compensated commensurate with their education. To do this, we must eliminate the educator wage penalty. In Los Angeles, the average educator earns 22% less than the average bachelor's degree holding worker. Nationally, research from the Learning Policy Institute shows that this penalty grows over time from 20% for starting teachers to 30% by mid-career.<sup>8</sup> We cannot retain the educators we have and attract new persons to the field if we leave this wage penalty intact. At the same time, we must recognize educators as the professionals they are and make certain that every school has robust student and educator supports designed to meet the needs of the community and achieve true equity.

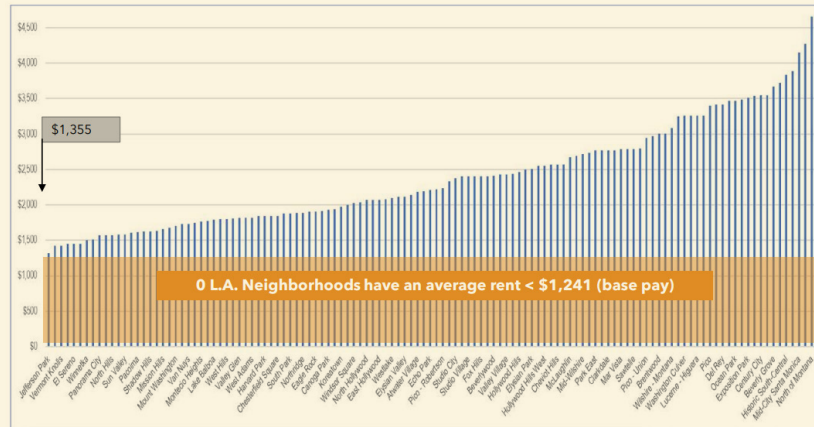
## The Cost of Living in Los Angeles

Teachers are equally affected by the high cost of living that challenges the broader community, including students and their families. In June 2021, the LAUSD Board of Education reported on the effect of the lack of affordable housing on retaining and recruiting educators. There was not a single neighborhood in the city of Los Angeles, it found, where housing prices were low enough for a new LAUSD teacher to live without being "rent burdened." The "affordability threshold" was \$1,286 a month for rent and utilities for a teacher with a \$51,440 starting salary, but the lowest average rent across Los Angeles neighborhoods was \$1,335.<sup>9</sup>

Figure 1: Slide from June 8, 2021, LAUSD Board of Education meeting <sup>10</sup>

### New Teachers Priced Out Of All La Neighborhoods

- Teacher Starting Salary = \$51,440
- Affordability Threshold for Monthly rent & Utilities (30% of Gross Income) = \$1,286
- Affordability Threshold for Monthly Rent Only: \$1,241



The median range for average rent in Los Angeles neighborhoods, according to LAUSD, was close to \$2,500, which represented 58% of an educator’s monthly income at an annual salary of \$51,440. The LAUSD analysis was conducted before the average rent in Los Angeles rose to its current, all-time median of \$3,400.<sup>11</sup> LAUSD educators could not afford rent before the onset of the pandemic. Two and a half years in, with increased rents, the situation has worsened.

The salary-rent disparity affects more than first-year educators. In a June 2022 UTLA survey of 13,597 LAUSD educators (with a median of 17 years of experience), 66% reported they cannot afford to work in the community they serve, and among those with more than 20 years of experience, the percentage is 58%.<sup>12</sup> In short, LAUSD acknowledges it does not pay new teachers and most veteran educators enough to afford an apartment in Los Angeles.

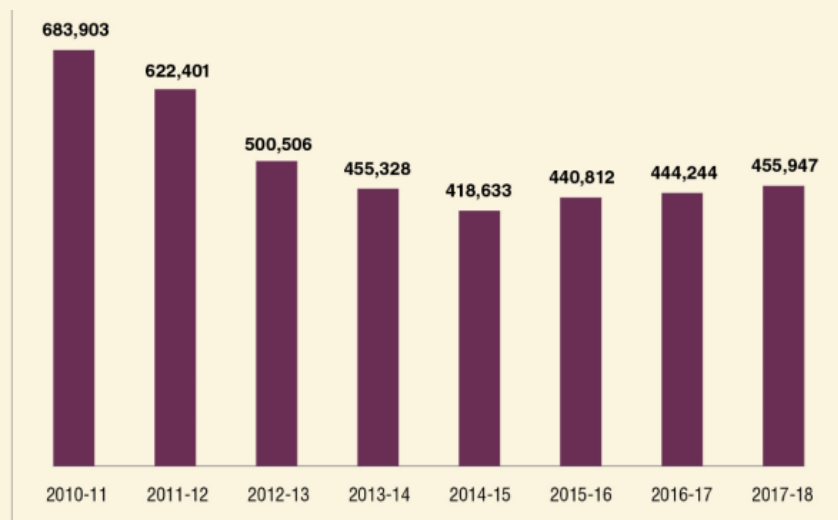
The LAUSD Office of the Chief Financial Officer too has made the connection between high living costs and the district’s financial health. In its most recent Second Interim Financial Report, for example, the CFO bases its projections for an accelerated student enrollment decline on a “lack of affordable housing” for district families.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that after decades of responding to enrollment loss with more intradistrict school competition for resources, Los Angeles Unified has concluded the number one factor in enrollment loss is affordable housing, not lack of market-based school choice for parents within LAUSD.

## The State of the Educator Pipeline

### Teaching Credentials Lag Behind Hiring Efforts in California and the Nation: Not enough educator credentials are being issued to keep up with available positions.

The “educator pipeline” has three major segments: enrollments in preparation programs, credentials issued, and new hires. Upstream changes at each stage of the pipeline have historically followed trends in the ultimate downstream stage of actual hires. When local districts across the nation cut 300,000 educator jobs following the 2008 financial crisis, for example, enrollments in teacher preparation programs nationally fell by more than 30%. They have never recovered to their pre-recession level. According to the U.S. Department of Education, nearly 700,000 students were enrolled in education-credentialing institutions in 2010-11. That number fell by nearly half to 418,633 students in 2014-15 and remained below 500,000 until 2017-18, the most recent year available, according to the Department of Education’s most recent annual Title II report.<sup>14</sup>

Figure 2: Enrollment in teacher-preparation programs nationally<sup>15</sup>



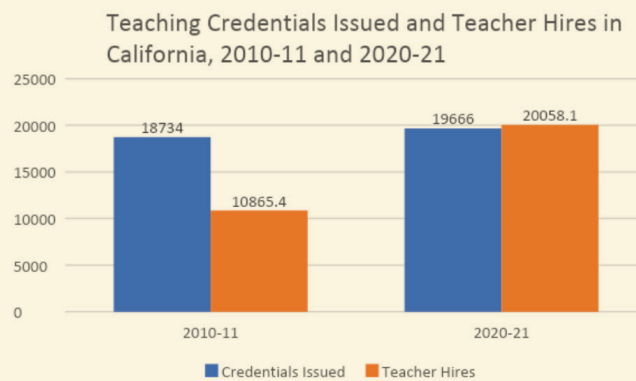
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. (2020). *Higher Education Act Title II reporting*

