

**A Pledge and A Promise:**

**Building a Seamless Pathway to College for El Monte Students and Families**

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## **Dedication**

To all El Monte students and their families –

May a Pledge and a Promise carry you forward into the light of the future.

## OVERVIEW

In 2007, The California Community Foundation (CCF) defined three key principles to guide its charitable efforts in a demonstration project aimed at revitalizing low-income neighborhoods outside the traditional city core: It chose to concentrate its philanthropic resources in one place, engage an entire community in setting priorities and goals, and invest for the long-term to strengthen a community's capacity to collaborate and problem-solve. In doing so, the CCF established its El Monte Community Building Initiative (CBI), and committed up to \$1 million each year over a ten-year period to support the community's effort to improve quality of life.

The CCF selected El Monte for several reasons: As a microcosm of the greater Los Angeles area, the region has a high proportion of immigrants working to improve their families' economic, living, and educational circumstances. Despite concentrations of poverty, the El Monte region receives far fewer philanthropic investments from local sources than communities in the inner city of Los Angeles. Additionally, there are opportunities for public and private partnerships and a collaborative disposition within the El Monte community, which itself conveys a sense of optimism and purpose.

While the first three years of the initiative focused primarily on affordable housing and workforce development, a mid-course assessment of the CBI and the dramatic shift in the nation's economy and housing markets caused CCF and its community partners to rethink their approach. In 2010, through a series of meetings with residents and other key CBI partners, the focus of the initiative shifted from the traditional economic development approach (e.g., jobs, housing, etc.) to one that focused on improving the socio-economic well-being of the community by ensuring that its children grow up healthier and better prepared for school, college, and career. To achieve this, a cross-sectoral collaboration of local government, schools, health providers, private businesses, nonprofits, volunteer networks, and parents was seen as essential to carving a pathway that provides the necessary supports for students' success.

Because the degree of need in El Monte is so significant, the CBI is working to strengthen access to out-of-school resources by supporting the efforts of other organizations that offer after-school programs and other services. Such resources reinforce school curricula and state standards and help students cultivate the skills they need to succeed in the world.

Recognizing that parents play a pivotal role in helping their child succeed academically in school, the CBI is focusing an effort to increase parent engagement throughout the region. The CBI also aims to help parents support their children in navigating critical transitions from elementary to high school to community college, and from community college to four-year college.

By contributing strategic support on a year-to-year basis, the CBI strives to increase preschool enrollment by 15 percent, high school graduation rates by 15 percent and the completion of required courses for admission to the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) (known as "A-G" requirements)<sup>1</sup> to over 50 percent.

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<sup>1</sup> The *minimum* 15 course requirements, known as the "A-G" subject requirements, for admission to the CSU and UC include the following: 2 years of history/social sciences (3 years recommended), 4 years of English, 3 years of

In 2010, voters of El Monte approved six Education Bonds, a very real expression of how much the community itself values education and recognizes that it stands as a life changing opportunity and resource for its youth.

*The El Monte Union Pledge and The El Monte Promise*

With education as the engine driving the region forward, the El Monte Union Pledge Compact<sup>2</sup> was established in August of 2010. In an unprecedented collaboration spearheaded by the Rio Hondo Partnership for College, the El Monte Union High School District, Rio Hondo Community College, and the University of California at Irvine (UCI) created an agreement to provide El Monte high school graduates with a seamless pathway from high school to community college and a four-year university (see Appendix A). In June of 2011, California State University Los Angeles (CSULA) formally joined the compact to become the fourth member of the El Monte Union Pledge Compact. The Pledge allows graduating seniors to take advantage of a one-time priority registration at Rio Hondo College and admission to CSULA and UCI if they maintain a 3.0 grade-point average, meet graduation requirements, and are eligible for CSU or UC admission (see Appendix B).

Building upon the institutional commitments of the four stakeholders of the El Monte Union Pledge, the *El Monte Promise* was established in September of 2010 as a collective of education stakeholders, local community groups, civic and business leaders, professional organizations, and others. The Promise seeks to extend the work of the Pledge by reaching *below* the high school level and providing local students with a seamless pathway to college from *as early as preschool and continuing through high school and beyond*. Equally important, the Promise intends to provide El Monte students with scholarships for their first two years of college.

Developed in a concurrent timeframe, the El Monte Pledge and El Monte Promise are complimentary and parallel initiatives that aim to create a rich diversity of resources from which the region may draw to strengthen educational priorities. Together, stakeholders of the Pledge and Promise are poised to bring forward business and corporate leaders, elected officials, and support from industry to endorse education as a powerful strategy for regional economic development. Principal stakeholders of the Promise include parents and families of *all* students, El Monte Union High School District, El Monte City Elementary and Mountain View Elementary Schools Districts, the El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals, the City of El

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mathematics (4 years recommended), 2 years of laboratory science (3 years recommended), 2 years of foreign language (3 years recommended), 1 year Visual and Performing Arts and 1 year of college-preparatory electives. At least seven of the 15 courses must be taken in a student's last two years of high school. Applicants for fall 2012 or beyond must complete 11 of the 15 required courses by the end of their junior year.

<sup>2</sup> The El Monte Union Pledge Compact is a localized version of Senate Bill (SB) 890 – the Early Commitment to College (ECC) with institutional commitments. SB 890 seeks to provide relevant information to students at the beginning – not the end – of their secondary school journeys. The core element of this initiative is the “Save Me a Spot in College Pledge” signed by students as early as sixth grade. That Pledge commits students to taking specific steps to achieve academic goals and to pursue the opportunities and financial support that the State of California offers in order for them to earn a college degree. Students who sign the pledge receive information and a set of informational services to assist them in fulfilling their goals. Learn more at: <http://www.collegecampaign.org>

Monte, First 5 LA, and the California Community Foundation (through its Community Building Initiative). Additional stakeholders who may officially join the Promise in the future are Rosemead Elementary and Valle Lindo Elementary School Districts in Rosemead and South El Monte.

### *The Planning Grant*

In February of 2011, the California Education Round Table's Intersegmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) was awarded a six-month planning grant by the California Community Foundation to conduct an assessment of existing college preparation and access programs in El Monte, and to recommend next steps for how best to move the Promise Initiative forward. ICC sub-contracted the scope of work to Dr. Julie Mendoza who is the primary staff person responsible for the design and implementation of the College Access Informational Continuum in El Monte through a generous grant from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation. Dr. Mendoza was joined in her effort by her Planning Grant Team: educational researcher Dr. Laura Romero, parent and community organizer Sandy Mendoza, and communications specialist Kathy Wyer.

Included in the inventory were nearly 300 parents of school-age children ranging from kindergarteners to high school seniors, the El Monte Union High School District, El Monte City and Mountain View Elementary School Districts, Rio Hondo Community College, Rio Hondo Partnership for College, and the El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals.

Under the direction of Dr. Mendoza, an Executive Leadership Team comprised of the Planning Grant Team and key stakeholders of both the Pledge and Promise met twice (in March and May) to coordinate efforts surrounding the needs assessment. Participants included representatives from parent groups, the El Monte Union High School District, Mountain View Elementary School District, El Monte City Elementary School District, Rio Hondo College, El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals, the City of El Monte, and First 5 LA (see Appendix C for a complete list of Executive Leadership Team members). Representatives convened to discuss how best to contribute their collective resources to build a long-term collaborative educational initiative for the region, one that will promote college readiness and a college-going culture for all students and their families in the region.

Dr. Mendoza and the Planning Grant Team, along with key members of the Executive Leadership Team, also convened in April to discuss the possible development and formation of an El Monte Scholarship/Endowment fund to help provide financial support for local students attending college; this assessment is also included as part of this Planning Grant report.

Moving towards the inventory phase, the Planning Grant and Executive Leadership Teams identified three next steps for the long-term: to determine how they might best create a community-minded organization to provide oversight for developing an endowment fund; to identify what other models – if any – similar to the Promise exist; and to seek out other resources (e.g., business leaders, faith-based organizations, etc.) to join the table and contribute to the El Monte Promise Initiative.

### *Demographics of the El Monte Region*

El Monte is the ninth largest city (out of 88) in Los Angeles County and has more than 125,000 residents. It has an ethnically diverse population that is 72 percent Latino<sup>3</sup>, 18 percent Asian, and 7 percent White. The land uses within its 10 square mile area are 58 percent residential, 11 percent retail, 10 percent industrial, 7 percent office/retail, and 14 percent other.

The 2010 Census reveals a decrease in El Monte's population over the last decade, which affects sales tax revenues, local businesses, student enrollment in schools, and establishes what is unquestionably unfavorable real estate trends.

There is considerable poverty in the region. El Monte has high concentrations of low-income Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders. According to the Office of the El Monte City Manager, home ownership is down and approximately 50% - 60% of El Monte City residents are renters. Median household income is between \$35,000 – \$40,000.

In an indication of the region's dire need for a substantial investment in education, First 5 LA reveals that a staggering 65 percent of El Monte's population *have not graduated from high school or completed an equivalency*.

In recent years, student enrollment in the elementary and high school Districts has declined. Families are leaving El Monte and moving to areas with more affordable housing and rents, and as a result some schools have been forced to close due to low enrollment. This demographic shift has had a dramatic impact on the City's sponsored youth programs and activities including organized youth sports.

Major industries and businesses in the region – potential collaborative partners to support supplemental education initiatives and scholarship funds – include Southern California Edison, Longo Toyota (the largest auto dealer nationwide by sales and volume), Von's Distribution Warehouse, Wells Fargo Operations Center, and regional offices for East West and Cathay Banks, as well as many others.

### *Implications for Policy*

Our society is moving toward a model of preparing all students for some form of education and training after high school. That is what parents want for their children, what students say they want for themselves, and what analysts and policymakers at all levels believe is needed for success in a global economy.

In an increasingly competitive world economy, America's economic strength depends upon the education and skills of its workers. In coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as those requiring no college experience. To meet this economic imperative, President Barack Obama has asked every American to commit to at least

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<sup>3</sup> The term "Latino" refers collectively to Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Central Americans, and other Hispanic origin students.

one year or more of higher education or career training and set a new national goal: by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. The benefits to the individual and society are clear – college graduates earn more money, have better career opportunities, engage in greater civic participation, and have a higher overall quality of life.

Unfortunately, we know that in low-income communities like El Monte, the pathway from early education to high school and beyond is filled with many barriers and obstacles. Far too few students from low-income families are able to successfully navigate the pathway from preschool to college completion. Even when low-income students complete the college preparatory courses required for admission to the CSU or UC system with a “C” or better, they often require remediation when they enter college.

Rio Hondo Community College estimates that 91 percent of First-Time-Freshman (FTF) do not have the basic math skills they need to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing general education courses without remediation. Consequently, these students must spend their first year of college improving their proficiency in remedial courses before they can enroll in and successfully complete entry-level college courses.

These remediation rates are not unique to Rio Hondo Community College. Nationally, college remediation rates are high. In the CSU system, remediation rates amongst FTF have historically hovered between 40 and 50 percent in both English and Math and on some campuses it is much higher. The remediation rates for Latino and African American CSU students is more than twice the rate of their White counterparts. Further, remediation rates in California Community Colleges are even higher than those of the CSU system. When students have to enroll in remedial courses, it increases their time to degree completion and is also associated with a decrease in the likelihood they will graduate from college.

Children from low-income families are particularly vulnerable to an education system that does not send clear signals to students and their families of how to prepare students for college. They are most dependent on schools to prepare students properly for college success because such students are often the first in their families to attend college and have limited access to professional networks to help them with career planning.

Rio Hondo Community College estimates that 70 percent of FTF arrive on campus without well-defined education and career goals. The lack of academic preparation to enroll in credit-bearing general education courses combined with no clear education and/or career goals have a significant impact on student success at the Rio Hondo Community College. It not only increases the time it takes for students to earn an Associate’s degree, it also increases the time it takes for students to complete the courses required to transfer to a baccalaureate program. This increase in time to degree completion results in enormous costs to students, their families, post-secondary institutions, and society.

California and low-income communities like El Monte face unprecedented challenges with respect to increasing college preparation, access, and degree completion. At every stage of the educational pipeline from preschool to high school graduation and college matriculation, the

achievement and resource gaps between low-income, Latino, and African American students and their White and Asian counterparts are enormous, and in many cases growing. Projections are that if this situation remains unchecked, it will continue to worsen.

This is the context that El Monte Promise stakeholders are up against as they aim to provide students with a *seamless pathway to college from as early as elementary school and continuing through high school and beyond*. For this reason, the Planning Grant Team believes that it is going to take concerted coordinated effort to create a college-going culture in the region.

Implementing the El Monte Promise Initiative will require a massive change in attitude among *all* education and community stakeholders on an unprecedented scale. Educators at all segments of the educational pipeline will have to respond as if they expect all students to achieve at a high level, actively work to remove barriers from learning, and teach students and families how to help themselves. Educational leaders will need to work collaboratively with all school personnel, offering adequate training and support that promotes high expectations and high standards for all students. Teachers will need to be on board and work to debunk negative myths about who can and who cannot achieve success in rigorous courses. Students and parents will also need to raise their expectations of themselves and their schools and work as partners to create a culture of excellence and high standards.

To put this into effect, a comprehensive communications campaign must be developed to communicate coherent and meaningful messages about the El Monte Promise Initiative so that all stakeholders understand the goals, how it will help students, what is expected from schools and parents, and how it will benefit the community.

Improving the academic preparation of all students for college will need to be a primary concern for all El Monte Promise stakeholders. Taken as a whole, the El Monte PreK-12 educational system has a long road to travel to realize readiness and proficiency in English Language Arts and other core academic subjects for all students, especially English Learners.

This needs assessment and inventory does not focus on curriculum and instruction issues. The primary focus of this inventory is to better understand existing levels of college preparation and access programs, organizations, and networks in the region that assist students in preparing for college. It also provides detailed recommendations for all stakeholders of how they can move from the *planning phase* of the El Monte Promise to *implementation*.

There are significant human and fiscal resources available in the region to assist students with college preparation. Currently, these resources are not aligned with the goals of the El Monte Promise Initiative and remain untapped. Beyond Executive Leadership, there is no common agenda among education and community stakeholders in the region. There is no shared vision or goals, no student achievement benchmarks, no deliverables, and no institutional/organizational policies in place to support the work. There is a culture of mediocrity and a great deal of confusion about the distinction between the El Monte Pledge and the Promise.

Below are several challenges El Monte Promise education and community stakeholders' face:

- The Planning Grant Team talked with nearly 300 parents of school-age children ranging from rising kindergarteners to high school seniors. Nearly all parents we talked to in the region expressed high aspirations for their children to graduate from high school, attend a four-year college, and to earn an advanced graduate or professional degree. Yet the majority of parents do not know what the graduation requirements are for the El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD), or could identify the classes that students need to successfully complete to prepare for college. This trend must be reversed before the goals of the El Monte Promise Initiative can be realized.
- This inventory included two of the four Elementary School Districts that are part of the EMUHSD's feeder pattern; Rosemead and Valle Lindo K-8 School Districts are not included in this inventory. Approximately, 15 percent of Rosemead School District's and 5 percent of Valle Lindo School District's student population will enroll in EMUHSD.
- Currently, the Superintendents of the four Elementary School Districts that feed into EMUHSD and other key community stakeholders including the El Monte City, business partners, and Parent-Centered Organizations are not part of the Rio Hondo Partnership for College organizational structure or Executive Leadership Team.
- No K-12 school District in the region has a strategic plan for how to create a District-wide college-going culture, how to increase parent engagement or how to strengthen connections between community stakeholders and schools. There is, however, widespread agreement that schools cannot improve education outcomes by themselves.
- The fact that EMUHSD is not a unified district poses a structural challenge to the region and the success of the El Monte Promise Initiative because no single education entity is responsible for creating a "seamless K-12 education pathway." The responsibility is on education leaders in the region to strengthen articulation between elementary school Districts and the high school District to ensure that systems and practices are in place to prepare students for successful transitions.

An important next step to move the El Monte Promise Initiative forward is for stakeholders to develop a common agenda with a shared vision and set of immediate, interim, and long-term goals. Education and community stakeholders will need to develop an appropriate P-20 organizational model made up of a broad group of stakeholders and secure adequate resources to support the El Monte Promise Initiative.

In addition, El Monte collaborative partners will need to intentionally pool and leverage their limited human and fiscal resources to maximize collective impact. They will need to coordinate their actions to support goals of increasing student achievement, college access, and degree completion. They must also develop a comprehensive strategy to communicate with internal and external collaborative partners and community stakeholders about the El Monte Promise.

Most important, they will need to share data and measurement systems to inform decision-making, educational practices and policies at a systems level to improve student achievement, and address college access issues. This will require collaborative partners to develop data

sharing agreements and systems so they can link education databases from preschool, K-8 Districts, the 9-12 District, community college, and four-year universities with relevant scholarship, job placement, career path, and workforce databases.

All of the above are necessary next steps to establish a healthy student-centered P-20 collaborative focused on improving student achievement, college access, and degree completion. The Planning Grant Team recommends El Monte stakeholders look closely at lessons learned by stakeholders in sister cities in the region working to increase academic preparation, college access, and degree completion. El Monte Promise stakeholders should carefully consider how they could adopt strategies and replicate effective practices of mature ARCHES<sup>4</sup> supported collaboratives like the Long Beach Promise and the Santa Ana Partnership.

Finally, there are two significant barriers that El Monte Promise stakeholders must overcome:

1. Organizational structures and behaviors that obstruct collaboration. Too often, educational and other societal sectors including business and industry, community organizations, public officials, and governmental agencies operate in their own silos and concentrate only on their own mission and priorities rather than functioning as an integrated system that is interconnected in a manner that facilitates the educational progress and success of students.
2. An acceptance of the status quo. Delivering on the Promise requires a shared sense of urgency to move quickly, decisively, and strategically in a coordinated manner from planning and policy formation to implementation. All stakeholders must create proper incentives and supports for intra- and inter-agency collaboration to improve student achievement in the region.

Ultimately, the success of the El Monte Pledge and Promise will depend on the outcomes to these as-of-yet unanswered questions:

Do El Monte Promise education and community stakeholders have the will to commit limited human and fiscal resources to close the ‘achievement and resource gap’ to increase college preparation, access, and completion rates?

Can entities collaborate in a coordinated and sustained manner to improve student outcomes and launch a Scholarship and Endowment Campaign?

Can collaborative partners commit to sharing information broadly, using data to identify issues, assess effectiveness of intervention strategies, and implement policies?

Most important, can we hold *adults* accountable for accomplishing agreed upon goals and keep *students* at the center of every decision and action?

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<sup>4</sup> Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Educational Success (ARCHES) is statewide voluntary confederation of regional collaboratives. Composed of schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, businesses, community and family organizations, ARCHES aims to create and sustain alliances dedicated to addressing the disparities in the “opportunity and resources gap” and the “achievement gap” for California Students. Learn more at: [www.arches-ca.org](http://www.arches-ca.org)

The El Monte Pledge and the El Monte Promise hold the potential to effectively transform lives by making a college education – and the change in quality of life and promise of a future that come with it – possible for *all* students. If successful, the El Monte Pledge and the El Monte Promise together may serve as a national model of how lives can be transformed through education and collective partnership, and lift an entire population out of poverty. The families and the students of this region deserve nothing less than full support from all stakeholders and contributors to the El Monte Pledge and Promise.