This lag between trends in enrollments in training programs and trends in new teacher hiring is clearly evident in California. California institutions approved by the State Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) issued 23,320 new teaching credentials in the 2007–08 school year. During the recession that followed the 2008 global financial crisis, California school districts cut payrolls severely and reduced staffing in response to declining revenues, which had fallen due to both state budget cuts and the temporary nature of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Veteran LAUSD teachers will remember the 10,000 job cuts LAUSD announced during that recession. In the three years following the 2010–11 school year, enrollments in Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC)-approved institutions fell by 43%.<sup>16</sup>

The number of those enrolled in CTC-approved teacher-preparation programs fell during the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years. From an annual high of 24,954 in the 2017–18 school year, enrollments in CTC-approved preparation programs declined to 21,754 in 2018–19 and 21,783 in 2019–20.<sup>17</sup> A slim majority of 53% of these enrollments are in private colleges and universities, with enrollments in the California State University (CSU) system a close second at 39%. But many private college and university students do not receive credentials upon completion: Their share of total new credentials fell to 48% in 2020–21 while the CSU share grew to 47%.<sup>18</sup>

After the staffing cuts to local districts that followed the financial crisis, the number of new annual certifications issued by California training programs declined for several years, bottoming out to a low of 14,810 in the 2013–14 school year. For the past seven years, the number of credentials issued each year in California has fallen behind the number of new hires. This is the second stage of the pipeline. Between the 2014–15 school year and the 2020–21 school year, California’s CTC-approved institutions issued a cumulative 118,429 teaching credentials. In the same seven-year period, California’s public-school districts made 145,856 new teacher hires. This is a difference of 27,427 hires—the amount by which new teacher hires in California has outpaced the number of credentials issued by state-approved institutions since the 2014–15 school year.<sup>19</sup> To fill the gap, districts have turned to hiring workers with credentials issued through nontraditional pathways—namely district-issued permits and waivers. They also have turned to hiring workers who previously earned credentials but are working in other sectors, whether because they previously left teaching or because they earned their credentials in the period when local districts were hiring fewer new teachers than training programs produced each year, such as during the period before 2014.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 3: Teaching credentials issued and new teacher hires in California for two selected years<sup>21</sup>



These figures demonstrate that many future teachers did not enter a career in teaching when they completed their preparation program. Many confronted a job market in which local districts were not hiring. Others may have decided to pursue more competitive salaries in other sectors. In either case, their delay and uncertainty about whether new credentials will be utilized contributes to a significant “leak” in the teacher pipeline.<sup>22</sup> That delay is key to understanding the recruitment problem in public education and cannot be separated from the profession’s retention problems—such as salary, control over work, and the expectations placed on educators. The uncertainty created by local district’s reticence to expand staffing influences the decisions of potential future teachers and has discouraged them from entering preparation programs.

The pandemic has thrown this reality into sharp relief. Employment in the sector sank dramatically and has not recovered despite growth in the private economy. The stagnation of enrollments in preparation programs nationally means that districts in California hoping to expand staff will be constrained even further, as the solution of hiring those with out-of-state credentials becomes less and less available. In fact, the share of new credentials issued in California to individuals from out-of-state programs has declined steadily, from 25% in the 2016-17 school year to 14% in the 2020-21 school year.<sup>23</sup> If California is looking to recruit educators from other states to fill the gap, there is no evidence to suggest that is possible. Measured nationally, the states are not creating a surplus of educators. For California, both its internal and external recruitment pools are dwindling.

### Student Debt

The growth of debt-financed tuition for higher education in America has had a particularly perverse effect on public school districts as employers. College graduates burdened with debt payments understandably must consider potential income when choosing their careers. A salary that does not allow them to pay their debts and live a middle-class life makes no sense financially. Public education jobs simply pay too little to future workers who must take out loans to enter the workforce at the professional level. The National Education Association reports that more than a quarter of educators over the age of 61 have not been able to pay off their student loans.<sup>24</sup> The National School Board Association also recognizes this problem, commissioning a report in 2016 that acknowledged college students may “feel more pressure to choose careers where they can earn higher salaries and pay off high student loans.”<sup>25</sup>

### Measuring Demand: Enrollment planning for teacher preparation programs is undermined by political uncertainty over the future of the profession.

The unavailability of official measures of “teacher demand” has long been understood as a weakness in states’ teacher pipeline planning programs. Demand may be difficult to forecast because hiring is controlled at the district level and subject to political decisions, such as how expenditures are budgeted, what class sizes district leaders target, and how revenues are projected. California school districts report the number of new teacher hires to the state Department of Education as a projected estimate, but this is the only public measure of future teacher demand. Of the six key measures for education workforce planning recommended by the National Council on Teacher Quality, California publishes only two—the number of credentials issued and estimates of teacher hires.<sup>26</sup>

California publishes no data on teacher attrition or mobility—that is, how many teachers leave the profession altogether and how many switch schools. California could improve these practices by reporting vacancies



at the school or district level, and by reporting how many teachers are assigned to teach areas outside their field. Without such disaggregated data, it is impossible to determine how changes in workforce size are due to retirements, quits, and new hires.

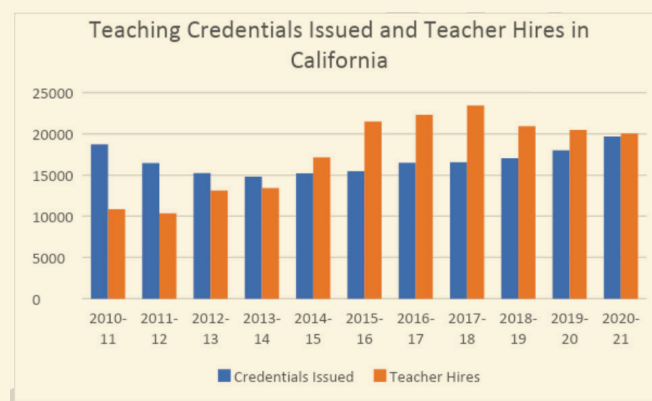
The trend in new teacher hires is bound up with the recruitment problem itself. Districts that are unable to fill existing staff vacancies will alter their payroll planning accordingly—meaning they may get rid of a position before even attempting to hire. For example, during the second half of the 2021-22 school year, the philanthropy-funded Partnership for Los Angeles Schools recommended that LAUSD limit hiring at “low-needs” schools until it had filled all existing vacancies at “high-needs” schools. Such policies would alter measurements of “demand.”<sup>27</sup> A more accurate measure might include existing vacancies plus new positions required for a staffing level consistent with professional recommendations about ratios of different types of educators to students. The district’s report to the CDE of “estimated new hires” does not allow for this level of analysis.

Recruitment also is affected by location: Districts and teachers themselves report many more recruitment problems in schools in low-income communities, which have some of the greatest encumbrances to retaining skilled teachers. A minor shortage at the state level can be experienced as an acute shortage for particular districts, campuses, and hard-to-fill positions.<sup>28</sup>

### Supply Lags Demand in Teacher Training

The sharp curtailment of local district hiring following the 2008 financial crisis precipitated a collapse in enrollments in teacher preparation programs. The staffing reductions also contributed to the reality of growing class sizes during the Obama and the Trump eras, especially at LAUSD. Expanding local district budgets in California changed this reality. Local district revenues, and the hiring this enabled, increased with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2014-15. Then, the number of credentials issued rose gradually and, at least until 2017-18, enrollments in California teacher-preparation programs also rose. The pipeline filled as the demand from local districts was allowed to express itself through greater district budgets.

Figure 4: Teaching credentials issued and new teacher hires in California, 2010-11 to 2020-21<sup>29</sup>



One conclusion from these trends is that efforts to expand and “plug the holes” in the teacher pipeline today cannot be separated from more certainty about the final demand for the intended product of the teacher pipeline—teachers with teaching jobs. We must realize the need for long-term, forward planning that ensures a college student entering a teacher-preparation program today will come out on the other side with an opportunity to use a credential. This has not been the historical pattern. Rather than pulling teachers through the pipeline, school districts cut employment in the early Obama years. As a result, a glut of credentialed teachers spread out across the labor market into other industries, unsurprisingly contracting the volume of the pipeline itself.

What did pull new potential teachers into credentialing programs and contributed, in however limited a way, to expanding the pipeline was the growth of teacher hiring that followed the LCFF and its augmentation in 2015-16. By raising the level of ongoing district revenues, the expansion of LCFF funding helped districts to plan hiring and signaled to the public that a future demand for teachers merited greater enrollments in teacher-preparation programs. If credential-issuing institutions in California are to continue to expand

enrollments, the growth in district revenues that ensures future teacher employment will have to continue. If district revenues and expenditures are allowed to contract again, as they did in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, we risk a future contraction in teacher training. In that situation, we will be repeating the historical pattern of training teachers who then use their skills in other professions.

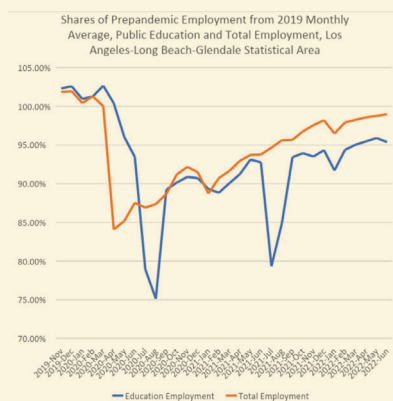
## Retention and the Pandemic

What was, before Covid-19, a widely and acknowledged failure of one of the most important workplaces in every community—the difficulty of retaining teachers—has become a social crisis of national proportions. The number of individuals who reported working as public school teachers in the United States fell by 6.8% from 2019 to 2021. Given that 3.3 million people worked as public school teachers before the pandemic, this represents an exodus of 220,000 teachers from public school districts.<sup>30</sup>

According to LAUSD data analyzed by UTLA, educator quits rose 38% in 2020–21 from the previous year. Retirements rose 12% in the same period. LAUSD’s annual report of expected new hires for the 2022–23 school year showed 2,512 new teachers. This is 34% greater than the five-year average of 1,871 new annual hires. This growth in new hires is due in part to the large increase of separations during the pandemic.<sup>31</sup>

Examined as a total employment sector, public education has been profoundly affected by the pandemic. Total employment across the economy in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale statistical area has nearly recovered to its pre-pandemic high of more than 4.5 million jobs, and, in February 2022, it was 97% of its February 2020 level. In that same period, however, employment in “local government education”—the survey category that includes public school teachers—had recovered to just 93% of its February 2020 level. This represents 15,800 workers missing from LA County public education systems. As the trends in the figure below show, public school districts are unlikely to fill this gap at their current rate of hiring.<sup>32</sup>

Figure 5: Shares of prepandemic employment for education and for all employment<sup>33</sup>



Nationally, there are over 300,000 fewer workers employed in public schools in June 2022 compared to February 2020.<sup>34</sup> The effect on the educators who remain and on the communities whose children they teach has been calamitous. In February, the National Education Association released the results of a membership poll that found 80% of teachers nationwide reported unfilled job openings that created more work obligations for those who remained on the job.<sup>35</sup> For teachers who are parents, the obligations of work and home have, by all reports, reached a breaking point. In UTLA’s own membership survey, one of the most common answers to the question of what would cause the respondents to consider leaving their profession was “current conditions” or “the status quo.”

### Retention Was an Existential Problem for Public Education Before the Pandemic

The stresses imposed on the public education system by the uncoordinated, inconsistent national response to the pandemic only forced into public view what has been long understood by those who work in public schools: Teacher turnover in public education is notoriously high. Studies show 44% to 50% of teachers leave within their first five years in the profession.<sup>36</sup> Over time, the quit rate in public education has increased from 5.6% in

the late 1980s to 8.4% in the mid-2000s. Less understood, but equally revealing, is the fact that in the decades before the pandemic, turnover for public school teachers changed with the state of the economy. When the business cycle was good, unemployment fell, job opportunities outside education appeared, and the quit rate in public education increased. When unemployment began to rise, as in the recession of 2009-10, the number of teachers who quit their jobs fell.<sup>37</sup>

What does this pattern in the relationship between teacher turnover and the wider labor market show us? If staff attrition from public schools increases in good times, when business and tax revenues are up, then the sector has a serious structural problem as an employer. At just the moment when public schools are able to expand payrolls and take on new staff to pursue their public purpose, they face higher turnover because of uncompetitive salaries and poor working conditions thrown into relief by better opportunities in other industries. Some turnover is good in any organization, but a rising turnover in a healthy economy means an organization has deep-rooted problems.

While there are various explanations for the retention problem in public education, all point to intrinsic aspects to the profession. Improving retention will require fundamental changes to the nature of educators' work and the institutions that support, or fail to support, it—changes much deeper than temporary bonuses for hiring or limiting new staff to the most historically neglected schools. As endemic turnover reflects a challenge to the morale of the profession, we might think of the retention problem in public education as the “demoralization of the educator.”

It is the nature of the work itself that is causing this demoralization. Teachers who cite the difficulty of their work and the lack of dignity and respect they experience in the profession name three major determinants:

1. The historical conditions of the communities their schools serve
2. Lack of control over their work due to micromanaging administrators and testing regimens to prepare for annual state requirements
3. Inadequate salaries compared to other professions

### **1.) The Conditions of the Communities Schools Serve: Scapegoating Educators for the Transformation of American Capitalism Since the 1970s**

Teaching, as those who excel at it well know, is one of the most challenging professions to do effectively. Social scientific research and official government position papers have long shown that the most important factors determining student success rest in the community, of which public schools are just one part. Since early in the first Reagan administration, however, the official government position on teachers' role in society is that public schools are the primary institution responsible for carrying and remedying the social burdens created by an economy increasingly dominated by multinational corporations and financial institutions investing in the growth of a non-union workforce.