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS**

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS: EL MONTE PARENTS**

### **OVERVIEW**

Like most parents, El Monte parents want the best for their children. They want their children to succeed academically, be happy, live fulfilling lives and make a contribution to society. The Planning Grant Team talked with nearly 300 parents of school-age children ranging from rising kindergarteners to high school seniors. Nearly all parents we talked to in the region expressed high aspirations for their children to graduate from high school, attend a four-year college, and go on to earn an advanced graduate or professional degree.

More than one-third of all parent focus group participants report that they were born in another country; they speak a language other than English at home including Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese or other Asian languages. Nearly two-thirds of parents who participated were female. Nearly half of all parent group participants have not graduated from high school and/or have attended U.S. schools. A little more than half of participants report that one member of their family has attended college. A large majority of parents report they have access to the Internet and would use online resources to help their children succeed academically and prepare for college, but they don't know where to start or what specific resources are best to use.

The majority of parents in all four focus groups lack familiarity with the course requirements needed to graduate from high school and prepare for college. In the high school parent focus group *all* participants report they expect their child to go to college. Yet the majority does not know what the graduation requirements are for the El Monte Union High School District, or the classes students need to successfully complete to prepare for college.

Families – including those with children starting in Pre-K – report feeling the harsh reality of these uncertain economic times, and fear that things may only get worse, and their ability to pay for college education will soon be beyond their reach.

Overwhelmingly, parents will not consider having their children work to support the family, unless it is done to support their ability to attend college.

Some high school parents report that they no longer believe earning a college degree is the only way to land a rewarding job or career – they believe there is no guarantee that a job or career in a particular field of study will be easy to find in this economy.

Post-secondary options supported by some parents include the military, which they believe offers focus, stability, and the assurance of an education that will be available to their son or daughter upon re-entering civilian life.

Some parents look for ways to partner with schools to ensure their child's academic success, while other parents don't know how and feel frustrated and disconnected as a result. Many immigrant parents feel isolated and are limited by language barriers. Parents at all levels of the

education pipeline have little or no knowledge of community resources, services, or programs that support students' academic success.

El Monte parents are acutely aware that cuts in funding to education will reduce the number of teachers, resources, programs, and services available to children in schools in the region. They are particularly concerned about the impact this will have on the quality of education and educational outcomes. They fear this will negatively impact their child's academic progress, especially if he or she is struggling academically to succeed.

On the issue of limited school resources, we asked the question: "How much would you be willing to pay to enable your child to visit a college campus?" Most parents report they would pay at least the price of a movie ticket. Others indicate they would pay more, or the equivalent of what they are paying now for their child to participate in sports or cheerleading activities. Parents value resources such as a College Club or program that will ensure their child gets the learning support, academic services, and extracurricular activities he or she needs to succeed in school and prepare for college. Parents are eager to partner with other parents and schools because they believe that their child cannot succeed in a competitive global economy without a good education.

A chief concern on the minds of many parents is safety, whether it is from cyber-bullying or campus conflicts. Parents see their children as vulnerable, whether they go off to college or not.

Some parents report they fear that students with undocumented status may be denied admission to college, or will be ineligible for scholarships and financial aid and have no higher education options.

Parents were asked, "At what point should college preparation and college awareness start for children?" Responses range from Pre-K to the middle school years to high school for building student awareness of the importance of college.

Common parental strategies for helping a child prepare for college include:

- Starting a college savings fund for a child at an early age.
- Visiting college and university campuses.
- Gathering information online about colleges.
- Applying for scholarships.
- Learning a child's interests and encouraging the pursuit of those interests.
- Social engagement activities, such as visiting libraries and museums.
- Serving as an example: showing children how a parent's lack of formal education constrains their employment opportunities and earnings potential.

With state funding cuts to education reducing many resources, parents see a decline in opportunities for students to visit college campuses firsthand. Parents are hard pressed to shoulder such responsibility themselves without help. Some parents report they are unaware that the general public can visit a college campus without approval or official authorization.

Parents indicate that there is inconsistency among high schools in distributing college-related information and notices about opportunities for visiting college campuses.

With few exceptions, a family's socio-economic status poses many barriers for parents, who have little or no time and/or knowledge of how to effectively support their child's educational journey.

Overall, parent focus group participants genuinely want to serve as advocates for their child's education. They want to put their talents and skills to use in the home as well as in school. They want clearly defined roles and a better understanding of the expectations schools have of them and their children. Parents want their involvement to *matter*. They want a parent engagement model at their child's school that is welcoming, inclusive and supportive, and which fosters constructive parent-to-school and parent-to-parent relationships. Parents want their time to be valued. Focus group participants feel they bring a lot to the table and are eager to know how they can more effectively contribute to their child's academic success and the school community.

## METHODOLOGY

Four focus groups were conducted between the period of April – May, 2011, with parents and caregivers of children who will be enrolled in or are currently enrolled in three school Districts: El Monte City, Mountain View Elementary, and El Monte Union High. Focus groups were designed to provide parents with an opportunity to share their dreams and insights for keeping their child on the path to high school graduation and a bright future.

We worked with the three Superintendents and their staff to coordinate parent outreach and other important logistics including scheduling dates, times, and meeting locations. We explained to Superintendents that our aim was to talk with a representative sample of parents from their District to learn how parents view the college-going culture at their children's school and how they may help to prepare their child for college at both home and school. We invited feedback from the three Superintendents and their staff on the meeting agenda and focus group questions that were developed to learn about parents' aspirations for their child's education, college knowledge, and related concerns.

Each focus group lasted two hours in duration and explored the following topics: parent expectations, parent knowledge of how to support their child's learning at home and school, knowledge of how to support their child's college and career aspirations, and communications and outreach efforts of their child's school. Parents were provided translation support, childcare, transportation to and from the meeting as needed, food and refreshments, group facilitators, and note takers.

Each session opened with a welcome and explanation of the meeting's purpose, an ice breaker question, followed by moving parents into smaller, facilitator-led discussion groups organized by language. We divided focus group participants into smaller groups by language to create a comfortable environment for parents and to maximize their participation. We asked District administrators and staff not to identify themselves as District employees, so parents would not be inhibited about speaking out and sharing their opinions and personal experiences. At the end of

each focus group, facilitators distributed college access informational materials in English and in Spanish, including “College: Making it Happen” booklets and a newspaper covering similar information (see Appendix D for a copy of facilitator instructions and Appendix E for meeting agenda and focus group questions).

We held focus groups with parents and caregivers of students’ in the region because research shows that parents play a critical role in helping children prepare academically for college and 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs. Further, knowing what parents value, need, and perceive as obstacles and resources in schools can offer insights for how to design or refine parent engagement strategies. Now more than ever, parents, teachers, school counselors, and administrators need to work together strategically and intentionally to ensure academic success for all students.

Parent Focus Groups were held at:

Mountain View Elementary School – April 28, 2011—9:00 am to 11:00 am

- Number of parents: (25)
- Parents were subdivided into small groups by language spoken (Spanish/English) ranging in size from 5-8 participants.
- Parents’ children are elementary school students enrolled in kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Majority of parents in attendance were Latino. This group comprised entirely of parent leaders who actively engage in their child’s education and serve as members of the Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council (SPAC). This is a group of parent representatives elected by their peers from each school in the District.

El Monte Union High School – April 28, 2011 – 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

- Number of parents: (100)
- Parents were subdivided into small groups by languages spoken. (Spanish/Mandarin/Vietnamese/English) ranging in size from 5-25 participants.
- Parents’ children are high school students.
- Majority of parents in attendance were Latino, followed by White and Asian-Pacific subgroups.

Voorhis Elementary School – May 6, 2011 – 9:00 am to 11:00 am

- Number of parents: (156)
- Parents were subdivided into small groups by languages spoken. (Spanish/Vietnamese/English) ranging in size from 15-75 participants.
- Parents’ children are elementary and rising Kindergarten students.
- Majority of parents in attendance were Latino, followed by Asian-Pacific subgroups.

El Monte City School District – May 24, 2011 – 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

- Number of parents: (16)
- Parents were not subdivided into smaller groups per their request. The focus group was conducted in Spanish with English translation.
- Parents’ children are Kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students.
- All parents in attendance were Latino.

## INQUIRY and FINDINGS

The following categories of inquiries examined what parents do to support their child's learning at home and at school, as well as gauge their knowledge of how best to prepare their child for high school graduation and college.

### **High School Graduation Requirements:**

Question to Parents: Are you familiar with your school District's high school graduation requirements?

Majority Response: Mixed.

- All rising kindergarten parents do not know what the requirements are for high school graduation in the El Monte Union High School District.
- A minority (six out of 16) of middle school parents report they know high school graduation requirements. When those six parents were asked to state the number of credits needed for graduation, there was disagreement about the actual number of credits needed for graduation.
- A majority of middle school parents are not familiar with college preparatory courses known as the A-G subject requirements. They are surprised that the course requirements for high school graduation are different from the course prerequisites for college. They do not understand the difference between the course requirements for high school graduation and the minimum courses that are required for freshman admission to California State University, the University of California, and many independent colleges and universities.
- The majority of high school parents report they are familiar with the course requirements for high school graduation; a few parents, mostly Vietnamese parents, said they are not familiar with high school graduation requirements.
- When high school parents were asked if they have awareness of A-G requirements, responses were mixed.
- Some parents feel El Monte Union High School District expectations are too low, and note that the District should make college preparatory courses the course requirements for high school graduation for *all* students.
- High school parents, regardless of their level of English proficiency, report serious barriers to communication and state they have difficulty understanding school "terminology." In particular, they feel a translation of terms is not enough because they themselves lack the context and/or experience of a high school setting and have difficulty understanding the steps needed to graduate and become college and career ready.

**Information About College (The relevance of information itself – the content – that schools convey to parents):**

Question to Parents: Are schools providing (to you, the parents) relevant information for preparing students for college?

Majority Response: No! (Said emphatically).

College information may in fact be shared with parents, but because schools do not communicate information in a consistent or similar manner, there are variations in content; parent understanding therefore is also inconsistent. One explanation may be that culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate information about college may not be conveyed; culturally appropriate materials are not merely translated from English, but they must be adapted or redesigned, using concepts, methods, and activities that promote clarity and understanding.

- Many parents note that when visiting their child’s school they see college-related information posted, but don’t understand its meaning, and/or need to ask the school for more information, including how to attend a parent meeting in order to learn more.
- Some parents feel that it is the school’s or school Counselor’s responsibility for communicating college information to them.
- Some parents feel that school Counselors do not encourage parental involvement, and even at times discourage it, because they don’t want to be “bothered by parents.”

**How Schools Communicate with Parents (The means of communication/media used):**

Question to Parents: How should the school convey important information to you?

Majority Response: Face-to-face meetings, teacher phone calls, via the child, e-mail, text messages, U.S. mail, parent-teacher conferences, automated voice messaging.

- Most favored mode of communication: Face-to-face meetings – *verbal communication*. Parents note that language can be a barrier especially if a child’s teacher does not speak the parent’s native language.
- Automated phone messages are also cited as a preferred mode of communication. However, some parents note that phone messages are often relayed in English, and if parents speak another language, they don’t understand what the message is saying.
- In non-English-speaking families, children are often relied upon to translate written and oral school communication, which can compromise the accuracy of the content and intent of the message.

- Parents acknowledge that in giving a child material to take home, they – the parents – must read what they receive; language and literacy can be an issue because parents may not be literate in their own native language.
- Some high school parents report SchoolLoop is a preferred mode of communication. Others note that they need more training on how to use SchoolLoop and note their child’s teachers do not use the tool or update information on SchoolLoop regularly.

**Parent Workshops:**

Question to Parents: Have you ever attended at least one parent education workshop to support your child’s education?”

Majority Response: Yes. (Mothers attend parent workshops more often than Fathers).

- A big concern is that not all workshops provide the information in the parent’s preferred language, making translation a key issue for many, particularly for Asian-Pacific parents and others who are non-English-speaking.
- Topics: College orientations, drug awareness, communicating with your children, migrant programs, domestic violence, anger management, bullying, math instruction, computer usage, English as a Second Language (ESL), financial aid, and immigration rights, etc.
- Workshop Locations: Arroyo High School, City of Industry, South El Monte High School, Rosemead High School, Savannah Elementary, Kranz Elementary, and other locations.

**College Culture at Schools:**

Question to Parents: What evidence of a college culture do you find at your child’s school?

Majority Response: A combination of posted visual displays, handouts, and events/activities.

For parents, evidence of a college culture at school includes:

- Posted flyers, t-shirts, announcements about workshops/seminars, and communications about college planning and exploration activities around campus.
- Receiving grade-level appropriate college information during the student registration process.
- High school parents mention the presence of a school-wide promotion of college scholarships throughout the year.

- College Fairs attended by parents: Citrus College, USC, UCLA Book Fair, UC Riverside, CSULA, Cal Poly Pomona, La Verne, Whittier College, UC Davis, UC Irvine, and more.
- Many parents report that Counselors could do a better job of keeping them informed about college and career exploration activities for their child throughout the year.

### **What Parents Value in Homework Support:**

Question to Parents: What support is important or necessary for your child to complete his or her homework?

Majority Response: A variety of strategies:

- Ensuring a child has a quiet space to do his or her homework.
- Re-allocating household budgets to pay for tutors and academic learning supports.
- Identifying a tutor or someone at school to help the child with homework, because many parents say they do not have the ability to help their child with homework, especially in core academic subjects such as English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- Enrolling a child in an after-school program (e.g. Think Together) or attending Saturday School for help in advanced math (e.g. Rio Hondo College). Some parents report there is no quality control for after-school programs and they want more structure and focus on academic skills building.
- Having teachers with master knowledge in a subject area (some parents indicate their child's teacher doesn't have master knowledge to teach or tutor a specific subject).

### **What Parents Need to Learn To Help Their Child:**

Question to Parents: “What do you need to learn to help your child graduate from high school and prepare for college and a future career?”

Majority Response: Numerous responses, including:

- How to contact the appropriate school official for different needs.
- How to deal with difficult children.
- How to know if a child is taking the right classes and how to identify learning problems early before they get out of hand.
- How to get a child re-classified from English Learner to English Proficient before he or she enters high school.

- How to get schools and/or Districts to respond to inquiries in a timely manner.
- The career/college exploration process so parents can build their knowledge and skills to support their child's academic and career interests.
- How to become informed about school and community resources that help parents address *all* aspects of a child's development, including his or her academic, social, and emotional needs.
- How to become part of a parent club or network that promotes student academic success.
- How to volunteer at a child's school.
- Non-English speaking parents report they need and want to learn to speak English.

**In-School and After-School Activities:**

Question to Parents: In what extracurricular or after-school activities does your child participate?

Majority Answer: A variety of responses, including:

- Academic Student Learning Support programs, such as tutoring in various academic subjects.
- Sports and Recreational activities, including soccer, basketball, softball, etc.
- College Preparation programs such as AVID, Early College Academy Program, GEAR-UP, etc.
- Culture/Ethnic groups, such as Chinese Club.
- Explorer's Club.
- Drama Clubs.

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS: EL MONTE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT AND 5 HIGH SCHOOLS**

### **OVERVIEW**

El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) was established in 1901 and included Arroyo, El Monte, Mountain View, Rosemead, South El Monte and Fernando R. Ledesma High School in addition to two El Monte-Rosemead Adult Centers, one of California's largest and most respected adult programs. The District's educational programs serve over 10,000 students in grades 9 through 12 including the enrollment in Community-Day School.

Approximately 200,000 people reside in the District's attendance boundaries. Families who live in the attendance area are broadly classified as middle to lower income. Latino students comprise 78 percent of the District's enrollment, Asian and Pacific Islanders make up 18 percent and White and other ethnic subgroups make up 4 percent of the total student enrollment. Eighty-three percent of the District's student enrollment is eligible to participate in the federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-seven percent of the students in the District are classified as English learners. The majority of students enrolled in the District have parents who speak a language other than English as their primary language. After English and Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese and Vietnamese are the most common languages spoken by parents and caregivers in the region.

EMUHSD receives students from four feeder Elementary Districts – El Monte City, Mountain View School, Rosemead, and Valle Lindo School Districts. Approximately, 80 percent of the EMUHSD's enrollment comes from El Monte City and Mountain View School Districts, 44 percent and 36 percent respectively. The other 20 percent of students come from Rosemead and Valle Lindo School Districts, 15 percent and 5 percent respectively.

State budget cuts to education and subsequent layoffs have had wide effects on all aspects of the District's instructional programs as well as guidance and counseling services. Unprecedented reductions in school staff, student services, and programs severely impact service delivery and staff moral. The loss of staff at all levels, including clerical and support staff, diminish the capacity of schools, collaborative partners, and outside service providers to deliver well-coordinated high quality instructional programs and academic support services. Not only are school staff asked to do more with less, many do not have the time, tools and/or professional training to work more efficiently and develop new systems and procedures to foster a college-going culture in the District.

Larger class sizes, fewer Regional Occupation Program offerings, limited vocational training programs, fewer summer school offerings for students to get ahead or make up classes have all contributed to a widening of the achievement gap between high and low achieving students; this

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<sup>5</sup> The National School Lunch Program is a federally funded program that assists schools and other agencies in providing nutritious lunches to children at reasonable prices. In addition to financial assistance, the program provides donated commodity foods to help reduce lunch program costs. The program offers a convenient method of providing a nutritionally balanced lunch at the lowest possible price. The program enhances children's learning abilities by contributing to their physical and mental well being. Studies have shown that children whose nutritional needs are met have fewer attendance and discipline problems and are more attentive in class.

is a trend that is particularly noticeable among 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Today, more students are successfully completing college preparatory courses, yet at the same time, more students are failing core academic subjects. This trend has caused a need for more tutors in all subject areas and levels including basic skills and advanced subjects.

All EMUHSD counselors report that they spend the majority of their time dealing with behavior and discipline issues and have little time for “guidance and career counseling.” There is also no funding for college field trips and other academic enrichment activities to expose *all* El Monte High School students to college life. This is important for the region because few students have family members or friends who are enrolled in college or have graduated from a four-year university. High school administrators and counselors explain that fostering a college-going culture loses its salience when efforts are focused on moving their school out of Program Improvement (PI). Currently, all five comprehensive high schools in EMUHSD are in PI for failing to meet all requirements for 2010 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a federal measure under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that measures the percentage of students in a school who have scored Proficient or higher on state standardized tests in math and English Language Arts.

Despite these challenges, there is reason for hope because student standardized test scores are improving in all schools. Equally important, EMUHSD’s Superintendent, administrators, teachers and staff are committed to providing *all* students with a rigorous, engaging standards-based instructional program while providing teachers with the professional support to effectively implement such a program. To reach this goal, the District has reorganized its instructional program to better support the needs of all its students and participates in several broad-based partnerships that increase opportunities to enrich students’ studies, heighten academic achievement, and prepare students for life beyond high school.