Unfortunately, the trend of socioeconomic life in many American communities has been widening inequality, stagnant real wages, and a rising cost of essential needs such as health and childcare. Housing is just one indication of the pressures facing many families in Los Angeles, among them, educators: In the last 20 years, the share of renters in Los Angeles paying more than 30% of their income on rent—the share the census uses to classify respondents as “rent burdened”—has increased from 51% to 62%. Median rents for a two-bedroom unit in Los Angeles have more than doubled since 2000, growing 131%, but median household incomes have grown by only 84%—rents are steadily outpacing incomes in many working-class communities. In 2020, more than 1 million households in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim area paid more than 50% of their income on rent. These realities mean longer working hours for parents just to afford basic necessities, and the result—less time at home and greater childcare burdens—acutely affects the students who teachers see during the school day.

The idea that teaching time in the classroom could correct for a community trend like this did not always stand up to social-scientific scrutiny. The most famous instance of government officials grappling with the reality of the problems facing public education is the “Coleman Report” issued by the Johnson administration during the Great Society program of 1964-66. Mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to report on “the lack of availability of equal educational opportunities ... in public educational institutions,” the federal Commissioner of Education in 1965 hired Johns Hopkins sociologist James S. Coleman to conduct the study.

Today, the Coleman Report's most lasting legacy is its identification of a persistent "achievement gap" between white and Black students. Yet the Coleman Report's explanation for this finding, less commonly repeated, profoundly challenges what has become the conventional wisdom about student achievement in the United States. Surveying 600,000 students and 60,000 teachers in 4,000 public schools, Coleman's research team found that the factors that correlated most strongly with the achievement gap were not the individual teacher or the particular campus, but rather the income of a student's family and the classroom's socio-economic mix. When students from similar class backgrounds were segregated into different classes, achievement gaps arose between students of different backgrounds. When there was a mix of students from different backgrounds, they succeeded together.<sup>38</sup>

Deep in the trough of the 1979-1983 recession, the Reagan administration signaled the birth of a new view about education's role in society that effectively repudiated the Coleman Report findings. In 1981, Reagan's Secretary of Education Terrel Bell established a National Commission on Excellence in Education whose 1983 final report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, set the tone that has dominated official discussion of public education until today. Reagan's education commission argued that public education explained the poor performance of the American economy—overall unemployment towered at 11% and Black unemployment was at 21% in 1982. Imports were dominating many American markets, U.S. employers were experiencing a historic wave of bankruptcies, and investment and employment in American cities was suffering. These problems, *A Nation at Risk* said, were due to local public schools. A tolerance for poor teaching became the official government explanation for the state of the nation's economy.

Despite the Reagan report's preposterous conclusions—its authors later admitted that the conclusions were predetermined and the supporting data cherry-picked—this interpretation that since the 1970s local public schools were to blame for the negative transformations of the American economy only intensified with time.

The education historian Diane Ravitch, who served as Assistant Secretary of Education in the George H.W. Bush administration, has described this prevailing thesis as nothing less than "a politically inspired hoax."<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the proposition that public school teachers were to blame for lackluster performance by entrepreneurs and financiers in providing jobs and investment to communities provided a politically convenient scapegoat for elected politicians in an era when inequality was rising. Governors from open-shop, right-to-work states such as Bill Clinton of Arkansas and George W. Bush of Texas readily embraced the message, explaining the economic problems of their states in terms of the "poor quality" of their teaching workforces.

The fact nevertheless continues to be true: The economic conditions in students' homes and communities lie beyond the reach of the classroom teacher. The most extreme expression of this reality is the fact that before the pandemic there were over 17,000 unhoused students enrolled at LAUSD.<sup>40</sup> Teachers are expected to overcome this reality and during each school day provide students with the opportunity to learn and grow. Schools cannot and will not be a panacea for the purposeful lack of investment in the community. Government officials must expand public education funding and local district spending to fulfill this high social expectation, enabling schools to provide the wrap-around social services needed to expand the school's influence in the community. Counselors, nurses, job-placement services, and afterschool programs can build public schools into the anchoring community institutions they need to be. The growth of community schools at LAUSD, as explained later in this report, offers a promising start.

## **2.) State-Imposed Testing: Limiting Teacher Autonomy and Controlling Teachers' Work**

Notwithstanding these social trends, the response from the state and federal governments has been to impose a carapace of standardized tests and micromanaged performance metrics on public school classrooms—as if reducing teachers' autonomy and control over their work can achieve what should be a collective project, including the whole of the labor movement and elected leaders, of improving our economy. Instead, we have come to govern schools as if more and more standardized tests, by sorting students and incorrectly measuring teachers' work, will somehow result in making businesses invest in good-paying jobs in our community.

The model on which today's testing regimes are based originated under Florida Governor Jeb Bush. Elected in 1998, Bush enacted what he called Florida's "A+ Plan" to grade schools according to regular testing and expand charter schools in areas where the plan reduced public school enrollments. When Jeb's brother George W. Bush was elected president in 2000, the "Florida Model" went national. In late

2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which required states to rank their public schools according to standardized test scores and place those whose results did not improve on a list that could result in closing those schools. States' standardized tests previously had been administered only at major transition points in students' lives—such as between primary and secondary school, or between high school and college—but they now are given annually for grades 3-8. Incredibly, the federal law mandated that every school raise test scores to 100% proficiency by 2014—a goal that was not reached.

The Obama administration intensified this trend. In 2009, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the former Superintendent of Chicago Public Schools, established an administrative program to change the basis of federal funding to school districts to a competitive model. Though the federal government is prohibited by statute from altering district curricula, Duncan worked around the Congress by creating the Race to the Top grant program. Districts applying for this federal funding were required to plan for Washington's desired changes to testing, expanding "accountability" and "choice" in the management and budgeting policies of controlling district administrators.

Standardized testing was transformed from a diagnostic tool to be used at the teachers' professional discretion into a metric for public school funding. In 2010, for example, the *Los Angeles Times* went so far as to publish an online database of individual LAUSD teachers ranked according to an outlandish "value-added analysis," propounded by the US Department of Education, calculated on the basis of standardized test scores.<sup>41</sup> The effect on teacher morale was predictable and tragic. After the body of one LAUSD teacher was found in the Angeles National Forest after the publication of the value-added analysis, the *New York Times* memorialized the effects of the controversial campaign of demonization of public school teachers, describing Rigoberto Ruelas "as a devoted teacher who tutored students before school, stayed with them after and, on weekends, took students from his South Los Angeles elementary school to the beach."<sup>42</sup> But the incredible decision by the *Los Angeles Times* to publicly rank teachers' performance according to their students' standardized test scores merely represented an adherence to Washington policy, in which many national newspapers participated.

In 2015, a year after the expiration of the No Child Left Behind deadline, the federal education law was finally amended to the Every Students Succeed Act (ESSA). While annual testing for grades 3-8 remained a federal mandate, the unattainable requirement of 100% efficiency was dropped.

"Accountability made teacher retention more difficult in low-performing schools," concluded the journal *Educational Leadership*. "Schools that had better working conditions—and especially those that gave teachers greater classroom autonomy—were able to mitigate the negative effects of accountability sanctions," meaning the demerits and penalties that accompanied No Child Left Behind.<sup>43</sup> Luckily, more than a year into the Biden administration, the bipartisan education "reform" project has not yet yielded any further experimentation with evaluating teachers at the federal level. Still, at LAUSD the project to apportion funding according to test scores continues in District initiatives to decentralize budgeting, give hiring and firing decisions to principals, and apportion funds on the basis of indexes that rank schools according to a variety of metrics including changes in test scores, rather than ensuring minimum program standards across all schools. Two decades of attempting to combat growing social inequality with increasing routinization of public education has made public school teaching a more difficult, less desirable occupation. LAUSD is the most valuable target for the newest phase of this campaign to oppose and delay the important and necessary growth of the public sector. Among the more than 10,000 explanations given by UTLA members in short-answer responses to the question of what might lead them to leave the profession, one of the most common answers included some version of "micro-management by administrators."

### **3.) Inadequate Salaries Compared to Other Professions**

National teacher salaries are widely available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since the early 2000s, the economist Sylvia Allegretto of UC Berkeley has compared teachers' salaries to those of workers in comparable occupations with similar education levels and found that educators take a "wage penalty" for choosing their career—their annual earnings are far less than those of professionals whose work required similar education and skills.

Two decades of data have accumulated since those initial studies, and economists like Allegretto, Emma Garcia, and Elaine Weiss have updated their measures of the teacher "wage penalty." Their most recent findings are shocking: In the late 1990s, public school teachers earned 6% less annually than their peers in

occupations requiring similar skills and education, but by 2021, the penalty had grown to 23.5%. Writing for the usually conservative Hoover Institution, Stanford university economist Eric A. Hanushek similarly has found that public school teachers are paid 22% less than if they had been employed in non-teaching jobs.<sup>44</sup> The wage penalty has deepened significantly in the last two decades as new industries have grown paying higher salaries to attract labor, as the cost of living has crept upward, and as public-school district spending has remained captive to over-cautious leaders and tax-averse politicians. The acceleration of this rise in the cost-of-living during the current inflation severely exacerbates this salary penalty facing public educators.

UTLA conducted a wage penalty study for the LA labor market that compared LAUSD teachers' salaries with those of bachelor's degree-holding workers in the LA metropolitan region. The results were strikingly consistent with the Allegretto, Garcia, Weiss, and Hanushek findings. In the last five years, the average annual salary for a bachelor's degree-holding worker in Los Angeles was between \$94,000 and \$101,000 while an LAUSD teacher's was between \$74,000 and \$79,000. The earnings of the many millionaires in the region surely pulls up the bachelor's degree-holding average, but the measure does not include capital gains, a popular form of income for those in controlling business positions. For the 2019-20 school year, the most recent year of the UTLA study, the gap between the average LAUSD teacher and the average bachelor-degree holding worker in LA was 22%.<sup>45</sup>

One result of low incomes for LAUSD teachers is that many report working multiple jobs. In spring 2022, 28% of UTLA members, more than 1 in 4, reported working a second job on top of teaching. Rates were higher for those with fewer year of teaching experience, as 34% of educators with 10 or fewer years of experience worked a second job.

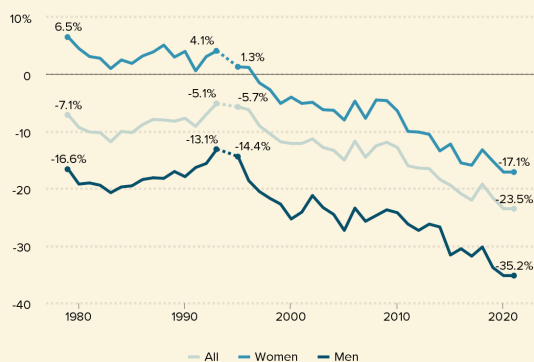
Nationally, the situation is even worse. Garcia and Weiss found that 56% of teachers took on additional paid work in the 2011-12 school year, a share that grew to an alarming 59% in the 2015-16 school year. Such a pattern exacerbates the retention problem in public education; those who earn income outside the profession may soon discover more reliable forms of primary employment. Using data from the 2012-13 school year, Garcia and Weiss found that of teachers who quit the profession that year, 18% had been working second jobs. Among those who stayed, just 16% were working second jobs. Those who left public education were more likely to be working a second job.

The wage penalty for educators is an historical legacy of the gendered labor market. For this reason alone, eliminating the penalty should be a paramount public goal. Throughout most of the twentieth century, women did not have access to the same employment opportunities as men. This allowed school districts to recruit and retain labor despite low salaries. In fact, as late as 1993, women working in public education earned a 4.1% wage *premium* compared to women in comparable jobs in other sectors, despite the fact that the average salary for all workers in education was 5% less than in other sectors. That is, the penalty in education as recently as the 1990s still represented a better salary than the average woman worker could earn in the rest of the economy. Economist Sylvia Allegretto describes this inequity as the result of public school districts relying on a "captive labor market" created by the occupational barriers women faced for much of the twentieth century. As occupational barriers for women have fallen, and wages for women in the rest of the economy have grown, that 5% premium has fallen to a 13.2% penalty.

Figure 6: Economic Policy Institute's teacher pay penalty measure<sup>46</sup>

### Teachers earn 23.5% less than comparable college graduates

Public school teacher weekly wage penalty (or premium) for all teachers and by gender, 1979–2021



**Note:** Figure shows regression-adjusted weekly wage penalties (or premiums) for public school teachers (elementary, middle, and secondary) relative to their college-educated, nonteaching peers. Data points for 1994 and 1995 are unavailable; dotted lines represent interpolated data. See Allegretto and Mishel 2019, Appendix A for more details on data and methodology.

**Source:** Author's analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data accessed via the EPI Current Population Survey Extract, Version 1.0.29 (EPI 2022A) <https://microdata.epi.org>

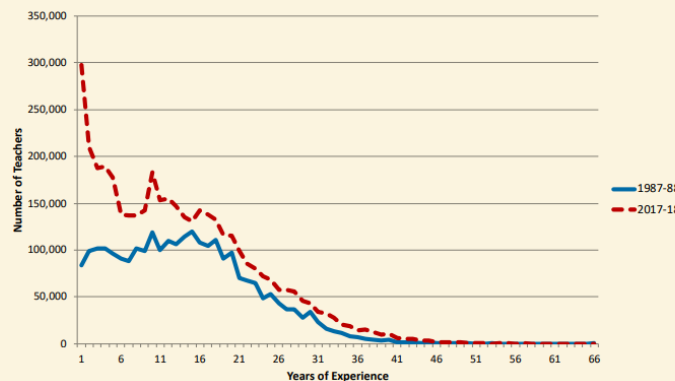
According to the US Department of Labor, in 2020 women earned 82 cents for each dollar earned by a man. For women of color, that amount is even lower. The gender pay disparity is measured using a calculated wage gap, with a ratio of male to female annual income for full-time workers. The pandemic reversed gains made toward closing the wage gap, and in February 2021, women’s labor force participation rate was 55.8%—the same rate as it was in April 1987. According to the National Women’s Law Center, the wage gap will cost an American woman approximately \$406,280 in lost income over the course of her career. Hispanic, Black, and Native women will lose approximately \$1 million during their career.<sup>47</sup>

## The Effect of Low Retention on the Demographics of the Teacher Workforce and on Students

The pandemic proved a breaking point for a system defined by the above three pressures: Scapegoating teachers for societywide problems, decreasing autonomy and professionalism from public officials and administrators, and inadequate salaries to retain labor. The employment situation in public education was already loose; the pandemic has produced a dramatic shake-up. But even before its onset, growing teacher attrition in public education was profoundly affecting the demographics of the teacher workforce nationally.