School administrators, counselors and teachers report the District needs to do a better job getting “buy-in” and support for creating a college-going culture from *all* stakeholders – including teachers, parents, and students. Currently, the District has no strategic plan for how it will foster a District-wide college-going culture, how it will increase parental engagement or how it will strengthen connections between community stakeholders and schools. However, there is widespread agreement that schools cannot improve student education outcomes alone. All education and community stakeholders need to have higher expectations for student achievement and greater knowledge about the interventions and academic supports available to students inside and outside the classroom. Students need strong support networks of adults and peers to help them access tutors, material resources, counseling services, summer academic programs, test prep, and other timely assistance to succeed academically and prepare for life after high school.

The fact that EMUHSD is not a unified district poses a structural challenge to the region and the success of the El Monte Promise because no single education entity is responsible for creating a “seamless K-12 education pipeline.” The onus is on education leaders in the region to strengthen articulation between the elementary school Districts and high school District to ensure that systems and practices are in place to prepare students for successful transitions. Vertical teams of teachers and counselors need to work together in professional learning communities within and across school Districts to ensure that students have the academic skills and knowledge they need

to successfully transition from one grade level to the next and from one school District to the next. This kind of articulation work and vertical teaming requires tremendous resources, organizational capacity, strategic planning, and professional support. It necessitates the alignment, coordination, and leveraging of limited human and fiscal resources around a student-centered agenda in order to have collective impact.

#### METHODOLOGY:

The El Monte Promise Planning Grant Team developed a School Inventory that consists of a series of questions and a matrix. The protocol was to be completed by schools as part of the school inventory and needs assessment. The answers to the questions were intended to provide qualitative information about existing activities, programs and/or resources currently assisting students with college preparation.

The matrix was designed to summarize a school's college access activities, service providers, funding sources, and sustainability plan.

The School Inventory consisted of 27 questions that focused on the *critical conditions* researchers tell us are necessary for developing a college-going culture in schools (see Appendix F for School Inventory and Appendix G for Matrix):

- 1) Support for a College-Going Culture: Students engage in experiences they need for high achievement and college preparation and understand that college preparation is normal and is for *them* and not reserved for the exceptional few who triumph over adversity to rise above all others.
- 2) School as a Learning Community: An organization that implements collaborative communication with leadership and planning strategies for teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and outside resources to improve educational opportunities for all students.
- 3) College Preparation Support: Teachers and counselors inform and prepare middle grade students for high school and college by providing information about college requirements, admissions, and financial aid; students understand high achievement in middle school prepares them for success in college preparatory courses in high school.
- 4) College-Going Identity: Students see college going as integral to their identities and a valued pathway to careers while demonstrating the confidence and skills needed to navigate college and not sacrifice their connections with their home communities.
- 5) Family-Neighborhood-School Connections: Educators, community groups, and parents work actively together to ensure that all parents and families have access to essential knowledge of college preparation, admission, financial aid, and other necessary support; parents and communities work collaboratively to ensure all critical conditions are met.

- 6) Rigorous Academic Curriculum: Students in middle school study algebra and other curricula that qualify them for college preparatory and AP courses in high school; schools monitor student progress and plan appropriate, timely intervention when necessary.
- 7) Qualified Teachers: Knowledgeable, experienced, and fully certified teachers engage students in work of high intellectual quality and make valued knowledge accessible to students from diverse backgrounds.
- 8) Academic Support: Students require support and assistance that takes place both inside and outside the classroom. To navigate the pathway to college successfully, students need support networks of adults and peers who help access tutors, material resources, counseling services, summer academic programs, test prep, and other timely assistance.
- 9) Communication: A targeted outreach effort is made to ensure that parents and families understand all information and conditions necessary to support and engage in a college-going culture; this is especially important in diverse communities such as El Monte where there are high concentrations of adults ages 25 years and older with no high school diploma or equivalency and who speak a language other than English at home.

In late March 2011, the Planning Grant Team sent an email to the Superintendent of El Monte Union High School District requesting his support with the El Monte Promise School Inventory process. We explained that the School Inventory consists of a two-page questionnaire with 27 questions and a matrix designed to better understand existing activities, programs and/or resources currently assisting students with college preparation. We asked that the School Inventory be completed by an individual in the Central District Office and by an appropriate administrator at every high school in the District. We conducted the inventory in this way because school employees told the Planning Grant Team there is often a disconnect between what Central District administrators perceive to be the resources available in schools and what school site staff believe are available.

The Superintendent was asked to direct his staff to type the answers to each question directly into the Word document we provided. We emphasized that information collected would be used to develop a written report of actionable recommendations on how to better support what is working to assist students prepare for college and to fill in resource gaps. We also provided the Superintendent with a sample letter he could send to his staff explaining the purpose of the inventory and the importance of their participation. We offered technical support to help EMUHSD staff complete the inventory and answered questions they had regarding the process and protocol.

The EMUHSD's College and Career counselors, in partnership with the Superintendent, developed a plan to complete the school inventories the week after school staff returned from Spring break. They reserved the conference room at El Monte High School for three consecutive days and identified a team of 3-4 individuals from each high school in the District to complete the School Inventory. Each high school team consisted of the Assistant Principal of Student Services, at least one counselor, and a resource teacher. School teams did not include teachers,

curriculum experts and/or assessment specialists; consequently, the high school needs assessment is missing this critical perspective and professional input.

All schools were asked to bring a laptop to the working sessions, their school WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) report, and any other pertinent data or information needed to complete the School Inventory. Members of the Planning Grant Team attended all three working sessions to provide school teams with technical support and context for the inventory and needs assessment.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis of the High School Inventories was conducted in two parts. First, the Inventory Supervisors carefully reviewed all written reports submitted by high school teams consisting of, on average, 20 pages or more of single spaced typed answers to the 27 questions listed in the School Inventory and supplementary information. Second, the Inventory Supervisors identified 9 questions from the inventories that generated the richest responses and qualitative data. From all of the written information, a qualitative data analysis was conducted. The specific tactics used in the content analysis of the written data included noting patterns and themes as well as clustering like items. Once common elements were identified in the data, they were placed in primary and secondary categories. Categories were determined to be “primary” if they were suggested by a significant number (usually 4 out of 5 high schools). Categories with fewer responses were considered secondary.

A draft of the findings was submitted to the Superintendent, as well as to College and Career Guidance counselors, in order to ensure that the analysis was accurate and consistent with their perception of the information that came out of the three-day work sessions. The District’s Superintendent and College and Career Guidance counselors were then given the opportunity to suggest where there might be gaps in the information presented or errors in terms of the interpretation of the data.

Dates: April 12-14, 2011

Schools Inventories: Arroyo High School  
El Monte Union High School  
Mountain View High School  
Rosemead High School  
South El Monte High School  
El Monte Union High School District  
Fernando Ledesma Community Day High School<sup>6</sup>

Type of inventory: Written reports, Focus Groups and in-person meetings.

El Monte Grant Planning Team School Inventory Supervisors: Dr. Julie A. Mendoza and Dr. Laura C. Romero.

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<sup>6</sup> The Principal of Fernando Ledesma completed the School Inventory, but did not participate and/or send a school team to participate in the three day working sessions.

School Inventory Results: The El Monte Union High School District and five high schools were inventoried.

*Key Categories of Issues:*

Categories of issues that should be addressed by the District and comprehensive high schools include:

- Academic & student supports
- Human resources/staffing
- Communication/outreach
- Parent engagement
- Partnerships
- Postsecondary student support

*Key Institutional Priorities:*

Key institutional priorities were also reported. The District and all high schools reported a need for the following:

Academic & Student Supports:

- Move schools out of Program Improvement (PI) status.
- Close the achievement gap between high and low-achieving students.
- Increase summer offerings to include more credit recovery courses, more A-G courses and more “go-ahead” courses.
- Enhance Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) to increase internship and employment opportunities for youth within the community.
- Evaluate current academic supports and service providers to better coordinate services and leverage resources to improve student outcomes.

Human Resources/Staffing:

- Increase funding to hire personnel targeted for specific positions.
- Hire one full-time Career Guidance Coordinator at each school site to promote a college-going culture with students, parents, and faculty.
- Increase amount of time spent by school staff on college and career counseling instead of disciplinary counseling.
- Expand the capacity of all educators in a school to be knowledgeable about and responsible for creating a college-going culture.
- Foster and promote fiscal and administrative efficiencies.

Communications/Outreach:

- Offer more language translation services to reach all parents, especially Asian languages and dialects; create a District and community pool of translators.
- Identify and develop effective strategies to improve communication and meaningful connections with parents and other community stakeholders.

- Utilize local cable channels, faith-based organizations, newspapers, and social media to increase outreach efforts and disseminate information to El Monte education and community stakeholders.

Parents:

- Increase parent engagement in their child’s academic success and in the creation of a college-going culture.
- Improve parental involvement to better support student academic and personal achievement, and strengthen schools’ relationship with parents and families.
- Offer evening counselor office hours at least one day a week at each school site so that working parents can meet with a counselor.
- Develop a series of education workshops to build parents’ capacity to serve as their child’s education advocate and deepen their “college knowledge” about the milestones and prerequisites necessary to prepare for college.

Partnerships:

- Strengthen and expand partnerships with higher education institutions and multiple sectors of society.
- Establish solid commitments from all educators and community stakeholders that the creation of a college-going culture in EMUHSD is the *responsibility of multiple stakeholders*. EMUHSD educators must take the lead and get it right because they hold the public trust.

## INQUIRY AND FINDINGS

The following inquiries were made as part of the District and high school inventories. Findings include responses from all participants and are a representative sampling only.

### **1. What specific interventions, programs, and/or information are shared with students and their families to communicate that college preparation is integral to their lives?**

*Key Observations and Trends:*

There is no coordinated delivery of college access services in EMUHSD; an exception is the District-wide implementation of student and parent TES activities built around the University of California’s Transcript Evaluation Service (TES). The Rio Hondo Partnership for College and EMUHSD both support TES activities and services. TES activities are intended to help students and their families monitor students’ progress towards meeting the course requirements for admission to the California State University and the University of California Systems.

There is a great deal of variation among El Monte Union high schools in the kind of college-access services, programs, and information that are provided to students and families. There is no standard set of college or career exploration activities or academic services offered to every high school student in the District. Equally important, there is no system in place to monitor when students receive college access information and services. There is also no evaluation of college

access services, programs or information offered to students and their families for the purpose of program improvement.

All School Teams report that District employees are being asked to do more with fewer human and fiscal resources. They also report additional staff (including college and career guidance counselors, translators, support staff to coordinate the work) as well as funding increases will be needed to provide college and career preparation services to all El Monte Union High School students and their families.

The District and all School Teams report that greater parent/caregiver participation is needed to create and sustain a college-going culture; high schools need to provide interventions, parent college-knowledge workshops, and other programs beyond school hours as well as utilize different strategies to reach *non-engaged* parents.

*Sampling of Resources:*

- Tutoring and other academic supports, such as GEAR UP, SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) test prep, etc.
- PREP program, which provides after-school tutorials and enrichment activities to increase students' interest in higher education funded through the LEARN (Learning Enrichment and Academic Resources Network) program. LEARN also provides funding for Summer Bridge and academic support classes.
- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program
- Guidance counseling.
- College campus visits/college summer "camp" attendance.
- Summer offerings (college preparatory courses, grade-recovery, and go-ahead courses).

*Sampling of Gaps:*

- Academic intervention initiatives targeting low-achieving students and their families.
- Parent programs to educate parents on how to prepare their child for college.
- College campus visits for students as well as their parents and/or caregivers.
- Effective communication outreach strategies targeting *non-engaged* parents and caregivers.
- Language and translation services and/or translation equipment to communicate with non-English speaking parents.
- Additional college preparatory and enrichment activities are needed: college campus visits, SAT/ACT preparation classes, college application workshops, scholarship funding, etc., for *all* students and not just a select few.
- Student motivation to go to college is low and must be increased; a strong college-going culture depends on students having access to a college-bound peer network.

**2. In what ways are parents/caregivers engaged as advocates for their child's academic success?**

*Key Observations and Trends:*

There is no comprehensive plan for parent engagement in El Monte Union High School District. Although all high schools provide a standard set of activities and events (such as parent orientation meetings, PREP parent workshops, TES families Nights, AVID Parent Night, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Counseling for At-Risk students, Financial Aid/FAFSA workshops, etc.), there is no District-wide coordinated plan to engage parents as advocates for their child's academic success.

All high schools teams reported low parent and student participation at events intended to foster a college-going culture; for example, one school reported that only 10 families out of 380 possible families attended a TES family night. Majority of the parents in the region are not familiar with the K-12 educational system in the U.S., nor do they understand high school graduation requirements let alone two-year college or four-year university admissions requirements.

Gaps include low parent participation and student motivation, funding reductions have made fewer resources available to foster a college-going culture, and some current outreach initiatives need to be restructured.

*Sampling of Resources:*

- Parent Center (College Awareness workshops)
- Back to School Night/Open House
- Parent Conference
- Progress Reports
- School Loop
- Phone Messaging Systems

*Sampling of Gaps:*

- Parent and caregiver participation is generally low at meetings, workshops, and other activities intended to foster a college-going culture; more parents and caregivers need to be reached, and each high school requires increased funding to hire career guidance coordinators (1 per school site for 100 percent of the school day).
- Student motivation to attend college is low and must be increased.
- Few resources are available to promote a college-going culture (staff personnel, tutors, counseling services, instructional materials, outside classroom support).
- A restructuring of Back-to-School Night and Open House is needed to accommodate individual parent conferences where student academic progress can be addressed. A full-time/TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) or community liaison is needed to assist with recruitment of parents/students, promoting events and a college-going culture.

**3. How are alumni, parents, students, and community partners leveraged to develop a college-going culture?**

### *Key Observations and Trends:*

Only an informal process exists to leverage alumni and other partners in the development of a college-going culture. Alumni are utilized as special guest speakers and in some cases as mentors. However, no coordinated system or database exists to formally reach, communicate or cultivate alumni in the school community.

Only an informal process exists to leverage and engage community partners and local businesses outside of traditional partners and service organizations within the region.

Gaps include issues related to transportation because many parents/caregivers do not have cars; effective management of business councils to accompany Career Technical Education; and funding for course offerings for Regional Occupation Programs that provide job training and job skills development.

### *Sampling of Resources:*

- Specialized Academies that invite guest speakers.
- Booster Clubs/parent partners in curricular projects (e.g., drama productions).
- College campus visits for select groups of students.
- Parent College Nights.
- Community partners (in education and other not-for-profit businesses) help support specialized projects.

### *Sampling of Gaps:*

- There are few large-scale business enterprises that provide “experts” and “mentors” for high school projects and students; family businesses and sole proprietorships have limited capacity to provide on-going regular or consistent support.
- Transportation for families and college-going students is a challenge (families cannot afford cars or car insurance), attendance and participation at meetings and events is low.
- Another gap is the ability of Career Technical Education (CTE) to effectively manage the many business councils that are required to accompany CTE funding. While there are some contributions from businesses, these remain largely untapped resources as there is just not enough “people power” to coordinate their efforts.
- Funding is needed for Regional Occupation Program (ROP) course offerings for job training and job skills development.
- Internships and job training positions with more community partners are needed.
- Single parent family households, working parents, time constraints, school, family, and life demands limit parent engagement.
- School staff is not aware of resources provided by community partners including the City of El Monte, businesses, community-based organizations, and may be underutilized.
- Students are not aware of their personal interests and do not know how to explore their career options or how to connect career exploration to college exploration.
- Career options for all students are inconsistent; exposure to trade schools is limited, etc.

- Community participation is low; communication about community/school events and meetings needs to be increased.
- Community outreach from the schools to the community needs to increase because there is very little positive press in the newspapers about El Monte Union high schools.

**4. What community-based organizations, businesses or other entities are available to sponsor programs, events, and activities to assist students in preparing for college?**

*Key Observations and Trends:*

There is no formal outreach strategy or coordinated plan to engage community partners in the region, and the District and high schools have a limited group of partners that sponsor programs, events, and activities to assist students in preparing for college.

The El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals (emCLP), an important community stakeholder, has relationships with four-year institutions that can be cultivated. Additionally, opportunities exist to link Rio Hondo Community College students with community service projects. A network of past scholarship recipients can also be created, to further extend alumni partnerships and peer-mentors to promote student success.

*Sampling of Resources:*

A number of organizations and clubs serve as resources, including:

- El Monte Police Department.
- Boys and Girls Club.
- California Community Foundation (CCF).
- Rio Hondo and Pasadena Community Colleges.
- Cal Poly, Pomona, Cal State, UCLA, and UCI.
- Health and Community Service organizations including Foothill Family Services, Asian Pacific Clinics, Kaiser Permanente, etc.
- El Monte Women’s Club, Lion’s Club, Rotary, and Soroptomist.
- LEARN, Cal-SOAP, and TELACU.
- El Monte Chamber of Commerce.

*Sampling of Gaps:*

- Full-time career guidance counselors are needed to coordinate resources within every high school in the District.
- A shortage exists of Community liaisons to connect students and their families to community resources.
- Classified staff coordinators are needed to better coordinate services and resources.
- Funding for GEAR-UP to continue is required. Unfortunately, funding for the Rio Hondo College GEAR-UP Partnership was not renewed. There is one year of carry forward left in the GEAR-UP Partnership Grant that must be used during the 2011-12 school year.

- Relationships between schools and community partners and community-based organizations are underutilized.
- Sponsorships/discounts and special offerings from community businesses are lacking; greater outreach to those businesses will be required to strengthen relationships.

**5. What support services – such as tutoring, material resources, counseling services, and test preparation – are available to help students reach their academic goals?**

*Key Observations and Trends:*

Tutoring and counseling services – to the extent that budgets allow – help students reach their academic goals.

The District and high schools state that they offer 9<sup>th</sup> grade Explore assessment, 10<sup>th</sup> grade PLAN assessment as well as test prep for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), PSAT, and SAT.

Summer school programs are offered primarily to help students with remedial work and not enrichment.

*Sampling of Resources:*

- Before, during, after-school, Saturday tutoring and PREP LEARN programs.
- The following are made available: self-paced online tutoring, resource teachers that augment instruction and provide special support services, sophomore labs for English Language students which allow students to makeup classes, online resources for catch up and review, and acceleration courses for advanced students.
- Counseling services (restricted by budgets) including referral to outside agencies.
- Summer school (funded principally for remedial work and not enrichment).
- Test prep for CAHSEE and the SAT, to the extent that funding is available.
- “Summer Bridge” programs are available to seniors transitioning to college.
- A sampling of counselors goes annually to CSU/UC workshops.
- Individual four-year plans.
- Special events.
- AVID Parent information meetings.

*Sampling of Gaps:*

- CSU/UC workshops to inform *all* counselors of changes in their systems, etc.
- Additional school resources are needed to promote a college-going culture (staff personnel, counseling/coaching, instructional materials, outside classroom support).
- Funding to support academic tutors, summer academic programs, after school academic enrichment program, etc.
- Limited capacity to help students develop individual four-year academic plans.
- Funding for both ACT and SAT prep classes needs to be reinstated.