While a long-term trend of an aging workforce has finally leveled off as older teachers retire, today’s high turnover in the profession reflects current management trends in public education. Career teachers, often wise and always experienced, have been replaced by young, early-career workers. Because so many of these new teachers do not remain in the profession, the rising attrition rate has resulted in what education demographers call the “greening” of the teacher workforce—that is, the workforce’s cumulative years of experience has dropped. In the 1987-88 school year, the most common group among teachers in the United States when measured by experience were those with 15 years of teaching experience. By the 2017-18 school year, most were first-year teachers.<sup>48</sup>

Figure 7: Teaching experience of teachers in U.S., 1987-88 and 2017-18<sup>49</sup>



As education demographer Richard Ingersoll notes, the most recent national data show that the “greening” of the workforce is becoming permanent as more than 44% of new teachers leave the profession within 5 years. This combination of new teachers and unsatisfactory working conditions has forced public education to rely on new teachers to compensate for high turnover.

The effect is particularly pronounced for schools in high-poverty urban neighborhoods, where turnover is significantly higher. Using national data, education experts Linda Darling-Hammond and Desiree Carver-Thomas found that in Title I schools, the turnover rate is nearly 50% greater than in non-Title I schools (16% versus 11%). For mathematics and science teachers in Title I schools, the percentage grows to nearly 70% (18% vs 11%). For schools enrolling more than 55% students of color, the turnover rate is 70% higher than in schools enrolling 10% students of color (17% vs 10%), and 90% higher for mathematics and science teachers (19% vs 10%). Confirming these findings, Ingersoll and his co-authors found that just one-quarter of public schools account for almost half of all teacher turnover.<sup>50</sup> Turnover is not without real fiscal costs. In LAUSD, it costs the district more than \$94 million annually.<sup>51</sup>

Rates of attrition in the teaching profession are higher than in nursing and far higher than other professions that have successfully protected their prestige such as civil engineering, medicine, law, or architecture. One explanation is that the purchasers of these services, from insurance companies to private firms, are less organized than the professional associations whose members they do business with, associations capable of enforcing norms and salaries. Another and equally plausible explanation is that none of the professions with lower attrition rates have become the focus of bipartisan politics that scapegoated them for societywide problems. The politics of tax revenues, the primary source of most district funds, offers the most powerful explanation for the power and influence behind this bipartisan project. High attrition in public school teaching most severely affects the communities that need the greatest care and attention. These are also the communities who are often least capable of asserting control over government and its taxes—that is, absent organization. As a result, those who control government and taxes without challenge have done so in a way detrimental to the maintenance of an experienced workforce in public education for the poorest communities. The result of high teacher turnover, Ingersoll writes, “is a large annual asymmetric reshuffling with the school system of a significant portion of the teaching force, with a net loss on the part of poor, minority and urban schools and a net gain to non-poor, non-minority, and suburban schools.”<sup>52</sup>

### **The Consequences of the Retention Problem in Public Education**

Insofar as test scores measure a school’s effectiveness—which should be taken with a grain of salt—education scholars point to turnover’s detrimental consequences. Lucy Sorensen of SUNY Albany and Helen Ladd of Duke University, for example, find that a 10% increase in turnover at a school leads to statistically significant declines in students’ reading performance and math performance. They and others also report that the length of a teacher’s experience correlates positively with test scores. Thus, by creating a workforce with a permanently lower level of experience, the public education system perpetuates high turnover that, in turn, affects test scores negatively. Given how much turnover is concentrated in high-poverty urban schools and schools serving communities of color, it is not difficult to see who this reliance on a permanently “green” workforce most affects.

But aside from student test scores, the detriment of relying on a constantly replenished workforce of low-experienced teachers is obvious: The social connections that sustain any workplace are constantly broken and never allowed to develop into the coordinated network needed for individuals to thrive. Smooth, effective organizational operations depend on routines and experience; institutions with high levels of attrition that regularly must replace its members are doing something other than encouraging its members to thrive.

## **Achieving Real Equity Through Community Schools**

*Encouraging competition for limited resources inevitably means some schools will win and some will lose. That inherent resource volatility is bad for students, educators, and the community.*

### **30 years of Market-Based Reforms Have Severely Weakened Our Public Schools and the Educator Labor Pool.**

Los Angeles has been ravaged by the 30-year national trend of school privatization. Market-based reforms pushed by real estate magnates, astroturf organizations, and the testing and charter industry have resulted in the unprecedented closure of school libraries,<sup>53</sup> nurses’ offices, and once-thriving school-based community hubs. They have resegregated our public schools<sup>54</sup>. Public education has been cut to the bone in the name of efficiency.<sup>55</sup> These efforts have destabilized neighborhood schools, and profoundly weakened student learning conditions and educators’ working conditions. Market- and demand-driven systems are inherently volatile; for this very reason, our schools cannot be. A marketplace dominated by concentrated wealth and power cannot ensure equity. It is a contradiction in terms.

Community schools offer the stability and protection made necessary by the inequalities of the marketplace. To reinvigorate the educator workforce in Los Angeles and re-establish our neighborhood schools as robust centers of community activity, we can no longer allow our leaders to cut corners with decentralized funding schemes. Angelenos deserve a fundamental reinvigoration of our public-school infrastructure. This is the only path toward recruiting and retaining educators for the long term that, in turn, will offer a world-class education to Los Angeles families. There can be no shortcuts. Creating inclusive, democratically maintained community schools is the antidote to a mass educator exodus brought on by privatization.



**The path to true equity requires a safe, stable, fully resourced Community School in every Los Angeles neighborhood.**

Every school in LAUSD needs the resources necessary for the community to thrive, and some will require far more than others. In a district where the unduplicated<sup>56</sup> pupil percentage of needy students is more than 84%, equity cannot be achieved by pitting schools in poor neighborhoods against schools in slightly poorer neighborhoods.<sup>57</sup> All schools serving all students require a robust, baseline foundation from which to build:

- A nurse available every day of the week
- An open, fully staffed library
- Manageable class sizes
- Reasonable special education caseload caps
- More counselors, PSWs, PSAs, and psychologists

These are essential elements for attracting and retaining both educators and families. Educators and students alike want to be in schools that value them; an astounding 70% of UTLA educators do not believe LAUSD values their students' learning conditions.<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, because LAUSD has experimented with market-based, competitive choice policies for so long, resources vary widely from campus to campus. More than 80% of LAUSD schools do not have a full-time nurse, and 15% of schools in South Los Angeles have no nurse whatsoever.<sup>59</sup> This is unacceptable for our students in the best of times. During a pandemic it is reprehensible.