- Summer offerings for summer school are limited due to budget cuts.
- Community liaison is needed, along with a guidance counselor for summer school.
- Photocopies and materials are limited due to budget cuts.
- Technology is needed for transcripts to be transmitted online to the UCs/CSUs.
- Missing are coordinated summer programs from 6<sup>th</sup> grade onward, where school work demands becomes significantly more complex, to create a bridge for students between middle and high school.
- Professional development for guidance counselors is needed: how to prevent and work with student problems, how to write a college letter of recommendation for students.

## **6. How is information on existing academic support services communicated to students and parents?**

### *Key Observations and Trends:*

The District and high schools utilize various methods and modes of communication to convey information to parents and students, including home notices, phone messages, website announcements, orientations, registration, School Loop, TeleParent, and ConnectEd, among others. Additionally, there are numerous events and activities coordinated by the District and high schools to communicate information to parents and students. However, there is no comprehensive or strategic student success plan available to students and their families.

There is a tremendous need for greater language and translation services to better communicate to parents and students.

### *Sampling of Resources:*

- Website announcements.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade registration and parent orientations.
- Tele-Parent, School Loop, etc.
- Registration manuals sent annually.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Sophomore Counseling.
- PTSA meetings, parent institutes, and Back to School Nights.
- “Pyramid of Interventions” for students who are struggling academically or otherwise.
- Teachers, counselors, and school administrators also provide direct communication.

### *Sampling of Gaps:*

- No District Communications Department or Division responsible for coordinating communications to students, parents, and community stakeholders exists.
- Sophomore counseling is now restricted to at-risk students.
- Lacking are language services and translators/translation equipment for parent orientations, registration manuals, parent teacher conference, Back to School Nights, etc.

- In short supply are parent education classes to increase their knowledge about academic supports and resources available to their child at school and in the community so they can do their job better at home monitoring their child's academic progress and success.
- Full-time Career Guidance Coordinator.
- Access to School Loop is limited because not all parents have access to the Internet.
- Hands-on training sessions are needed to teach parents about School Loop and how it can be used to keep students in school and on track; technical support is also needed.
- Insufficient parent contact information exists.
- Transportation limitations make attending meetings difficult for many parents.
- Home mailers are limited due to budget cuts.
- Automated phone systems need upgrading or should be replaced.

## **7. How are the language needs of students and their families addressed?**

### *Key Observations and Trends:*

There is a demand for translators (to help with translation at meetings, and of materials, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), parent teacher conferences, parent-counselor conferences) in every mode and point of contact with the parent population. Additionally, it is also necessary to establish a comprehensive coordinated system for translating and communicating with students and their families in their native language.

Currently, information to parents is only conveyed in English and Spanish. However, a consensus affirms that it is necessary to communicate with students and families in languages other than English and Spanish, such as Vietnamese and various Chinese dialects.

Primary channels of communication (websites, registration materials, four-year academic plans, Individualized Education Plans, etc.) do not convey a strong college-going message and culture.

### *Sampling of Resources:*

- Information is distributed in all major languages on websites and other materials.
- Translators are sometimes available at schools meetings, conferences, and workshops; some school staff members who are bilingual provide interim support.
- School Loop is available in English, Spanish, and other languages.

### *Sampling of Gaps:*

- A lack of partnerships exists with outside agencies that can serve families in their native language while understanding cultural differences that may impact them.
- Translators in all languages are needed; Asian language translators are especially needed.
- Translators are essential during the school day for meetings and parent conferences.
- Parent Education classes (computer literacy, English, GED).
- Community Liaison, Coordinator of Student Services personnel, and others who speak foreign languages are required.

- A coordinated system to provide translations on an as-needed basis is required; staff or teachers should not be pulled away from their jobs to provide translation services.

## **8. What kind of information and professional development support is needed at your school to develop a college-going culture?**

### *Key Observations and Trends:*

El Monte Union high school teams report they need professional training to learn new college admissions processes and procedures. These include how-to: help students prepare their college application, complete the Common Application, take college admissions tests online, complete a FAFSA application online, choose a major, write a college personal statement, and how they can write a student letter of recommendation. They want comprehensive training to review college preparatory courses and A-G requirements with all school staff (including teachers) so they can develop a school-wide plan to raise expectations for all students and set academic achievement goals that teachers use for planning instruction. Currently, counselors and teachers attend separate workshops and trainings so there is not enough coordinated joint action between the high school faculty and counseling staff.

Deep cuts to education have put an end to funding for on-going counselor training and have diminished the human counseling infrastructure in high schools. Currently, there are only two Career Guidance Coordinators for five comprehensive high schools in the District and nearly 10,000 high schools students. High school teams reported they have limited time, capacity, and opportunities to plan and coordinate college access activities. They want more time to plan joint activities with college access partners and after school service providers so they can better align student services and leverage resources.

El Monte high school teams also reported a need for on-going professional development and training to help guidance counselors' work with students with serious social and/or academic problems. They reported the need for training to know what they can and cannot do/should or should not do regarding discipline issues. They want in-service sessions presented by staff from specialized programs/services on campus so counselors can learn about the resources for special education and English Learners for ongoing education at community colleges and universities. They know resources exist, but they do not know where to direct their students. High school teams reported that they need on-going training to build their counseling skills so they can reach down to the four K-8 feeder Districts and train their counterparts.

### *Sampling of Resources:*

- Counselors have one 8-hour professional development day in August.
- Select counselors attend Community College workshops and Cal State/UC workshops.
- AVID Summer Training Institute is available for select staff.
- UC/CSUs workshops that inform counselors of the changes in their system's admission policy are offered.
- TES school-wide counseling and activities are available.

### *Sampling of Gaps:*

- No District-wide plan or policy exists to guide all schools in fostering a college-going culture.
- Only limited time is allocated for professional development opportunities to build guidance counselors' "college counseling skills."
- No full-time career guidance coordinator is available at every high school to ensure comprehensive service delivery to all students.
- No District-wide approach to college counseling exists; college counseling activities, services, and programs vary dramatically among the District's five comprehensive high schools.
- Lack of professional trainings exists, such as the AVID Summer Institute, to help counselors and teachers develop a school-wide plan, and coordinate joint actions to build a college-going culture.
- There is limited funding to send Student Services personnel to College Board and CSU/UC Counseling workshops.
- Professional support is needed to provide all school staff (including teachers, classified staff, and paraprofessionals) training in how to foster a college-going culture.

### **9. How does your school/District help families monitor student progress throughout the academic year and provide them with information they need to plan appropriate, timely interventions to ensure student academic success?**

#### *Key Observations and Trends:*

The District provides guidelines to schools to report on student progress; this includes 6-week grades (which can also be accessed on School Loop), some professional release time for data analysis, reviews of student work, intervention planning, Sophomore Counseling, D and F reports, and analyses of standardized testing on a school-by-school and District basis – all of which are available to families as individual child reports or as published school data. As part of the "Pyramid of Interventions," there are regular protocols in place to determine response to student needs on a timely basis.

Unfortunately, there is no data system or process to monitor the kinds of instructional, academic or social support services students receive at school or by outside agencies or service providers. The District does not provide parents with a comprehensive set of college-readiness grade-level milestones that students, parents, and educators can monitor to see if students are on the college preparation track. High school students and their families need to understand what academic proficiency looks like in each core subject area and how it connects to the next course in the sequence or the next level of course in a subject area.

This is important because El Monte parents report they need a better roadmap and understanding of the important milestones their child must reach to complete the academic and social skills required for graduation and college readiness; El Monte parents do not understand how to use the information on their child's report cards and standardized test scores, or how this information connects to college preparation.

### *Sampling of Resources:*

- Student report cards are generated every six weeks.
- Teacher generated progress reports notify parents if a student is failing or at risk of failing a class.
- Tele-Parent facilitates parent-teacher communication by telephone.
- School Loop provides communication with all school personnel via the Internet.
- ConnectEd is used to communicate information by phone to parents and individual households on issues related to attendance, upcoming workshops, and meetings.
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings are available.
- Parent-teacher conferences address questions and concerns.
- Parent Informational Nights and Back-to-School Nights are held.
- Home mailings and Senior Letters are distributed.
- Open House events are offered.
- Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) meetings are scheduled.
- Eighth grade parent orientation and Freshman/Sophomore College Night are offered.
- Junior TES Parent Information Night and Junior TES individual student activities and workshops are scheduled.
- School-wide Title I meetings are offered.

### *Sampling of Gaps:*

- There are insufficient services to provide students and families with sustained support on an individual basis to ensure that students are firmly “on track.”
- Not enough translators are available for school-to-parent communications (whether in writing or by phone).
- Schools often have the incorrect and/or incomplete contact information for parents.
- No Parent workshops exist to provide instruction on how to monitor a child’s academic process and the steps needed to get a child on track.
- No full-time Career Guidance Coordinator is available at each school site.
- Direct home mailers are limited due to budget cuts.
- Human resources in schools are finite or are stretched so thin that it is difficult to determine *who* is responsible for translating messages, sending messages out to parents, and managing the necessary follow-up.
- Community liaisons have been cut in the last few years so schools have become disconnected from the greater community and are unaware of the resources in the region.
- Schools do not maximize use of their marquis effectively to communicate college-going messages to community stakeholders.
- No evaluation or formative assessment of programs and services exists to evaluate impact of services on student outcomes.
- No survey or inquiry of parents is undertaken to examine how home-school communication can be improved.

## INQUIRY and FINDINGS EL MONTE CITY AND MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS

### OVERVIEW

Nearly 18,000 children who live in El Monte and South El Monte and are enrolled in Kindergarten through 8th Grade attend a school that is part of the El Monte City School District (EMCSD) or Mountain View School District (MVSD). Compared with districts statewide, both have a significantly higher percentage of low-income, English Learners, and compensatory education students<sup>7</sup>. Approximately eighty percent of the students enrolled in these two elementary school Districts will attend El Monte Union High School District and stand to benefit from the El Monte Promise Initiative.

Both El Monte elementary school Districts offer a rich set of academic programs and educational services to students. Several schools in both Districts have taken initial steps towards creating a college-going culture in their school. However, neither District has developed policies and programs to intentionally promote a cohesive District-wide college-going culture in their schools. The academic programs and student educational services that currently exist can be adapted to support a college-going culture, but they were not put in place specifically for that purpose. Consequently, given the magnitude of the El Monte Promise, creating an initiative that seeks to build a seamless pathway to college starting *as early as elementary school* will require special consideration; the cooperation of both elementary school Districts will be necessary, along with a change in the culture and attitudes of administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students.

Fortunately both Superintendents of EMCSD and MVSD believe that creating a college-going culture in their elementary schools will inspire students to achieve a great education and deeper learning that culminates in a college degree. They believe it is important to instill in young children the belief that going to college is an achievable dream, and that El Monte schools will help students develop the work ethic needed to make it happen. They also believe that developing a college-going culture in their District will help them meet their goals.

Both Superintendents acknowledge that the current economic climate makes it difficult for their Districts to maintain their focus on providing the best programs, instruction, and opportunities for their students as they cope with catastrophic reductions in education funding from the state. Additionally, both Superintendents are proud to report that, against all odds, schools in their Districts are seeing steady growth in improving student outcomes District-wide as student performance advances in core subject areas measured by year-to-year student CST scores gains.

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<sup>7</sup> Children growing up poor have, on average, lower academic outcomes than their well-off peers. They are less likely to attend preschool and more likely to experience learning disabilities and developmental delays. Poor children score between 6 and 13 points lower on various standardized tests of achievement. Poverty also has a negative impact on high school graduation, college attendance and completion. Children raised by a single parent, children who have more than two siblings, children raised by teenage parents, and children raised in poverty-stricken neighborhoods are also at risk of low academic achievement.

These two Superintendents credit their District teams which include teachers and support staff who remain committed to providing the best programs, instruction, and opportunities for students to help them reach their full potential. During the 2011-12 school year, both Districts will be focused on improving education outcomes for all students, particularly the percentage of English Learner students who are proficient and advanced in English Language Arts, mathematics and other core subject areas. They will continue to work with parents to make sure they are engaged in their child's achievement and work to foster staff development and professional growth.

El Monte City School District was established shortly after California achieved statehood in 1850. It is a K-8 school district comprised of fourteen elementary schools and serves more than 9,000 students. One of its schools serves grades K through 5, seven schools serve grades K through 6, and six schools serve grades K through 8. Data on ELMSD students show:

- 78% are Latino.
- 17% are Asian and Pacific Islander.
- 4% are White and other.
- 90% are eligible for federal free and reduced lunch program.
- 44% are classified as English Learners.

Presently, EMCSO serves students of over 35 different language backgrounds. Along with English, the languages most commonly spoken by students' families include Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

As reported on the District's 2009-10 School Accountability Report Cards, on average, EMCSO students scored Proficient or Advanced levels at the same levels in mathematics and history as students statewide. They scored at lower levels than their peers statewide in English language art and at slightly higher levels in Science. When CST scores are disaggregated by student subgroups they reveal an achievement gap between Asian and Latino students and for English Learners. EMCSO is a Program Improvement (PI) District. A district that receives Title I funding can enter PI if they fail to meet Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The first year the District entered into PI was in 2004-05. Only three of its fourteen schools are not in PI.

Mountain View School District was established in 1868. Located in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley, it is a K-8 school District comprised of ten elementary schools, one intermediate school grades 7-8, one middle school grades 6-8, an alternative education program for students in grades 5-8, and a Children's Center and Head Start/State Preschool program.

MVSD, with an enrollment of 8,000 students, serves the educational needs of children living in the cities of El Monte and South El Monte. In 2010, the District's overall enrollment dropped at the elementary level. MVSD serves a predominantly Latino population in the communities of El Monte, with a population of 100,000, and South El Monte, with a population of 25,000. MVSD's mission is to ensure that each student attains academic proficiency. Data on MVSD students show:

- 93% are Latino.

- 6% are Asian and Pacific Islanders.
- 6% are White.
- 1% is other subgroups combined.
- 94% are eligible for federal free and reduced lunch program.
- 53% are classified as English Learners.

The results of the spring 2010 California Standards Test (CST) reveal that on average, MVSD's students scored Proficient and Advanced at lower levels than did students statewide in English Language Arts, science, and history/social science and at the same level in math. MVSD eighth graders take algebra at rates significantly lower than their peers statewide and scored Proficient or Advanced at a lower rate than their statewide peers on the CST math tests. For 2009-10 MVSD did not meet all the benchmarks to attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Only one of the District's elementary schools met all their AYP criteria. The District's Intermediate and Middle schools are both in Year 5 of Program Improvement.

## METHODOLOGY

The El Monte Planning Grant Team applied the same School Inventory and matrix that was discussed in the high school section of this report for elementary school needs assessment.

In late March 2011, the Planning Grant Team sent an email to the elementary school District Superintendents requesting their support for the El Monte Promise Inventory process. We explained that the School Inventory consists of a two-page questionnaire with 27 questions and a matrix designed to better convey existing activities, programs, and/or resources currently assisting students with college preparation. We asked that the school inventory be completed by an individual in the Central District Office and by an appropriate administrator at every elementary school in the District.

The Superintendents were asked to direct their staff to type the answer to each question directly into the Word document that we provided. We emphasized that the information collected would be used to develop a written report of actionable recommendations of how to better support programs and services currently assisting students in preparing for college and to identify gaps. We provided a sample letter that Superintendents could send to staff explaining the purpose of the inventory and the importance of their participation. We offered technical support to help staff complete the inventory and answered any questions they had regarding the process and protocol.

The elementary school Superintendents each completed the two-page questionnaire on behalf of their District. They then directed a staff member at each school in their District to complete the matrix, which summarized in one page the existing college-access programs, activities, and/or resources currently offered in their school.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis of the EMCSD and MVSD was conducted in two parts. First, the Inventory Supervisor carefully reviewed all written materials submitted by the two elementary school

Superintendents consisting of their typed answers to the 27 questions listed in the School Inventory and supplemental information. Second, the Inventory Supervisory selected the same nine questions from the School Inventory that were analyzed in the high school section of this report. The information presented in this elementary school inventory reflects the responses the Superintendents provided to each inquiry. The information summarized in the matrices document significant variation among schools with respect to college access activities, programs, and resources available to students and their families in the region.

A draft of the findings was submitted to both Superintendents, to ensure that the analysis was consistent with their perception of the information they shared with the Planning Team.

District Inventory: El Monte City School District

School Matrices:	Cherylee Elementary	(K-6)
	Cleminson Elementary	(K-6)
	Columbia Elementary *	(K-8)
	Cortada Elementary	(K-6)
	Durfee Elementary*	(K-8)
	Gridley Elementary	(K-8)
	Le Gore Elementary	(K-6)
	New Lexington Elementary	(K-6)
	Potrero Elementary	(K-8)
	Rio Hondo Elementary	(K-8)
	Rio Vista Elementary*	(K-6)
	Shirpser Elementary	(K-5)
	Wright Elementary	(K-8)
	Wilkerson Elementary*	(K-6)

\* School did not complete inventory matrix

Type of inventory: Written reports, e-mail correspondence, and in-person meetings with Superintendent.

Inventory Supervisor: Julie A. Mendoza

District Inventory: Mountain View School District

School Matrices:	Baker Elementary	(K-5)
	Cogswell Elementary	(K-6)
	La Primaria Elementary	(K-4)
	Maxson Elementary	(K-6)
	Miramonte Elementary	(K-6)
	Monte Vista Elementary	(K-6)
	Parkview Elementary	(K-6)
	Payne Elementary	(K-6)
	Twin Lakes Elementary	(K-5)

Voorhis Elementary (K-6)  
Magnolia Learning Center (5-8)

Middle School:

Kranz Intermediate School (7-8)  
Madrid Middle School (6-8)

Type of inventory: Written reports, e-mail correspondence, and in-person meetings with Superintendent.

Inventory Supervisor: Julie A. Mendoza

## INQUIRY and FINDINGS

**Question 1: What specific interventions, programs, and/or information does your school/District share with students and their families to communicate that college preparation is an integral part of childhood and youth?**

*Sampling of Resources in EMCS D:*

- Some EMCS D K-8 schools have posted A-G requirements in English and Spanish.
- District discusses relevance of A-G courses to middle school students through a series of workshops that were held in 2010-11. District intends to increase the number of these workshops in 2012 to ensure that all K-8 students and parents receive this information.
- In academic year 2010-11, the District took groups of parents from two K-8 schools to tour the campuses of UCLA and USC.
- Parents receive information regarding the importance of attending college through the Superintendents Key Communicators meetings, held six times annually. This group of parents includes at least two representatives from each site.

*Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- Five District-wide parent meetings are held per school year.
- Parents are provided information regarding the high school education system beyond graduation requirements, such as types of courses, typical assignments and grading, extracurricular activities, athletics, etc.
- Many of these meetings feature A-G requirements to qualify for university.
- There is a sharing of high school graduation requirements.
- Information on the CAHSEE is provided.
- Middle school promotion requirements are made.
- Schools communicate the need for students to attain a college education.
- Schools share with parents various ways that financial aid is provided.
- The federal financial aid application is made available to parents.

- Parents can obtain information about colleges, universities, and high schools through different media (primarily through online resources).

*MVSD Schools:*

- Most schools hold monthly parent meetings.
- Parent meetings complement the District meetings in providing information on: middle school promotion requirements, knowledge of the high school system, A-G requirements for university acceptance, high school graduation requirements, CAHSEE information, expectation for college completion, advantages of college completion, financial aid, and knowledge of college system.
- Some schools take students to college/university campuses.
- Some schools take students to university sporting events.
- Some schools take students to a Book Fair.

**Question 2: What are the ways your school/District engages parents as advocates for their child’s academic success? (e.g., report cards, parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, etc.)**

*Sampling of Resources in EMCSD:*

- Ground mail notifications are sent to parents.
- Information is sent home with students.
- All sites, as well as the District office, utilize the Connect Ed program to make sure that parents receive timely and accurate information regarding student academic progress as well as parent involvement opportunities.
- The District’s website provides information on a variety of areas, including tutorial services, student accomplishments, nutrition information, and instruction department updates.

*Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- Report cards are provided to parents on a quarterly system; report cards offer an opportunity for goal setting both short-term and long-term.
- Parent-teacher conferences are produced twice per year.
- Back-to-School Night is held in September, which helps set expectations for the school year and beyond.
- Open House is offered at the end of the school year as a concluding activity where teachers display student work and feature their accomplishments.
- Other Communication; many teachers provide additional communication through written notes, phone calls, face-to-face contact before and after school, email, websites, weekly grade forms, and by other means.

**Question 3: How does your school/District leverage alumni, parents, students and**

## **community partners to plan and implement college and career programs?**

### *Sampling of Resources in EMCS D:*

- Five of our six K-8 schools offer the AVID program, which gives students the opportunity to interact with college-attending tutors on a twice-weekly basis; this interaction provides positive role models for students.
- GEAR UP Program has also provided similar opportunities in the past.
- Alumni are routinely asked to participate in school activities, such as the El Monte City Mayor who has participated in several Associated Student Body Leadership swearing-in ceremonies. As keynote speakers at promotion ceremonies, alumni highlight the importance of higher education to students.
- The Mock Trial Academy, a Saturday program with judges from the Municipal Court System who train (30) 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at a time in the law and its applications including court room practices; parents are also welcome to participate and students receive information on careers related to the law.

### *Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- Alumni and community partners are rarely used by the District/schools.
- Sometimes former students are asked to address students in classrooms, parent meetings, and promotions.
- High school counselors and administrators are asked to speak to students primarily at the middle school level.

**Question 4: List all community-based organizations, businesses or other entities your school/District partners with to sponsor programs, events and activities to assist students in preparing for college.**

### *Sampling of Resources in EMCS D:*

- El Monte Union High School District.
- Los Angeles County Office of Education's AVID program.
- El Monte Coalition of Latino Professions (emCLP).
- El Monte City's participation in student government.
- Rio Hondo Community College.
- University of California, Irvine (7<sup>th</sup> grade PSAT administration).

### *Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- El Monte Union High School District.
- Los Angeles County Office of Education.
- Turnaround Schools College Program.
- El Monte City School District.

- Rio Hondo Community College.
- University of California, Irvine.

**Question 5: What support services are available in your school/District to help students reach their academic goals? (e.g., tutors, material resources, counseling services, summer academic programs, test prep and other timely assistance)**

*Sampling of Resources in EMCSD:*

- After School Education and Safety (ASES) program at all school sites in the District.
- Migrant Education Saturday Program (20 Saturdays), which includes a parent class, Migrant Education Summer School.
- Summer School Reading Academies.
- Summer School Pre-Algebra and Algebra Academies.
- AVID.
- Success Maker afterschool intervention.
- Kids' Campus Academic Tutorial Services.
- Supplemental Educational Services (free tutoring) to over 500 students this year.
- Instructional Assistants at all schools provide academic support for small groups and individuals.
- Teachers hold individual academic goal setting conferences with students.

*Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- Classified staff: Some schools have instructional assistants available for small group instruction; the use of instructional assistants is a site decision.
- Software: Schools have access to computer programs such as Lexia Phonics, Waterford Reading, and Renaissance products for reinforcement and re-teaching.
- Instructional Materials: Schools have purchased many phonics and reading supplemental programs, which are used to reteach and reinforce student learning.
- Counseling Services: Both middle schools have two full-time counselors available for academic and behavioral counseling. Some elementary schools have part-time counselors available for academic and behavioral counseling. Parent contact is also a component of the counseling program.
- Summer academic programs: Migrant Education provides summer school to migrant education students for 15 days. Special Education provides a 20-day summer program. When funding is available, each school provides a 20-day summer program. For the summer of 2011, a Long Term English Learner program was offered for 25 days through a special grant.
- Test Prep: Schools provide test prep through the format of their common assessments, debriefing assessments, test prep materials, and explain to parents the tests and their formats.

**Question 6: How does your school/District communicate to parents and students the academic support services that are available to them?**

*Sampling of Resources in EMCSD:*

- Various parent meetings in the summer provide an opportunity to discuss Supplemental Educational Services (SES) tutorial services.
- Communicate SES information via ground mail and Connect-Ed phone system, advertisements (bilingual) in community publications, as well as distribute informational flyers at key community locations.
- Local County Librarian has provided information regarding reading resources for parents and students at District English Learned Advisory Committee (DELAC) meetings and at some Back To School nights.

*Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- Face-to-face communication with individual teachers and principals.
- Parent meetings.
- Written communications which include applications.
- Special program information such as tutoring is available through program improvement.
- Student Study Team process that discusses the achievement of individual students.

**Question 7: How does your school/District address the language needs of students and their families?**

*Sampling of Resources in EMCSD:*

- Translation is provided for parents.
- Language classes are made available for parents.
- Students are taught through appropriate methods for English Learners.
- District communication is provided in English and Spanish and in some cases Cantonese and Vietnamese.

*Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- A large portion of the administrative staff and teaching staff speak Spanish.
- Very few staff members speak Vietnamese or Cantonese.
- All written and oral communication is translated into Spanish.
- Some parental communication (though very limited) is conveyed in Vietnamese and Cantonese.
- Instruction in Spanish is provided in many classrooms District-wide.
- Two schools provide instruction in Spanish through a bilingual program in grades K-2.

**Question 8: What additional information and professional support is needed at your school/District to develop a college going culture?**

*Sampling of EMCS D Needs:*

- A PreK through 14 grade level curriculum is needed for parents and the District to follow to create college-going culture.

*Sampling of MVSD Needs:*

- Greater contact and resources provided from colleges/universities and other organizations to communicate to parents the importance of a college-bound culture.
- Financial aid resources.

**Question 9: How does your school/District help families monitor student progress throughout the academic year and provide them with the information necessary to plan appropriate, timely interventions to ensure student academic success?**

*Sampling of Resource in EMCS D:*

- Appropriate reporting on progress attaining proficiency with the standards and other forms of parent reporting via parent conferences, benchmark reports, etc.
- All schools have annual parent conferences at all grade levels to discuss student academic performance.
- Progress Reports.
- Benchmark results.

*Sampling of Resources in MVSD:*

- Each school establishes its system for monitoring student achievement.
- Some grade levels assess students in 20/25 day cycles based on 4/5 standards.
- The grade level develops their common assessment.
- The grade level debriefs following the administration of a common assessment.
- Teachers discuss individual and group student achievement.
- Teachers discuss and implement re-teaching strategies.
- The principals and teachers determine the need for interventions.
- Some schools/grade levels use the District benchmarks.
- Following administration of a District benchmark, teachers engage in data reflection.
- Individual and group student achievement is discussed.
- Principals and teachers establish the need and system for re-teaching and intervention.
- Some information is shared with parents on student achievement on common and District assessments.
- Schools have access to after school After School Educational Safety (ASES) program to reinforce skills students need to master.

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS RIO HONDO COLLEGE**

### **OVERVIEW**

Rio Hondo College (RHC) is a leading two-year vocational and occupational training institution among 112 post secondary schools within the California Community College system. RHC has long focused on creating access to higher education, and is now also directing its effort to improving student academic success and completion, which includes degree completion certificates or transfer to a four-year institution. RHC aims to increase its capacity as a transfer college.

Due to a lack of fiscal and human resources, RHC currently has limited means to reach below high school and provide outreach personnel and college access materials to serve all middle and elementary schools in the region. Last year, the California Community Foundation's (CCF) El Monte Community Building Initiative (CBI) provided funding to the RHC's Office of Education Partnerships to host College Planning Family Nights at Columbia, Potrero, Madrid, and Kranz middle schools and select El Monte high schools. These two-hour events were designed to introduce families to the El Monte Union Pledge Compact, the course prerequisites required for admission to California's four-year public universities and convey information on how parents can assist in their child's transition into high school and college. Given the success of these events, the CCF's CBI has offered to fund RHC's Office of Education Partnerships so it can continue to host College Planning Family Nights during the 2011-12 academic year.

Through a generous grant from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, the Intersegmental Coordinating Committee (ICC) partnered with RHC's Office of Education Partnerships to provide college and career exploration counseling services to all 8<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in the Mountain View School District (MVSD) last year. As a result of these grant activities, more than 800 students in the region opened CaliforniaColleges.edu accounts (the official online source for college and career planning in California), signed the El Monte Pledge Compact online and completed college and career exploration activities. Ninety-six percent of the students who received the two-day counseling intervention reported that they felt that the workshops should be offered again next year and that it increased their motivation to attend college. The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert grant activities will be offered to all 8<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in MVSD and select middle schools in El Monte City School District during the 2011-12 academic year.

During the 2010-11 academic year, RHC Office of Education Partnerships leveraged their GEAR UP Partnership Grant to develop resources and materials to pilot a series of college counseling services at Mountain View High School that were designed to help seniors understand their responsibilities related to the Pledge. RHC and UCI conducted a Senior Class Pledge Assembly. Topics covered included an overview of the El Monte Union Pledge Compact, Degree/Transfer Requirements, Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG), RHC Campus Overview, UCI Overview, and student responsibility for activating the Pledge.

In February, a series of RHC/California Community College Application Workshops were held in the computer labs at MVHS. In March, onsite Assessment Testing in English, Reading, and

Mathematics were offered to seniors. In April and May, orientation and educational planning workshops were held at RHC. Students were offered a traditional campus orientation, presentations by Associated Student Body and student services programs, and a small group counseling session to help them develop a three semester Education Plan (which includes the summer term immediately following high school graduation and the first two semesters of college) based on the results of their assessment tests. In June, priority registration workshops were offered to newly admitted students who signed the Pledge to help them with the online registration process. A RHC counselor was present in these computer lab workshops to answer questions students had about course selection or college major preparation. The RHC Office of Educational Partnerships provided this series of College Counseling services to seniors enrolled in South El Monte and El Monte High School.

In addition to providing outreach personnel and materials to help El Monte Union High School students learn more about college, RHC has committed to offering *one-time* priority registration to students who sign the El Monte Union Pledge to give them better access to the classes they need to achieve their academic goals. This is an extraordinary institutional commitment because college students across the nation report that the *inability* to enroll in required classes that are in high demand is a major barrier to achieving their academic goals and graduating in a timely manner. Given that RHC provides priority registration *one-time* to newly admitted students who signed the El Monte Pledge Compact, it is paramount that these students make informed decisions and carefully select courses that can successfully launch them onto their academic and career paths.

Offering one-time priority registration to students who signed the El Monte Pledge Compact is an unparalleled opportunity, although it presents a particular challenge to RHC and to newly admitted students for two primary reasons: First, RHC estimates that 70 percent of First-Time Freshmen (FTF) arrive on campus without well defined education and career goals. Second, few students arrive with the academic preparation needed to enroll and succeed in credit-bearing general education courses without remediation.

For example, 91 percent of FTF *do not* have basic skills math so they need to spend their first year of college improving their proficiency before they can enroll in and successfully complete entry-level college courses. These two factors have a significant impact on student success at RHC and affect the time it takes for students to earn an Associate's degree or complete the courses required to transfer to a baccalaureate program.

These educational trends are not unique to RHC or its student population. The lack of well defined education and career goals and low levels of academic preparation to enroll in credit bearing college courses is common across the state among all types of higher education institutions. This background and context is important for El Monte stakeholders interested in building a seamless pathway to college for all students and families in the region because it underscores the magnitude of the lift and the need for RHC to provide all students, including undocumented students<sup>8</sup> commonly known as AB 540 students, with monetary awards for tuition

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<sup>8</sup> Undocumented students are those students who are present in the United States illegally, with or without their parents or caregivers. They face unique legal uncertainties and limitations within the U.S. educational system. Most children of illegal immigrants, 73 percent in 2008, are U.S. citizens by birth.

and education expenses beyond the first two years of college to increase student retention, transfer and degree completion rates.

## METHODOLOGY

Planning Grant Team members Dr. Julie A. Mendoza and Dr. Laura C. Romero met with (Vice President of Student Services) Henry Gee and (Associate Dean of Student Services) Dr. Mike Munoz of Rio Hondo College on May 2, 2011 to gain input and feedback on the needs assessment for Rio Hondo College. Vice President Gee and Dr. Munoz also provided additional background materials and information for the Planning Grant Team's assessment, as well as reviewed the summary notes.

## INQUIRY and FINDINGS

RHC's vision, mission, and values are among the region's greatest resources that can support the El Monte Promise. RHC has demonstrated tremendous leadership as an institution of higher education and has made extraordinary commitments to the students and their families. RHC has pledged to offer EMUHSD graduates a *one-time* priority registration beginning with the Fall 2011 semester, provide outreach personnel and materials to help students learn more about college opportunities, and to give EMUHSD students who matriculate to Rio Hondo College the information and assistance necessary to meet the Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) requirements to enter the University of California, Irvine.

RHC's role as the collaborative convener of the Rio Hondo Partnership for College and the institution's ability to negotiate the El Monte Union Pledge Compact with UCI in 2010 and CSULA in 2011 is a testament to the institution's commitment to college access and student success.

Another institutional resource that supports the El Monte Promise is RHC's Office of Educational Partnerships, which houses all college access and readiness programs. This Office has done an impressive job leveraging human and fiscal resources, forging strategic alliances and partnerships, and building the capacity of education and community partners in the region. The Office of Educational Partnerships has outreach staff that visits each EMUHSD high school on a weekly basis.

In collaboration with the EMUHSD, the Office of Educational Partnerships leveraged a five-year GEAR UP Partnership Grant to develop a college-going culture in all high schools in the District. The GEAR UP Partnership Grant ended in August 2011 and the Office of Education Partnerships applied for a new seven-year Partnership Grant. Unfortunately, RHC was not awarded a new multi-year GEAR UP Partnership Grant. Therefore, they will only be able to deliver college access services to students in select schools in El Monte through August 2012 by leveraging their no cost extension for unspent GEAR UP Grant funds which ended in August 2011.

The lack of funding to support college access and readiness programs presents a major challenge to the college access work in the region. It threatens the long-term sustainability of the whole

school reform and systemic change efforts that are underway to develop a college-going culture for all students by limiting RHC's ability to provide outreach personnel and college access services to schools in El Monte.

There are three significant gaps at RHC that require attention:

1. Because of a lack of human and fiscal resources, RHC has a limited capacity to reach below high school to serve middle and elementary schools in the region.
2. Funding issues related to AB-540 students need to be addressed.
3. RHC needs to establish a scholarship program to support student retention beyond the first two years of college.

The following are institutional priorities of Rio Hondo College:

1. Increase its capacity to reach below the high school level to provide outreach personnel and materials to help students learn more about college opportunities.
2. Communicate to students their responsibilities related to the Pledge and that priority registration is not an automatic guarantee. Students must be informed that there are a series of steps they must undertake: completing a RHC new online Admissions Application, take assessment tests in reading, English, and mathematics, and attend an orientation to be eligible for *one-time* priority registration.
3. Establish institutional policies and procedures to assist all RHC students in developing a comprehensive Education Plan so they can become a candidate for a degree. This individualized student Education Plan should be based on a student's academic and career goals.

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS RIO HONDO PARTNERSHIP FOR COLLEGE**

### **OVERVIEW**

In 2008 RHC joined with the El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) and the University of California, Irvine (UCI) to form the Rio Hondo Partnership for College. This cooperative effort leverages institutional resources and expertise and informs policy in support of increased college attainment for the District's 10,000 high school students.

The Rio Hondo Partnership for College, a regional collaborative, received a grant from the Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Educational Success (ARCHES), to achieve three primary goals:

- To develop a strategy to restructure and refocus the District's 9-12 Mathematics instruction.
- To align professional development for teachers and site principals in Mathematics.
- To implement the University of California's Transcript Evaluation Service (TES).

The EMUHSD began by eliminating all non-college preparatory Mathematics courses and funded a Math Content Specialist and a Math Course Lead position at each of its six high schools. Additionally, with ARCHES support, the Rio Hondo Partnership for College hosted professional development conferences and seminars for site administrators and instructional staff.

Building on key policies and practices established by the EMUHSD in 2009 while utilizing support from ARCHES, the Rio Hondo Partnership for College focused its efforts on increasing students' Algebra I proficiency rate. As a result, teachers and administrators who were engaged in professional development and training gained greater competency in developing school-site systems and protocols for the ongoing analysis of students' academic performance data to inform and modify instruction. These combined efforts have resulted in:

- Increasing the number of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who passed Algebra I with a C or higher from 647 students in 2008–09 to 1,257 students in 2009–10.
- Increasing the number of students proficient in CST Algebra I from 410 students in 2008 to 720 students in 2010.

### *Transcript Evaluation Service*

The University of California's Transcript Evaluation Service (TES) is a state-of-the art technology tool that integrates academic preparation with financial preparedness to improve academic achievement for California high schools and their students. TES augments the guidance offered by high school counselors by providing students with an individualized

progress report of how “close” or “far” away they are from meeting UC and California State University *minimum* course requirements for admission. TES electronically analyzes every student transcript in a high school and produces easy-to-use reports of student and school college readiness patterns. Student TES reports detail the courses a student has completed, and lists those still needed in order to fulfill the minimum 15 unit college prep course requirements for admission to the CSU or UC. Student TES also provides easy-to-read charts and graphs, and includes college planning tips and financial aid reminders.

TES was designed to improve college preparation for students who are the “first-in-their-families” to go to college, and enables students, families, and school counselors to work together to develop an effective academic plan they can refer to at any point in a student’s high school years so they can choose the right classes at the right time to prepare for college or their future career.

Implemented in 2008, this student guidance strategy complements the Rio Hondo Partnership for College’s academic reform in Mathematics and is aimed at increasing students’ college eligibility and college-going rates. Focusing on students’ progress towards meeting essential A-G requirements, TES has strengthened students’ college readiness.

Key successes for students meeting A-G requirements from 2008 to 2010 include:

- El Monte High School > increased from 9% to 30%
- Mountain View High School > increased 8% to 17%
- Arroyo High School > increased 26% to 33%
- South El Monte High School > increased 28% to 36%

Only Rosemead High School showed a decrease in students meeting A-G requirements, which fell from 37 percent to 35 percent.

The Rio Hondo Partnership for College also played a key leadership role in developing The El Monte Union Pledge Compact, a commitment by the EMUHS District, Rio Hondo College, California State University, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Irvine to advance a college-going culture and provide college preparatory support for students as early as middle school through high school in El Monte. The goal of the Pledge is to provide qualified students with a seamless pathway from high school to college and university.