It's time to end the experiment: Our communities should not be treated as a petri dish for management consultants and their tax-averse constituencies. The health and well-being of our students is our first and most basic responsibility as educators. In a school without a full-time nurse, educators have to take over the job as a matter of necessity.

**Beyond Recovery: Provide every school in LAUSD with the strong, consistent, foundation of programs and services educators and students need to succeed.**

Educators welcome their new and veteran colleagues into historically difficult-to-staff schools. However, our current market-competition system at LAUSD results in the resource and programmatic volatility that makes some of our schools so difficult to staff. We must solve that root problem. Teaching in a school without foundational resources is a fundamentally different job than teaching in a school with a 250:1 student-counselor ratio, manageable class sizes and special education caseloads, a nurse every day of the week, an operational library, parent and community resources, and sufficient time to teach. Teaching is fundamentally social and interactive—both characteristics that require time and attention from the individual professional. Educators must be able to trust that the school system has been set up for educators and students to succeed. Compensation in lieu of institutional capacity is not a bargain educators are willing to make.

At the same time, politicians across the United States have staked the entirety of society's familial and child safety net on our public schools. Instead of Medicare For All, expanded child tax credits, and guarantees of housing and work for our families, schools are left to fight each other for scraps to make up for politicians' refusals to provide any material support to working families. Because education funding cannot make up for homelessness, the lack of medical and mental health care, and poverty, large urban school districts contract with education management organizations (EMOs) on ways to distribute their limited funding more equitably—a word, like efficiency, employed as MBA-speak, devoid of meaning and context, useful for board meetings and political campaigns. As defined by LAUSD's EMOs, however, the word equity is not useful for guaranteeing access to basic minimum services. Market-driven reformers cut programs and then put the onus of navigating the resulting dysfunctional system on families. If the school does not have the resources and eventually closes, policymakers blame the working family—those who “chose” poorly.

We reject this scenario. If your neighborhood school is not your most attractive option, there has been a fundamental failure to provide the resources the school and the community needs to thrive. The failure is not the fault of individual families.

Robust institutional capacity cannot be achieved if we continue down the same path of market-demand-driven school choice and decentralized funding to the campus level. A year ago, LAUSD attempted to implement a radical change in funding that would have gone all-in on schools competing for students,

dramatically increasing school volatility and closures,<sup>60</sup> through Student Centered Funding (aka Student Based Budgeting).<sup>61</sup> This model has been accompanied in other large urban districts by mass school closures and even greater disparity in the basic resources available among schools. Site-based decision making regarding basic school resources can only lead to impossible choices, e.g., “Do we keep the library open or provide special education services in compliance with IDEA?” No school should have to make these choices. No principal should be blamed for resource mismanagement due to state and district budget cuts. And teachers and students deserve a higher minimum of resources, regardless of their LAUSD campus. This is where community schools come into play.

**Unique, campus-based specialized learning programs are a wonderful way to meet specific community needs, but the basics must be present at every school.**

A community school is the democratic hub of the community, a place where families are welcome and the needs of the community are front and center. It’s a place for democratically determining community education priorities, on top of, not in place of, the foundations that all students and educators need to thrive. In their 2019 strike, UTLA educators recognized the potential of this model and demanded and won the right to establish the first 30 community schools in Los Angeles Unified.<sup>62</sup> The model has been so successful that there will be a total of 70 community schools in LAUSD within the next three years. The California governor and state legislature have heard the message and are expanding state funding for districts to build just this type of institution.<sup>63</sup>

Community schools offer a tailored approach to each community, while ensuring the basic foundations for equity are in place. Community schools differ from community to community, but they share four basic pillars. They:

**Integrate student supports:** The capacity to support the basic needs of every child, no matter where they come from, is built into each school’s structure. It needs counselors, nurse clinics, an operational library, low class sizes and caseloads, and wrap-around services such as health care, eye care, and social and emotional services provided year-round to the entire community. Positive discipline practices such as restorative justice and social and emotional learning supports are all commonplace in community schools.

**Expand and enrich learning:** Community school coordinators partner with local organizations to bring in programs and resources. These include summer programs, expanded learning opportunities, and real-world, practical experiences brought to our students and their families. They also need a strengthened curriculum that is engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging, including a broad selection of classes and after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies.

**Engage families and the broader community:** Community schools partner with residents to identify the needs of the community.

**No more cutting corners. Los Angeles families and educators deserve robust infrastructure. All schools require a stable foundation from which to build and adapt to the community’s specific needs.**

Cutting schools to the bone, prioritizing temporary contracts, and a myriad of short-term bandages have upended a once-thriving system of public education. In the last 30 years, state by state, district by district, the United States has injected private-sector reforms into public education. Nowhere is that fight at its most critical than in Los Angeles. These private sector reforms have destabilized schools, decimated the educator labor pipelines, exacerbated segregation, and increased resource disparities within the district. During this time, we have witnessed an unprecedented wave of school-choice reforms, accompanied by an unprecedented number of school closures. The market has prioritized hiring cheap, disposable labor and emphasized advertising in place of tangible increases in resources. It is triage for a wound of its own making.

Education is at a unique place in time. With billions in federal education funds available for the first time in generations, we have important decisions to make. On one hand, we can use these funds for one-time payments that will act as little more than a band-aid, ignoring the data on the teacher pipeline and labor pool. On the other, we can reinvigorate the structure of American public schools, which should be community institutions with the robust institutional capacity to help communities thrive. Massive increases to advertising budgets are not a real solution to declining enrollment. LAUSD, by its own admission, understands the greatest driver of declining enrollment is housing affordability in Los Angeles.<sup>64</sup> Expanding

or relying on market-based choice programs cannot solve LAUSD's problems. Instead, we, as a community, must ensure that all students and educators have the resources they need to succeed, and that they can count on them being there, year in and year out.

If schools are where the community comes into being and grows—and UTLA truly believes they are—we must ensure schools have the tools necessary for success. The answer to this is fully funded, stable, neighborhood, community schools. Schools across the district must have and maintain baseline supports for the community. Libraries and nurses offices must be staffed and open every day for our students. These are not “nice to have items” that should be capriciously subjected to the invisible hand of the market. They are necessities that should be guaranteed by the public institutions of a free society. With the new federal and state influx of resources coming into California public schools, we must make an organized and concerted effort with the district to make Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds our new baseline for public education. The increase in resources must be robust, ongoing, and reliable. One-time bonuses will not attract the community members to become educators. Temporary contracts with private companies to provide tutoring will not move our students forward. Build strong, institutional capacity and we will solve the educator shortage, and school districts will regain the trust of the community.

## Educator Shortage Policy Recommendations

The federal government, the state of California, and the Los Angeles Unified School District must act boldly to ensure that public education persists. With record levels of funding ready to be put to work for our community, the following policies will go the furthest in attracting and retaining educators and meeting the needs of our students.