## METHODOLOGY

Dr. Julie A. Mendoza and Dr. Laura C. Romero from the El Monte Planning Grant team met with (Vice President of Student Services) Henry Gee and (Associate Dean of Student Services) Dr. Mike Munoz of Rio Hondo College on May 2, 2011 to gain input and feedback on the needs assessment for Rio Hondo College. Vice President Gee and Dr. Munoz also provided additional background materials and information for the Planning Grant Team’s assessment, as well as reviewed the summary notes.

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS**

### **EL MONTE COALITION OF LATINO PROFESSIONALS (emCLP)**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals (emCLP) is an informal coalition of young Latino/a professionals who constitute a strong and impressive professional network that promotes student development and the professional development of its members.

The organization was formed in 2000 with a mission to build leadership capacity through civic participation, cultural awareness, education, and community development in the City of El Monte. The organization established the following objectives to achieve its mission:

- Promote education by providing financial, academic, social, and professional support to El Monte students.
- Advance civic participation through communication strategies, which facilitate policy discussions.
- Increase cultural awareness, which empowers and acknowledges history and the arts.
- Cultivate community development and nurture economic opportunities in housing, retail, and transportation.

Over the past seven years, emCLP has raised over \$50,000 for scholarships to help students pay for college; scholarships range in amounts from \$250 to \$1,000. In addition to a monetary award, emCLP offers scholarship recipients a network of college graduates to mentor them throughout their college experience.

The idea and vision for the El Monte Promise originates with emCLP. In 2009, the organization developed the concept and began discussions with members to develop a vision, which grew into a commitment to create a college-going culture in the region to establish a seamless pathway to college for El Monte's students, from as early as elementary school and continuing through high school and beyond. In addition, emCLP hopes that the El Monte Promise will provide students with funding for tuition and educational expenses during their first two years of college.

*The priorities of emCLP are to:*

- Strengthen college-going outcomes in the region.
- Improve higher education outcomes (degree attainment).
- Fundraise for scholarships.
- Serve as the conscience of the "El Monte Promise."

#### **METHODOLOGY**

One focus group was conducted with 23 El Monte Coalition of Latino Professional members on May 2, 2011. The focus group was designed to better understand who emCLP members are, the way the organization is currently promoting education in the region, and how the organization can contribute to the creation and success of the El Monte Promise.

The focus group lasted two hours in duration. The session opened with a welcome and explanation of the meeting's purpose, an ice breaker, a PowerPoint Presentation using the Meridia Audience Response system to allow focus group participants to quickly answer ten questions to capture the demographic profile of the group, their educational background and their aspirations regarding their children and the children of El Monte.

Among the 23 focus group participants, thirteen were female and ten were male. A little less than half of the group lived in the City of El Monte. Twelve participants lived in a nearby city other than Rosemead and South El Monte. Nineteen participants were born in the U.S. and only three reported that they speak Spanish at home. Twenty-two participants reported earning a graduate and/or professional degree as their highest level of education completed. Nineteen reported that they were part of the first generation in their family to graduate from college. Twenty-one reported that other members in their family attended college. All focus group participants who have children said that they expect their children to go to college and all focus group participants expect 100 percent of El Monte's children to go to college.

## INQUIRY and FINDINGS

### **Question 1: What specific interventions, programs and/or information does emCLP share with students and their families to communicate to them that college preparation is an integral part of their childhood and youth?**

As an organization, coalition members do the following:

- Provide a very informal scholarship program.
- Mentor students and offer internships.
- Communicate with scholarship recipients informally through Facebook, email, and the organization's website.
- Help scholarship recipients connect to emCLP's professional network.
- Sponsor FAFSA workshops.
- Serve as Guest Speakers at Career Fairs at El Monte high schools.
- Organize a Speaker Bureau series to inspire students to continue their education and serve as role models.
- Partner with El Monte schools to support "I'm Going to College" events.

### **Question 2: What are the ways emCLP engages parents as advocates for their child's academic success?**

There is no formal structure to emCLP's outreach efforts; rather, efforts are informal, and they honor parents as role models at their annual scholarship fundraiser known as a Tamalada.

**Questions 3: What are emCLP’s most effective strategies for engaging El Monte parents as advocates for their child’s academic success?**

There is no system currently in place.

**Question 4: How does emCLP leverage alumni, parents, students, and community partners to develop a college-going culture in the region?**

The organization has no formal or structured system although to some degree emCLP’s mentoring efforts and informal scholarship program help cultivate a college-going mind-set among El Monte students.

**Question 5: What opportunities exist that can support emCLP to help students develop a college-going identity?**

- emCLP can develop a speaker series targeting El Monte parents and youth to help them understand that college is for *them* and a pathway to careers and financial self-sufficiency.
- emCLP members have tremendous knowledge about how El Monte schools work and can serve as role models for students seeking information and strategies for college access and academic success.
- Coalition members know at least one counselor at each El Monte school site. They can build a network to connect parents and students to adults who can help them access academic and social supports in the region.
- Coalition members hold key positions in El Monte as school administrators, counselors, teachers, and elected officials on school boards of education and in the community at large.

**Question 6: What community-based organizations, businesses or other entities can emCLP partner with to sponsor programs, events, and activities to assist students in preparing for college?**

- Coalition members can leverage their professional and alumni relationships in the region with institutions of higher education in the region.
- emCLP can link high school and community college students to community service opportunities.
- The organization can tap into its network of past scholarship recipients to serve as role models and peer mentors to El Monte students.

**Question 7: What support services are available in the City of El Monte to help students reach their academic goals? (i.e., tutors, material resources, counseling services, and test prep).**

Focus group participants were unaware of City of El Monte academic support services; they thought local libraries have home centers and reading clubs; and they mentioned that some faith-based organizations provided academic support services for students.

**Question 8: How does emCLP communicate to parents and students the academic support services that are available to them?**

The coalition's website serves as the primary channel for emCLP to informally communicate with parents: [www.emclp.org](http://www.emclp.org)

The website does not currently include information about student academic support services.

**Question 9: How does emCLP address the language needs of students and their families?**

The organization does not currently address the language needs of El Monte students and their families.

**Question 10: What does emCLP see as its next steps for contributing to the success of the El Monte Promise?**

- Develop and facilitate a formal parent-to-parent speaker series/program.
- Develop and facilitate a student peer mentor program connecting students to students;
  - Can be a requirement of the emCLP scholarship program.
  - Can engage students from Rio Hondo College in this service initiative.
  - Can engage Alumni from the El Monte Union High School District.
- Be part of the decision-making body of the El Monte's Promise Scholarship Endowment.
- Be the community voice for the El Monte's Promise Scholarship Endowment to engage residents, business, employees, etc. in a charitable giving campaign for Endowment.
- Be the community's voice and advocate for the El Monte Promise Initiative.

## **INQUIRY and FINDINGS EL MONTE SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND**

### **OVERVIEW**

Each year, the El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) awards approximately 22 scholarships to college bound seniors. The number and type differ across the 5 high schools. The EMUHSD distributes scholarships, to the extent possible, across the District so that the greatest numbers of students are rewarded for their achievement. Some existing scholarships are regional, national, and local (rotary, women's club, etc.). As one would expect, academically competitive students tend to receive the majority of the awards.

Representatives from the EMUHSD, its feeder K-8 Districts, Mt. View and El Monte City, and community scholarship organizations convened to discuss the feasibility of establishing an endowment that would serve as an umbrella organization to administer the various funds and to build a sustainable El Monte Endowment.

On April 18, 2011 a representative from the Orange County Community Foundation Hispanic Education Endowment Fund (HEEF) and The California Community Foundation presented their Endowment models for consideration.

#### Hispanic Education Endowment Fund (HEEF):

HEEF is a fund of the Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF) and not its own 501 (c) 3. HEEF only serves Latino/a students who have graduated from an Orange County high school or community college. Recipients can attend any accredited college or university.

Juan Francisco Lara, one of the original founders of HEEF and its current chair, explained that the OCCF has fiduciary responsibility for HEEF contributions and that a HEEF Advisory Board directs scholarship and awarding priorities and academic programming for its student recipients.

Since 1990, HEEF has been a pillar of philanthropy within the Orange County Latino community. Volunteers have changed over the years but HEEF has sustained its commitment to providing scholarship awards annually as well as a teacher and corporate recognition dinner.

#### *Key Points:*

- Utilizes the Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF) as its 501 (c) 3 umbrella and fiscal manager, while HEEF manages the front-end and programmatic side.
- Has a \$2.9M Endowment as of 12.31.10 which is composed of an “unrestricted” endowment for general scholarships and 30 donor directed specific sub funds, e.g. Arts, Business, Engineering, Santa Ana College, CSU Fullerton, UC Irvine, Chapman, Soka, and Vanguard universities, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Hispanic Bar Association, Realtors, Union and Wells Fargo Banks, and specific family funds.

- The HEEF Advisory Committee and sub fund representatives determine funding priorities and criteria for selection.
- OCCF receives a 2 percent fee to administrate the HEEF endowment.
- The OCCF on-line application serves graduating high school seniors, community college transfers, and law school bound applicants.
- Applicants are interviewed and ranked within the college or university at which they are admitted, e.g. UC, CSU, CCC, Independent colleges, and universities. In general, academically competitive AB 540 undocumented students are the highest priority.
- The Hispanic Bar Association scholarship is the only sub fund that serves a professional school student. Future development would include a sub fund for graduate education and other professional schools.
- Future student services would include a professional mentoring system, tracking of recipients and their progress towards a degree, and awards that would represent 25%-50% of tuition and fees especially for AB 540 undocumented students who can't attend the most selective universities due to insufficient funding.
- Multi-year renewable scholarships remain a major goal.
- HEEF has no paid staff and is administered by a volunteer chair, board, interviewers, and dinner committee members.
- Corporate support underwrites costs, including an annual Awards dinner.

California Community Foundation:

Kerry Franco of the CCF indicated it is one of the largest scholarship managers in Los Angeles County, and currently oversees approximately \$70 million in scholarship funds.

*Key Points:*

- CCF helps donors to be involved, but handles the management and back-end of the administrative process; when CCF opens a community scholarship fund, it's up to the donor or donor group to handle the outreach, selection, etc., and CCF formally appoints committee members and makes the payments, but it is up to the committee itself to do the front-end administrative work.
- Works with donors and committees to make sure they have the back-end support they need.
- Does not sub-fund.

- Does not manage outreach, selection, etc.
- Manages *restricted scholarship funds* for donors who are deceased but have specified how those funds should be distributed.
- CCF has a *discretionary scholarship fund* for deceased donors who have specified where their funds should go, but have not specified how to administer and make those awards. CCF has done an assessment of such funds – there are 23 of them with assets of \$32 million dollars – and has decided to fund students with an interest in college.
- CCF has made much effort to help students *get into* college, but it is now looking to help students *stay* in college, and is able to utilize these unrestricted 23 funds to support students towards this end.

### *CCF Options*

Committee Advised Scholarship Fund: CCF would handle the administration and serve as support. It would be one fund, with one purpose (CCF does not sub-fund). CCF would provide one contact, one reporting system.

- CCF has the capacity to help a school manage its funds and is fiscally responsible, although it does not have the capacity to do the administrative work and scholarship management that some groups have.
- Contributions may come in from different sources and the Committee directs where the funds will go, but there is a lot of work for the Committee itself.
- A core group will do all the work; a member or two on the Committee are the administrators, while others may be involved in the selection process.
- Much organizational work is involved, such as enlisting the right people, sending out a scholarship newsletter, etc.
- CCF suggests there should be a *paid* Administrator, who holds a detailed role, and the remainder can be volunteers. HEEF maintains that an *all-volunteer* structure is advisable, as once someone begins to collect a salary, the money from the fund gets directed to cover infrastructure.

A Committee Benefit Fund is another type of management model that CCF recommends, and is much like a donor advised fund in which someone who wants to establish a fund joins others to create a general pot, and there is a committee that oversees how that money is spent.

### *Scholarship America*

Another consideration is Scholarship America, based in Minneapolis, and which oversees a good deal of the front-end process, administers scholarships, as well as provides online resources, applications, etc.

- Scholarship America works with outreach.
- Manages applications.
- Works with donors who want to be involved with students.
- Pre-screens students before the committee considers them.

### *General Considerations*

- Approximately 70 percent of students locally go to community colleges, and the other 30 percent, who may get accepted at a prestige school such as USC or UCLA, may not be able to go because of lack of funds.
- District currently manages about \$400,000 a year in scholarships, and does all the leg work through committees.
- El Monte Promise aims to provide scholarships for the first two years of college, but sustainability is essential.
- EL Monte Union High School District currently provides about 22 scholarships a year, but schools themselves have more.
- People are familiar with the CCF and have a good relationship with that organization; working with CCF as the umbrella organization may be beneficial, as it will reduce discomfort with trying to create an entirely new model for a fund operation.
- County vs. City: A larger, affluent region (Los Angeles County) surrounds a smaller, more economically limited one (El Monte); it may be advisable to consider expanding outreach to a larger region, where there are more resources, and to encompass national groups, and new donors.
- Americorp/VISTA volunteers: Enlisting support from this group may enable the program to work more efficiently and allow for some on-the-ground coordination. CCF is exploring this possibility.

### *General recommendations for next steps*

- Create an Endowment Development Advisory Task Force to explore the feasibility of an El Monte Endowment.
- The Endowment might include: El Monte Corporations, local businesses, EMUHSD, K-8 Districts, Mt. View, El Monte City, CSU Los Angeles, Rio Hondo College, local Faith

Congregations in the El Monte Region and existing scholarship organizations, alumni as well as educators.

- The Endowment model must serve high school seniors and community college transfers that are college bound to UC, CSU, CCC, and independent colleges.
- The Advisory Task Force must set benchmarks as to (1) what percent and what number of seniors and transfers it aims to support annually with one time and multi-year scholarship awards as (2) distinguished from grant in aid awards, and (3) taking into consideration U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents who qualify for State and Federal Need Based Financial Aid and the AB 540 undocumented student who does not qualify for State and Federal funds at this time.

## **ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS**

## ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Although all stakeholders of the El Monte Promise who had joined the initiative as of March of 2011 participated in the inventory for this report, there remain additional stakeholders who have recently joined or who are about to join. Some of these additional stakeholders participated in one of two Executive Leadership Team meetings that were held in March and May while others are entirely new to the Promise and their role within the collaborative is evolving.

With interest and support for the El Monte Promise continuing to grow, it is anticipated that additional contributors beyond those identified here may join the Promise in time to come.

### CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY LOS ANGELES (THE PLEDGE)

Joining with the El Monte Union School District, Rio Hondo Community College, and the University of California at Irvine, California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) became the fourth member of the El Monte Union Pledge Compact on June 16, 2011.

Consistent with its role as a stakeholder in the Pledge, CSULA has agreed that all El Monte Union High School students who successfully complete the minimum college preparatory requirements and who are designated as CSU eligible will be offered admission to CSULA and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree. CSULA has also pledged that all Rio Hondo Community College students who successfully complete minimum community college transfer requirements will be offered admission to CSULA and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree.

CSULA will also assist students with the admissions process, as well as host campus tours and workshops for admission and financial aid.

### FIRST 5 LA (The El Monte Promise)

First 5 LA's Best Start Communities is interested in partnership and leveraging opportunities with the El Monte Promise and is an important stakeholder that has already made significant contributions to the greater El Monte community through Best Start along with other initiatives such as School Readiness, Healthy Births, Partnership for Families in South El Monte and El Monte. First 5 LA is a child advocacy organization created by California voters to invest tobacco tax revenue in programs that improve the lives of children in Los Angeles County.

First 5 LA was represented at the May 19, 2011 Executive Leadership Team meeting by Reuben De Leon, Senior Program Officer. First 5 LA and the CCF are already strategically aligned: both are committed to place-based initiatives to improve the quality of life within communities and have marshaled local resources to invest in the community's infrastructure in support of children and families. Perhaps most important, First 5 LA Best Start Communities is working to develop a Community Partnership with parents and other local stakeholders in the El

Monte/South El Monte region, which will help build an infrastructure to support the goals that children in the community will be born healthy, maintain a healthy weight, will be safe from abuse and neglect, and ready for kindergarten.

Best Start Communities is a community-driven effort that brings many diverse stakeholders representing key constituents to the table. Best Start has brought together business owners, child and health care providers, community agencies, faith-based leaders, government officials, and others focused on promoting the well-being of children and families. First 5 LA is continuing to foster development of such community alliances in the region.

#### CITY OF EL MONTE (The El Monte Promise)

The City of El Monte is taking steps to become a key stakeholder in the El Monte Promise. With a City representative attending the Executive Leadership Team meeting in March, the City has recognized an opportunity to partner with education and community leaders to develop a national education model that can transform the lives of youth and their families. Should the City join the Pledge as a principal stakeholder, it will reinforce the efforts of all El Monte school districts and the community itself in supporting the Promise.

In a significant gesture of support, the City is currently seeking the opportunity to support the El Monte Promise and contribute monetarily from potential non-general fund dollars to serve as the lead gift for the creation of the El Monte Promise Scholarship Endowment Fund. With this gift, the City will help make higher education accessible to all El Monte Union High School District graduates.

In joining the El Monte Promise, the City can align its Parks and Recreation Services as well as transportation and other related services to support and work in conjunction with School Districts and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the City is in a unique position to make use of existing communications media such as water utility bills and bus ads to reach the public and promote the City's commitment to the El Monte Promise and its role as a partner in education. The City may encourage business and corporate leaders to join the Promise, raise money from local businesses to sponsor College and Career Centers on school campuses, and convene regional Community-Based Organizations to explore ways they can collaborate with public schools.

By actively participating in the El Monte Promise, the City may connect youth and their families to City and community resources, while working as a high profile collaborative partner to align the entire community with its education priorities and goals. The City of El Monte is prepared to present for discussion at a City Council meeting in fall 2011 the exact monetary contribution as approved by the entire City Council.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

## GENERAL DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report presents six interrelated high priority recommendations and offers a set of recommendations for each stakeholder who participated in the El Monte Promise Planning Grant inventory and needs assessment process. The General Discussion and Recommendations section is organized this way so that stakeholders can see the interconnection between their individual efforts and the larger P-20 collaborative. We hope this will help stakeholders organize their work and prioritize next steps into an integrated body and strategic partnership, rather than as a collection of individuated entities working independently of one another.

### HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following High Priority Recommendations are based on the inventory and needs assessment of this report. Six interrelated High Priority Recommendations have been identified and were first presented in a joint meeting of the El Monte Community Building Initiative's Advisory Board and the El Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team on July 28, 2011 in El Monte.

Immediate steps are to formalize a *Stakeholder Transition Team*, which we recommend be comprised of education and community stakeholders, many of whom have already served on the Executive Leadership Team for the El Monte Promise. We recommend this Transition Team be in place for approximately 10 – 12 months and that all work be P-20 student-centric.

#### Recommendation #1: Develop infrastructure.

Invest in the development of the El Monte Promise infrastructure by hiring a dedicated *Third Party Entity* to staff the Initiative. The Third Party Entity is intended to be transitional, serve as an intermediary, and help build capacity among collaborating partners.

The Third Party Entity should have the ability to focus people's attention and create a sense of urgency for this Initiative. It should have the skill to apply pressure to stakeholders without overwhelming them, competence to frame issues in a way that presents opportunities as well as difficulties, and strength to mediate conflict among stakeholders.

The Third Party Entity and Stakeholder Transition Team will collaborate to provide oversight for the development of infrastructure and make the El Monte Promise Initiative operational.

Responsibilities of Third Party Entity should include:

- Planning, managing, and supporting the initiative through on-going facilitation.
- Providing communications support.
- Helping with the development of data sharing agreements, data collection, and reporting of relevant student achievement and educational outcome data.
- Handling logistical and administrative details as needed during the Initiative's infancy.

## Recommendation #2: Align existing programs.

Identify an *Intersegmental Education Liaison* to help align existing programs and activities to the El Monte Promise vision and to ensure a seamless P-20 educational pathway.

This role is especially important given the need to coordinate El Monte Promise collaborative efforts and activities among the five K-12 school districts in the region and three participating institutions of higher education. We recommend the El Monte Promise collaborative partners pool their resources to fund a full-time position so that someone is responsible for coordinating El Monte Promise activities with the four K-8 districts that feed into El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD), EMUHSD, and institutions of higher education.

This position would ensure continuity and take the pressure off people that already have so much work to do. This individual would be responsible for planning and coordinating joint activities among collaborating partners to build a college-going culture for all students in the region.

Responsibilities of the Intersegmental Education Liaison include:

- Fostering collaboration among El Monte Promise educational stakeholders, including the four K-8 school districts that feed into EMUHSD, EMUHSD, Rio Hondo College, CSU Los Angeles, and UC Irvine.
- Supporting activities and strategies that promote a more integrated and less segmented educational experience for all P-20 students.
- Developing a plan and strategies to better coordinate, integrate, and improve college preparation activities for students and their families from preschool through college.

## Recommendation #3: Build Parent Network.

Develop a P-20 Parent Engagement Network overseen by a *Parent Network Coordinator* to ensure student success.

The Parent Network will enable parents and caregivers to build their capacity to serve as advocates for their children's educational success and as partners with schools. This is important in this region given that 65 percent of the adults (age 25+) living in El Monte and South El Monte do not have high school diplomas or equivalencies making it difficult for them to serve as their child's academic coach or as a partner with schools to build a college-going culture.

Establishing a P-20 Parent Network will improve all aspects of parent engagement – including the co-creation of parent education workshops, appropriate communications to parents about the El Monte Promise, and efforts to organize family visits to college and university campuses. The Parent Network Coordinator would be responsible for aligning Parent Networks throughout the community, across the region's four elementary school districts, high school district, and higher education institutions.

This recommendation is consistent with the needs of parents and educators in the region. Overwhelmingly, parents and caregivers that participated in the Planning Grant focus groups

said they want to be part of a parent network that helps them prepare their child for college. School administrators and counselors also reported that they want parents to be more engaged and need their help to create a college-going culture in the region's schools.

Responsibilities of the Parent Network Coordinator include:

- Overseeing the Parent Engagement Network and making it operational.
- Target outreach efforts to connect with disengaged parents.
- Develop the capacity of parent leaders to successfully lead and engage parents in the Parent Network.
- Serving as a liaison on behalf of parents in their engagement with schools, districts, and other stakeholders.
- Coordinating events and special activities, such as college visits, informational meetings for parents, etc.
- Providing support for communications outreach as necessary.
- This position would report directly to the Third Party Entity, although the Transition Team may also be asked to provide input as necessary.

#### Recommendation #4: Centralize Communications

Create a centralized communications system between parents, schools, and stakeholders by appointing a *Communications Coordinator*.

Clear and consistent communication between parents and schools about the El Monte Promise Initiative and the goals of the P-20 collaborative work is essential for the success of the Initiative. This is particularly important given the region does not have a single Unified (K-12) School District and none of the five K-12 school districts in the region have the staff or a dedicated communications team who are poised to take on this responsibility.

Responsibilities of the Communications Coordinator include:

- Serving as a liaison between schools, districts, and the Parent Network Coordinator to develop key parent-friendly communications materials:
  - a. Summarize outlining college readiness benchmarks and milestones at each grade-level and key transition points: Pre-school to Kindergarten, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade to 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, middle school to high school, and college to degree completion.
  - b. Develop a "P-20 Student Success Manual" for parents and students.
- Helping to educate parents on how to use these communications tools as part of the El Monte Promise P-20 Parent Network education workshops.
- Overseeing development of an El Monte Promise website to serve as central resource.
- Ensuring content is made available in parents' native language (including Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and other Asian languages), and helping to determine the means of conveyance and appropriate messaging.
- This position would report directly to the Third Party Entity, although the Transition Team may also be asked to provide input as necessary.

#### Recommendation #5: Establish Institutional Policies.

The Stakeholder Transition Team and the Third Party Entity will collaborate to facilitate the development and adoption of institutional/organizational policies in support of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

Schools and communities with a strong college-going culture adopt policies and set measurable goals for achieving a college-going culture in support of the El Monte Promise. Once the policy context is established, we recommend each collaborating partner develop their own implementation plan to create a college-going culture that reflects a shared vision and goals among its respective stakeholders. All stakeholders should understand that developing a college-going culture in the region's schools and community is everyone's responsibility and will benefit the entire community.

Responsibilities of this collaborative effort include:

- Developing and adopting organizational and institutional *policies* in support of the El Monte Promise.
- Developing and implementing organizational and institutional *plans* to create and sustain a college-going culture in support of the El Monte Promise.

#### Recommendation #6: Launch Scholarship/Endowment Campaign

Develop a strategic plan to launch the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment Campaign that will create incentives for student achievement and provide monetary awards for students' tuition and education expenses. The strategic plan should be thoroughly vetted with all education and community stakeholders. Efforts should be made to engage the region's local banks and credit unions as partners in the Scholarship/Endowment Campaign. Special consideration should be given to how the overall fundraising and campaign strategy will connect to the larger El Monte Promise Initiative.

Issues to be addressed include:

- How will the Scholarship/Endowment be structured to ensure that funds are managed in a fiscally responsible way?
- Who will do the administrative work associated with the Scholarship/Endowment?
- How will the outreach, interview, and selection processes be managed, and by whom?
- Who is eligible to apply for a scholarship? Will all graduates from El Monte Union High School District be eligible to apply for a scholarship, or will it be restricted only to students who live in the City of El Monte?
- Will scholarships be multi-year and renewable?

## **Discussion and Recommendations: El Monte Parents**

There is a tremendous need to establish a functional PreK-12 Parent Network, one that will allow parents and caregivers to build their capacity to serve as advocates for their child's educational success and as partners with schools. El Monte parents and schools should work together to give children the high quality education they deserve.

Despite their limited formal education or "college knowledge," El Monte parents are highly motivated to help their child earn a college degree and want to know how they can help him or her prepare for college. To realize the El Monte Promise, education and community stakeholders will need to work collaboratively with parents to help them turn their high aspirations into action in order to see their child graduate from high school and earn a college degree. For this reason, we believe that stakeholders need to tap into and mobilize this extraordinary human resource and make parents core partners in the development of the El Monte Promise.

Most important, education and community stakeholders will need to work intentionally to build parent understanding about the academic benchmarks and milestones students must meet to attend and graduate from college. All stakeholders will need to monitor student outcomes at key transition points throughout the education pipeline from preschool through college completion to make sure that all students are on-track to graduate and successfully transition to the next phase of their academic journey.

Education and community stakeholders should be mindful that the vast majority of parent focus group participants lack familiarity with the basic course requirements needed to graduate from high school and prepare for college. There is an immediate need for this information to be communicated to parents and caregivers so they can monitor their child's academic progress.

It is important to note that when high school parent focus group participants were asked, "What evidence of a college-going culture do you find at your child's school?" not a single parent or caregiver mentioned the number of students who have enrolled in or successfully completed a college-preparatory curriculum. Parents also did not mention the accessibility of academic learning supports for all students, or the number of graduates going on to college as evidence of a high school's college-going culture. This is important because these are key indicators of a college-going culture and some of the outcomes that P-20 collaborative partners will need to monitor closely to ensure the success of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

**Recommendation #1:** Build parent capacity by establishing a PreK-12 Parent Network through the hiring of a Parent Network Liaison.

Establish a PreK-12 Parent Network through the hiring of a Parent Network Liaison who will coordinate activities and liaise on behalf of parents with schools and other community stakeholders. Participating education stakeholders should include First 5 LA, the four K-8 districts that feed into EMUHSD, and EMUHSD. We believe establishing a PreK-12 Parent Network in the region that is aligned with the goals of the El Monte Promise Initiative will facilitate all aspects of parent engagement.

Further discussion is needed to determine more specifically what may be involved in establishing an El Monte Promise PreK-12 Parent Network. However, it is abundantly clear that in order to build a successful PreK-12 Parent Network, a meeting with education, community, and parent stakeholders must be convened to reach agreement on a common agenda and set of goals.

Currently there are a number of isolated organizational efforts in the infancy stage working to build parent capacity and networks in the region including those of First 5 LA, Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and school-based efforts. It will be essential to break down silos of communication, information, and resources among these independent efforts to leverage collective efforts and investments to build parent capacity in the region to support students' academic success.

Recommendation #2: Conduct an inventory of existing programs and resources working with parents and caregivers to build their capacity to serve as advocates for their child's educational success and as partners with schools. The inventory should be used to develop a strategic plan and set of recommendations for how to develop an El Monte Promise PreK-12 Parent Network in the region.

The inventory should explore:

- (a) Existing organizations, non-profits, and school partners working with parents and caregivers to better understand the nature of their parent training program and curriculum.
- (b) Existing programs, activities, events, and resources that can be leveraged to support the creation of the El Monte Promise PreK-12 Parent Network.

### **Discussion and Recommendations: El Monte Union High School District and High Schools**

El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) is at an important juncture on students' path to college. In recent years, the District has taken extraordinary steps to provide students with a seamless pathway from high school to college and university. As a member of the Rio Hondo Partnership for College, the District has worked to develop a set of articulation agreements between the high school district and select higher education institutions – Rio Hondo Community College, California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA), and University of California, Irvine (UCI). The El Monte Union Pledge Compact offers graduating students with a 3.0 GPA one-time priority registration at Rio Hondo Community College and admission to CSULA and UCI if they maintain a 3.0 grade-point average, meet graduation requirements, and are eligible for CSU and UC admission.

As a partner of the El Monte Pledge Compact, EMUHSD has committed to providing all 8<sup>th</sup> graders and their families' in its feeder elementary school districts with information regarding services and resources to prepare students for college and careers. The El Monte Pledge Compact affords students and their families an unprecedented opportunity. However, the implementation of the Pledge poses an unparalleled challenge for the District given the demographics of the region, education outcomes, and deep cuts to education funding.

The El Monte Promise Planning Grant Team believes successful implementation of the El Monte Pledge is intrinsically connected to the success of the El Monte Promise Initiative because both efforts aim to create a seamless pathway from high school to college and beyond. For this reason, El Monte Promise stakeholders need to support the successful implementation of the El Monte Pledge and work to build, strengthen, and expand the capacity of the EMUHSD to create a college-going culture.

This needs assessment found significant gaps in the EMUHSD's human counseling infrastructure and its ability to meet the counseling and information needs of the District's students and their families. In order to successfully implement the El Monte Pledge and by extension the El Monte Promise Initiative, EMUHSD will need to align policies, improve instructional practices, redesign counseling practices, develop broad-based partnerships, and build integrated systems to create a college-going culture for all its students.

Recommendations are organized by the following categories of issues that should be addressed by the District and its five comprehensive high schools:

- Academic & Students Supports
- Human Resources/Staffing
- Parent Engagement
- Communication/Outreach
- Partnerships/Strategic Alliances

### *Academic & Student Supports*

Recommendation #1: Continue the work underway to modernize the District's instructional program. Expand the work to include a rigorous evaluation component to monitor the impact of the new instructional program on measurable student outcomes.

The Planning Team believes that all students must have access to a Rigorous Academic Curriculum and Qualified Teachers, two *critical conditions* for developing a college-going culture. EMUHSD has taken exemplary steps to reorganize its instructional programs to better support the needs of today's students and the instructional program has been significantly "modernized." Curriculum planning is linked to assessment of students' academic progress. District-wide curricular maps and six week Common Formative Benchmark Assessments (CFBAs) have been developed collaboratively by the department chairs with input from department members at all sites.

Information about the District's new instructional programs is summarized in a publication that can be found online at: [http://emuhsd.org/index.php/teachers/teacher\\_resources/](http://emuhsd.org/index.php/teachers/teacher_resources/).

Recommendation #2: Develop a district-wide plan that reflects a shared vision and goals among all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, counselors, students, parents, community, and college partners) to create a college-going culture for all students and is aligned with the El Monte Promise Initiative.

The district-wide plan should include a common approach to college counseling so that college counseling activities, services, and programs are the same at all five comprehensive high schools.

The plan should also include a systematic process for identifying, obtaining, and implementing new and expanded resources; all stakeholders groups should be included in the planning and implementation process. Additional college preparatory and enrichment activities are needed for all students such as: a broad array of summer enrichment programs, internships, college campus visits, academic tutoring, SAT/ACT preparation classes, college application workshops, scholarship funding, etc.

**Recommendation #3:** Create a comprehensive student service delivery model aligned to the District’s vision and goals for developing a college-going culture for all students and the El Monte Promise Initiative.

Student support services should be available to all students and not just a select few. The District should develop a system to monitor and evaluate student access, frequency of use, student progress, and program effectiveness of support services. Students and families should be incorporated into the evaluation process.

**Recommendation #4:** Develop new resources such as a Parent/Student Academic Success Handbook that includes grade-level college-readiness benchmarks.

This Handbook should be co-developed by all stakeholders including students and parents to ensure that it meets their informational and counseling needs. It should include grade-level college-readiness benchmarks so students and their parents have a roadmap with clearly defined milestones, prerequisites, and core academic competencies students need to be ready for college.

**Recommendation #5:** Conduct student focus groups to better understand why student motivation to go to college is low.

High school teams report that student motivation to go to college in the District is low, a trend that must be reversed. A healthy high school college-going culture depends on students having access to a strong college-bound peer network. Focus groups should seek to better understand the resources, barriers, and opportunities El Monte students encounter as they prepare for college.

### ***Human Resources/Staffing***

Deep cuts to education have put an end to funding for on-going counselor training and have diminished the human counseling infrastructure in high schools. Currently, there are only two College and Career Guidance Coordinators in EMUHSD to provide college counseling services to nearly 10,000 high school students. All high school teams report they have limited time, capacity, and opportunities to plan and coordinate college access activities in their school.

**Recommendation #1:** Identify and/or create professional development opportunities to build guidance counselors’ “college counseling skills,” including hands-on training of new online college exploration, planning, and application tools.

EMUHSD, like most public school districts in the nation, is using 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century counseling tools to counsel 21<sup>st</sup> century students at a time when the college admissions process and procedures have radically changed. On-going professional development for guidance counselors is critical in order for them to update their skills so they can better assist students with their college exploration, planning, and application process.

Recommendation #2: Invest in professional development training to build and enhance the capacity of *all* school staff to support the creation of a college-going culture for all students and their families.

Building a college-going culture in EMUHSD will require that teachers, administrators, parents, and students themselves will expect all students to have the experiences they need for high achievement and college preparation. These expectations must be coupled with specific interventions and information that emphasizes that college preparation is a normal part of a student's childhood and youth. Professional development training opportunities, like the AVID Summer Institute, should be designed to help school site teams coordinate joint actions to develop a college-going culture. Activities and events to promote college should also be integrated and planned within the content of the school's curriculum.

Recommendation #3: Reallocate existing resources and/or work to secure new funding for a full-time college/career coordinator at every high school to ensure comprehensive service delivery to all students. In the interim, identify a lead counselor at each high school who will be responsible for coordinating college exploration and planning activities. This individual could be released from some of his or her student responsibilities and offered a stipend for the additional work responsibilities.

Leverage community resources, afterschool service providers, and college-access partners to secure additional resources and the availability of more trained hands to do the work. A high school's college/career coordinator should be responsible for coordinating trainings for all school staff including teachers, classified staff, and paraprofessionals to foster a college-going culture. This individual would also be responsible for leveraging limited school site and district resources. In addition, he or she should be responsible for coordinating joint activities with a school's college access partners and afterschool service providers.

### ***Parent Engagement***

Engaging parents with their children and their schools is one of the most effective ways to improve student achievement. EMUHSD must take the lead in establishing a district-wide college-going culture because the vast majority of parents we talked to do not have the "college-knowledge" about the milestones and prerequisites needed to prepare their child for college. In addition, El Monte City and Mountain View Elementary School District Superintendents report that their staff relies on the EMUHSD's counselors to train their staff about the requirements for high school graduation and the college admissions process.

Recommendation #1: Develop a parent engagement model to engage the District’s multilingual parent population in the creation of a college-going culture.

Currently, EMUHSD has no comprehensive or strategic parent engagement model. The parent engagement model should be tailored to the information needs of the District’s parents and accommodate schedules of working parents. A primary goal of the model should be to build parents’ “college-knowledge.” The model should aim to transform the high college aspirations that El Monte parents have for their children into concrete actions so they can become empowered to serve as their child’s college advocate. The parent engagement model should be strategic, purposeful, and intentionally aligned to the goals of El Monte Pledge and Promise Initiative.

Recommendation #2: Redesign and restructure current parent engagement activities in collaboration with a parent advisory team. Concerted efforts should be made to ensure that strategies for student academic success and college preparation are integrated into all parent activities.

Co-create with parents *new* events or restructure existing activities to intentionally promote a college-going culture. Offer activities that support a meaningful academic partnership between the school, parent, and students such as workshops to help students, their parents/caregivers, and counselors develop a four-year academic plan to prepare for college. Parents should be trained how to understand student assessment and grading procedures, and know how to contact their child’s teachers and counselor whenever they have questions or need clarification. Hands-on computer training workshops should be offered to train parents/caregivers on how to use School Loop.

Recommendation #3: Co-develop a Parent Leadership Program with parents and community partners to train parents how to foster a college-going culture for their child.

High school teams reported that higher levels of parent participation are needed to help schools create and support a college-going culture. Currently, no parent leadership program exists to train EMUHSD parents how to partner with the schools to create a college-going culture. Parent roles and responsibilities at home and school should be clearly defined. Parents should co-develop with administrators, counselors, and teachers a “Code of Parental Responsibilities” for promoting an EMUHSD college-going culture. This Code should include parents’ responsibilities and commitments to help their child pursue the opportunities that the El Monte Pledge and Promise offer.

Recommendation #4: Co-develop a comprehensive series of College-Knowledge workshops with parent leaders and college access partners to educate parents how to prepare their child for college.

Work with El Monte parents, community, and college access partners to develop a “College-Knowledge” Academy for parents. Offer parents and caregivers incentives to complete the workshop series such as a *free* family pass for a college campus visit.

Recommendation #5: Explore ways to fund evening or Saturday college/career counseling services once a week with appropriate staffing and/or consider establishing an El Monte Promise college-counseling call center.

Many El Monte parents and caregivers report that they work from early morning until 7 or 8 pm. Schools should consider ways to keep school counseling centers open beyond regular school hours or on Saturday to accommodate working parents.