## State and Local District Policies

### **Eliminate the Educator Wage Penalty in LAUSD**

There is no way out of an educator shortage without eliminating the 20% wage penalty educators face the moment they dedicate their careers to making the dreams of students possible. To attract and retain LAUSD educators, an across-the-board 20% increase in wages is one of two imperatives for the district. There is no more direct way to solve a shortage than by increasing salaries substantially. This increase will reinvigorate the educator labor pool and allow LAUSD to be at the forefront in righting the gender wage penalty that has plagued the education profession for a century. Educators deserve to be able to afford rent in the neighborhood where they serve. Educators deserve a living wage. Educators deserve to not suffer an historical, sexist wage penalty. And educators should only have to work one career to make ends meet. It is untenable to have a professional workforce that cannot afford the rent in a single neighborhood in their city.

### **Ensure Equity with a Robust, Consistent Staffing Foundation in Every LAUSD School, and Expand Community Schools to Democratically Determine LAUSD Communities' Unique Needs**

Equally important to eliminating the wage penalty is ensuring every student arrives at school with all of the supports necessary for success. Every school across the district, regardless of neighborhood, must have the following:

- A nurse at every school every day of the week
- An operational library at every school open every day of the week
- Manageable class sizes
- Reasonable special education caseload caps
- Student-counselor ratios of no more than 250:1<sup>65</sup>
- School-social worker ratios of no more than 250:1<sup>66</sup>

Without these essential tools, educators and students walk into deeply inequitable LAUSD schools every day. No matter where educators are working, they should be able to trust they can focus on their pedagogy and student growth. Everyone is set up for failure when any one of these pieces is missing.

On top of that robust foundation, the community schools model can flourish. Community schools are designed to foster collaboration with the community to democratically determine how the school can meet the needs of the community.<sup>67</sup> This is the path to true equity and democratic participation in our schools. With a recent influx of \$635 million recently allocated by California explicitly to expand community schools, it is the right time, and this is the right model.<sup>68</sup>

In California, the recent expansion of state education revenues through one-time grants has prevented districts from planning for higher levels of staffing. This is information preparation programs need to confidently plan enrollments. Unless the level of ongoing district revenues increases, and unless the culture of district leaders changes to acknowledge that these higher revenues will continue, we cannot just assume there will be adequate enrollments in preparation programs. Districts that may need to hire new teachers because of increased retirements, rising turnover, or growing class sizes may be unable to do so if revenues are inadequate or politically uncertain in the future. A stable or declining rate of new teacher hires reported by the state Department of Education should not be interpreted as a failsafe indicator of stable or declining “teacher demand,” which is as much a political concept as an economic one.

## Federal Policies

### **Make Federal ESSER Funding Permanent**

The annual appropriation by Congress for federal spending on primary and secondary education was about \$23.7 billion in 2016, the final year of the Obama administration. The legislation controlling these funds is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, renamed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 and Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015. Of the \$23 to \$25 billion annually spent under this law before the pandemic, more than half or around \$15 billion was earmarked for direct grants to local school districts. Before the pandemic, the NEA estimated that less than 10% of local district revenues came from federal funds, but the emergency stimulus of the CARES Act, CARES II, and the ARPA may have at least temporarily shifted this ratio.

In addition to the \$26.2 billion appropriation for the ESEA in FY 2022, during the pandemic Congress appropriated \$190 billion under those three emergency measures to be spent by 2024. Of those funds, about \$140 billion remained unspent by the spring of 2022. Were it distributed evenly across the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years, this sum would nearly quadruple the federal contribution to public education. From an annual expenditure of \$27.6 billion (the FY2022 appropriation), it would raise the level of federal education spending to more than \$97 billion.

The superintendents of America’s public school districts do not know how to spend this money. To ensure districts are able to adjust to the permanently higher level of spending necessary to meet the needs of the nation’s cities, the Biden administration should both extend the deadline for spending these funds and ensure the continuation of this higher level of spending beyond the 2023-24 school year. In May 2022, in a hopeful sign, the U.S. Department of Education extended the deadline for spending American Rescue Plan funds until April 2026. Further actions along these lines can signal to districts that the federal government will accommodate their planning to raise their long-term level of spending by ensuring that federal revenues will be there to fund the new, necessarily higher level of commitments.

### **Fulfill the Half Century-Old Promise to Fund IDEA at 40%**

As we continue through a debilitating pandemic, it is more important than ever that Congress fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Full funding means meeting the original 40% promise Congress made in 1975. Not meeting that promise has meant a \$2 billion annual shortfall for special education services in California.<sup>69</sup> When we underfund special education, we underfund the entirety of the school system. Special education is a fundamental right, and there are no cutting corners for providing access to learning opportunities for all students. When districts are forced to manage the crushing reality of Congress’ refusal, they choose one or both of the following two paths: They systematically discourage the identification of students with disabilities, resulting in severe undercounts of students who should be receiving additional services. Or they define the manifestations of disability as dangerous that must be managed by law enforcement. A police officer is cheaper than ensuring students have access to nurses, psychologists, social workers, therapists, and meaningful accommodations. Districts have re-created a system of incarceration that is part of many of our students lives outside of school. We are fighting for a

different vision, a very different path forward, where every school has the resources it needs for our students to thrive. Fully funding IDEA at the original 40% promise will help bring this vision to reality.<sup>70</sup>

### **Strengthen and Reinstate the Assault Weapons Ban**

There can be no learning without safety. It is our first priority as educators to protect our children. We need nurses, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists who can give our students positive, individual attention. Our students cannot thrive in a space they have been conditioned to fear. There is only one way to ensure the safety of our school communities: Get rid of the weapon designed specifically to fit in a human being's hands and inflict as much death as possible. Every educator and student who walks into our buildings each morning deserves safety. It is a foundational human expectation, without which educators cannot succeed and students cannot learn. We reject any proposal that asks educators to act more like the police or schools to operate more like prisons. Schools must not be carceral institutions. Schools do not need national security-style surveillance command centers. No one inside of a school should be armed with weapons designed to kill. And the police should not be employed to mask the structural underfunding of our schools. If the federal government will not act, then the state of California must explore the limits of its power to stop these weapons from harming our students and educators.

### **Cancel All Student Loan Debt**

In LAUSD, 65% of educators know what it is like to live with student loan debt.<sup>71</sup> According to an NEA survey, teachers nationwide with student loan debt owe an average \$55,800, and more than a quarter of educators over the age of 61 have not been able to pay off their student loans.<sup>72</sup> When NEA broke down these results, results showed that this debt is unequal across racial and ethnic demographics. Student loan debts are particularly burdensome to Black educators, 20 % of whom currently owe more than \$105,000. Student loan debt cancellation would positively affect both the educator labor pool and current educators. President Biden, through executive action, must cancel all student loans. All of them. It is not enough to cancel loans held by educators. Loans not only take a huge bite out of current educators' compensation apple, they also prevent people who may want to become teachers from pursuing a career in education. Cancel all of it.

Public schools can and should be the center of their community. Educators should not collect crushing debt along with their teaching credentials. Beginning and veteran educators alike should be able to afford an apartment in their community. Los Angeles cannot be a city exclusively for elites. Through our collective power, we can ensure Los Angeles is a city of the people.

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