### ***Communication/Outreach***

Recommendation #1: Establish a Communications Advisory Committee to liaise with the El Monte Promise Communications Coordinator and to review the District's communication and outreach strategies with parents and students to ensure that they are communicating a strong college-going culture.

Assess current communications plan of the District and high schools to ensure that it addresses a multilingual population and conveys a strong college-going message; develop strong internal and external communications plans to conform to best practices currently implemented in other multilingual school districts.

Recommendation #2: Develop a communications outreach plan that connects students and families to existing academic and socio-emotional support services in the school and community at large.

Students and families should be provided with a comprehensive list of services and resources available in their school, the District, and within the local community to help them successfully graduate from high school and prepare academically for college.

Recommendation #3: Facilitate the translation into all relevant languages all communications to parents and students about academic support services and college preparation.

Establish a comprehensive and coordinated system to translate and communicate with students and their families in their native language. Coordinate existing District resources including language and translation services. Develop a pool of translators fluent in the various languages to help schools communicate with non-English speaking parents more effectively.

Recommendation #4: Develop a system and process for parents and caregivers to easily update their contact information. A District plan should also be developed to reach *non-engaged* parents and caregivers.

An online tool should be available to parents so they can easily provide schools with their current contact information including telephone, email, and home mailing address. Parents should be encouraged to update their contact information and confirm that the District's database has all their necessary and current contact information.

Recommendation #5: Develop a strong college-going campaign that leverages the content and expertise of the El Monte Promise collaborating partners and other strategic stakeholders.

Redesign the District's and high school websites to ensure they are "user-friendly" for parents and students, and prominently display student academic support services, requirements for high school graduation and college admissions, as well as links to other critical information. A parent resource tab should be added and featured prominently on the District and high school websites. This tab should contain useful information about important resources parents can use and steps they can take to better ensure their child's academic success and college preparation.

### ***Partnerships/Strategic Alliances***

Findings from this needs assessment reveal that EMUHSD should engage a broad base of partners to help them create a District-wide college-going culture. The District and high schools need to strategically expand the group of partners they engage with to sponsor programs, events, and activities to help students prepare for college. They should also focus on coordinating internal and external resources to maximize impact.

Recommendation #1: Develop systems, data sharing agreements, business processes, and the necessary *data infrastructure* to monitor issues of equity and access.

There should be an on-going evaluation of student interventions, programs, and the quality of information shared with students and families. Identify clear baseline data, realistic and sustainable increments of progress, and target outcomes.

Recommendation #2: Develop and cultivate relationships with business and corporate partners to identify and secure resources to help students prepare for college.

This kind of collaboration and teamwork requires that someone be responsible for coordinating resources, organizational capacity, strategic planning, and professional supports.

Recommendation #3: Create a formal process and program to engage EMUHSD alumni and the region's college/university alumni to serve as resources, role models, and mentors to schools, students, and families.

Assign EMUHSD staff the responsibility of developing a community outreach strategy and plan to engage community partners to help the District foster a college-going culture.

Recommendation #4: Develop a formal outreach strategy and coordinated plan to include new and non-traditional partners (i.e., non-profits, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations) to support the development of the region's college-going culture.

Engage El Monte Promise collaborative partners to identify and leverage resources from non-traditional partners including those provided by faith-based organizations and other groups in the region to support student academic success and the goals of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

These community partners should be invited to support college preparation activities in high schools and local community.

### **Discussion and Recommendations: El Monte City and Mountain View Elementary School Districts**

Delivering on the El Monte Promise will require that all education and community stakeholders understand the importance of early education to the future success of children in the region. Stakeholders must also have a realistic understanding of the challenges they will face in ensuring that the region's youth will receive the best early education possible.

Elementary school is the foundation for all future education. For a child to succeed in elementary school he or she has to learn *how* to learn - that is, to be part of a class, pay attention, complete assignments, etc. Children also have to learn how to get along with others, become team players, and get involved in various group projects. Elementary school is the prerequisite for entering high school and the training ground for mastering core academic subjects; it is during this time that the work ethic necessary for success in high school and college is first established and is the stepping-stone towards pursuing higher goals.

For this reason, the El Monte Promise Planning Grant team believes that strengthening all aspects of the region's early education system should be given the highest priority among stakeholders.

English Learners comprise nearly half of the 18,000 children who attend elementary schools in El Monte City School District (EMCSD) and Mountain View School District (MVSD); the majority of these students would be the first in their family to go to college, and they also have parents who speak a language other than English at home.

Graduates from these two elementary school districts will enroll in El Monte Union High School District (EMUHSD) and make up 80 percent of the high school district's total student enrollment.

This needs assessment found significant achievement gaps among elementary school students in the region in core academic subjects on California Standards Tests. These trends must be reversed for the El Monte Promise to be realized.

Fortunately, the two Superintendents and their respective School Boards understand the urgent need to focus efforts on improving instructional practices among teachers so they can meet the educational needs of all students. During 2011-12, both elementary Districts will focus on improving the academic proficiency of all students, especially English Learners because these students often become stagnated in English Language Development and tend not to reach beyond the Basic level on the California Standards Test. The Districts have also developed a plan to provide targeted interventions to students and align all resources to help students achieve proficiency and master core academic subjects.

The greatest resources and contributions EMCS and MVSD can make towards the implementation of the El Monte Promise Initiative relate to the Districts' ability to:

- Mobilize staff, parents, and students around the El Montes Promise goals.
- Offer facilities and transportation resources.
- Provide staff to support implementation.
- Provide access to students and families in a comfortable and familiar setting.
- Offer categorical funds available to complement outside resources.

The greatest obstacles, gaps, and unmet needs pertain to funding for the following:

- The creation of significant parent partnership programs.
- Early childhood programs such as "Parent and Me" or other quality early childhood programs.

Their "Angel" donor wish list includes:

- Funding for transportation to visit colleges and universities.
- Guest speakers for meetings with administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students.
- College awareness materials in several languages (including various Asian languages) that explain to students and their families EMUHSD graduation requirements and basic college admissions requirements including course, GPA, and college admissions test requirements.
- Banners, posters, etc., from colleges and universities for schools to place in prominent locations to help students build familiarity with different college campuses.
- Funding for staff time so they can participate in professional development. One principal reported that the cost of paying substitute teachers prohibits teachers from participating in important college access activities, including professional development and field trips with their students.
- A cadre of mentors for elementary school students (which could include former elementary school students who are now high school or college students, professionals or successful entrepreneurs in the community and can share their education/career path with students).
- Funding for education college Partnership Scholars Program. The Partnership Scholars Program is an existing non-profit which provides qualifying students with a long-term mentor who guides and supports their academic progress, takes students on field trips to local colleges and universities, and provides enrichment cultural activities that students might not otherwise access.
- A high quality citywide recreation/tutoring program.
- Money for a full "college preparation" summer and evening program for students and their parents such as Upward Bound, which provides week-long stays at colleges and universities.

The Superintendents suggest the following recommended next steps:

1. Continue to develop and implement a plan for the El Monte Promise Initiative.
2. Secure funding for the El Monte Promise Initiative as elementary schools ramp up teaching to improve student outcomes.
3. Develop “standards” by grade level of what parents and students should “know and be able to do” in order to be ready and able to succeed in post-secondary education.
4. Develop a rubric or exemplar that demonstrates to students and parents what core academic subject work would look like at the Beginning, Developing, Proficient, and Exemplary levels.
5. Districts can use “standards” to develop activities by grade level, incorporating the work they are already doing to meet academic subject standards.
6. Create working groups to focus on separate aspects of the goals of the El Monte Promise.
7. Develop a communication plan to attract donors and share information about El Monte Promise with education and community stakeholders.
8. Develop a PreK-14 curriculum for parents and students about securing a place in college and being successful in earning a college degree.

Given these considerations, the Planning Grant Team has identified the following priorities:

Recommendation #1: Continue the work the EMCSD and MVSD have underway to improve instructional practices that lead all students, including English Learners, to mastery of grade level standards. Deepen articulation work with EMUHSD and develop a strategy to align curricula across the elementary and high school districts.

In 2010, California adopted the Common Core Standards (CCS) in English language arts and mathematics. These standards provide an opportunity for the higher education and K-12 systems to collaboratively design a more thoughtful and streamlined curriculum and assessment system. As El Monte schools prepare to implement the CCS, we recommend instructional leaders reach out to higher education collaborative partners to support on-going professional development that provides greater focus on:

1. Effective teaching strategies for all students, including English Learners.
2. Information on how to implement the CCS.
3. Effective methods for monitoring student progress.
4. Effective systems that produce the highest gains for student achievement for all students.
5. Effective writing processes.

Recommendation #2: Adopt a policy that supports the creation of a college-going culture in EMCSD and MVSD and develop District plans with measurable goals for achieving a college-going culture in support of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

The District plans should reflect a shared vision and goals among all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, classified staff, students, parents, community, and college partners) to

create a college-going culture. All stakeholders need to understand that developing a college-going culture in every El Monte elementary school will help them meet District goals.

Recommendation #3: Establish school site teams at every elementary school in EMCS and MVSD to have them complete a supplementary school inventory to identify resources and gaps and develop a school-site plan for creating a college-going culture.

This is important because the Superintendents completed the School Inventory questionnaire themselves and identified general District-wide resources and gaps. The Planning team recommends that a supplementary inventory be completed at every elementary school by school-site teams. Teams should be given technical support to complete their inventory and to develop a school-site plan detailing how existing programs and resources can be aligned, leveraged, and coordinated to support the creation of a college-going culture in support of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

Recommendation #4: With support from the Third Party Entity and Parent Network Coordinator, develop an elementary school parent engagement model to recruit, inspire, and engage multilingual parents. Parents of elementary school students should be invited to co-create a college-going culture in their child's school.

Parents and students should be recruited, invited, and inspired to dream big; they need to understand that elementary education is a training ground to prepare for college. Schools and teachers need to help parents and students develop their personal academic achievement goals. Educators should provide students and parents with concrete strategies (including appropriate learning supports, time management, study skills, and test-taking strategies) to help students reach achievement goals. Schools should solicit input from students and parents regarding strategies to expand communication with parents, especially non-engaged parents, about how they can support their children's studies. Parents and students need to understand the importance of their elementary education and why the mastery of core academic subjects is intrinsic to their dreams of going to college.

Recommendation #5: Create an El Monte Promise Middle School Task Force to help students and families better prepare for the transition from middle school to high school and beyond.

We recommend the Task Force consist of representatives from MVSD, EMCS, EMUHS, higher education partners, parents, students, and community stakeholders. The Task Force should work to align college and career counseling policies and practices, business processes, and the three school Districts' student information data systems to support the goals of the El Monte Promise. Additionally, the Task Force ought to develop a coordinated plan with benchmarks and measurable student outcomes to improve student transition from middle school to high school. The Task Force should work to secure funding to provide students with a summer academic skills-building program prior to their matriculation to high school.

Recommendation #6: With support from the Third Party Entity, EMCS and MVSD should each designate a representative to liaise with the El Monte Promise Communications Coordinator

to help Districts develop content to communicate important information to parents, students, general public, donors, stakeholders, etc., for placement on website and in other materials.

### **Discussion and Recommendations: Rio Hondo College (RHC)**

Based on the inquiry and findings and RHC's institutional priorities, the Planning Team supports the recommendations the College proposes for the institution to support the El Monte Promise Initiative.

We recommend that RHC work with El Monte Promise Collaborative Partners to do the following:

Recommendation #1: Create a Matriculation Advisory Council and an El Monte Union Pledge Matriculation Task Force with representatives from each segment of the educational pipeline.

The Matriculation Advisory Council would meet quarterly to review the work and recommendations of the Task Force. They would be responsible for developing policies and practices to improve student matriculation outcomes in the region and for fostering collaboration among El Monte Promise educational stakeholders at all levels (including Pre-K, elementary school districts, El Monte Union High School District, and higher education partners). They would work to better understand matriculation issues and reach agreement on the problem. Together, Task Force members would develop collective goal(s) for each segment, joint approaches and supporting strategies to solve the problems the region faces in preparing students for college.

Recommendation #2: Seek funding for the Matriculation Task Force to pay for release time for staff to participate in professional development training and Task Force meetings.

That El Monte does not have a unified school District poses a structural challenge to the region and the success of the El Monte Promise Initiative because no single education entity is responsible for creating a "seamless K-12 education pipeline." The onus is on education leaders to strengthen articulation between elementary school Districts and the high school District to ensure that systems and practices are in place to prepare students for successful transitions.

Recommendation #3: With input from the Third Party Entity and Communications Coordinator, develop a guide that takes students and their caregivers step-by-step through components of a student matriculation plan; outline academic benchmarks and clearly delineate student, family, and institutional responsibilities at each stage of the educational pipeline.

This guide should do more than merely list a set of courses or a sequence of classes students need to complete in middle school or high school to apply to college. We recommend this guide help students and their parents understand the kinds of content knowledge they will be expected to have and the assessments they will need to successfully complete at each stage of the pipeline to demonstrate their mastery and proficiency of the content.

In addition, we recommend the guide detail the cognitive skills and strategies students will need to succeed in college. Key cognitive strategies include analysis, interpretation, precision and accuracy, problem solving, and reasoning. Low income and immigrant families frequently lack “college knowledge” that is critical for planning, preparing, and earning a college degree. As a result, parents and students have no conceptual framework to understand how all the elements of their PreK-12 education (including academic coursework and assessments) fit together. Parents and students need to understand that a key goal of the region’s PreK-12 education pipeline is to prepare students to enroll in “credit-bearing” general education courses at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program without the need for remediation.

Recommendation #4: Develop a comprehensive college planning counseling model in partnership with EMUHSD and the elementary districts that feed into the EMUHSD.

Rio Hondo College estimates that nearly 70 percent of First-Time Freshmen arrive on campus each year without well-defined education and career goals. This trend must be reversed to realize the El Monte Promise. We recommend RHC work with El Monte Promise stakeholders to identify a set of college and career planning activities that lead up to signing the El Monte Union Pledge Compact. Middle school students should be required to complete a *free* Career Interest Self-Assessment on CaliforniaColleges.edu in middle school so they can begin the process of career and college exploration. Parents, high school counselors, and teachers should have access to the results of a student’s career self-assessment inventory. Parents should be incorporated into this college and career exploration process so they are aware of their child’s career interests and understand how they connect to their child’s college exploration process.

Recommendation #5: Develop an implementation plan for rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in EMUHSD to communicate the steps and responsibilities required to activate the El Monte Pledge Compact.

Students and Parents need to be included in this process as active participants. They need to co-create with educators their respective Code of Responsibilities to enter into the El Monte Pledge Compact. Students and their parents should understand that the Pledge is an unprecedented opportunity for them to go to college and contains commitments from four education institutions in the region. In turn, students and their parents/caregivers should be expected to commit to taking specific steps to achieve academic goals and to pursue the opportunities afforded by the El Monte Pledge Compact.

Recommendation #6: Seek funding for a Coordinator position for a *College and Career Center* at the high school level. Create Counselor Lead position (similar to content specialist and course leads).

This position could be a rotating position with a yearly \$1,000 stipend. Qualifications for this position should be a counseling credential/Pupil Program Specialist (PPS). Functions of this position should be imbedded in the job description so that they are sustainable and institutionalized. Consider partnering with the City of El Monte and the local business community to support this position.

## **Discussion and Recommendations: Rio Hondo Partnership for College (RHPC)**

It is clear from this needs assessment and inventory that the Rio Hondo Partnership for College (RHPC) is doing important work to assist students in the region with college preparation. In less than five years, the RHPC has developed policies and piloted processes to increase college-going rates for students in the region. They have documented measureable student impact and are working to scale up their pilot initiatives and take on new projects and activities. As the work of the RHPC evolves to increase college preparation and access, the El Monte Promise Planning Grant Team recommends the following:

Recommendation #1: Continue to develop and refine a strategy to restructure and refocus the EMUHSD's 9-12 Mathematics instruction and align professional development for teachers and site principals in Mathematics. Explore ways to expand this work to include other subject areas including English Language Arts.

RHPC should document lessons learned about promising practices and develop a plan and timeline to take this work down to the elementary school districts that feed into EMUHSD.

Recommendation #2: Develop policies and business processes to institutionalize Transcript Evaluation Service (TES) college counseling activities into the practices of EMUHSD guidance counselors.

In 2010, with the assistance of the RHPC, EMUHSD earned a California School Boards Association's Golden Bell Award for their innovative TES practices designed to improve college counseling and increase college admissions rates in the District. As the RHPC strives to take on new projects related to their Partnership's goals they will need to work with EMUHSD to help them develop policies, business processes, and accountability systems to ensure that TES counseling interventions become institutionalize into the District's college counseling practices.

Recommendation #3: Work with EMUHSD and collaborative partners to help them develop new systems and business processes using the TES extract file to augment the District's Student Information System (SIS) to monitor issues of equity and access.

On October 6, 2011, EMUHSD convened a meeting at the District, "Developing Systems to Monitor Equity and Access: Lessons Learned from Fresno." The two goals for this meeting were to build coherence among collaborative partners, education stakeholders, and funders about the work underway in the EMUHSD to become a college-going District and to gain a common understanding of the existing college counseling tools and data systems that can help collaborative partners monitor equity and access. At this meeting, Jorge Aguilar, Associate Superintendent for Equity and Access & Special Assistant to Superintendent, Fresno Unified School District shared how the EMUHSD can enhance their existing SIS by using the TES extract file to monitor A-G access and completion, access to higher education, including FAFSA completion and expand student placement in college prep programs, and develop a data tool to integrate academic supports with social-emotional services.

Recommendation #4: Clearly articulate to El Monte Promise education and community stakeholders the focus of the RHPC's work and how its goals connect to the El Monte Promise Initiative.

The goal of the El Monte Promise Initiative is to create a seamless pathway to college from as early as elementary school and continuing through high school and beyond. This will require large-scale social change and the creation of an appropriate P-20 collaborative structure. It will also require a long-term commitment to transform slowly and incrementally student attainment, achievement, and college preparation in the region. The RHPC will need to determine its primary role and how it intends to partner with the larger P-20 work so it can maximize the collective impact.

Recommendation #5: Think carefully about how RHPC will develop an appropriate organizational model that is logical and relevant to its work.

As the RHPC begins the heavy lift of implementing the El Monte Pledge Compact, it will need to think carefully about how it will incorporate *new* collaborative partners into its existing organizational structure to accomplish its work. Currently, the Superintendents of the four Elementary School Districts that feed into EMUHSD and other key community stakeholders including the El Monte City, business partners and Parent-Centered Organizations are not part of the RHPC organizational structure or Executive Leadership Team.

### **Discussion and Recommendations: El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals (emCLP)**

emCLP is an informal coalition of young Latino/a professionals who developed the concept and vision for the El Monte Promise Initiative. They are committed to helping to create a college-going culture in the region, establishing a seamless pathway to college for El Monte students, and helping to provide students with funding for tuition and educational expenses during their first two years of college. The organization sees itself as the conscience of the El Monte Promise and intends to play an active role in the implementation phase.

We recommend emCLP consider the following as they work with collaborative partners to implement the Promise:

Recommendation #1: Develop and formalize the organization's assets and infrastructure.

It is essential that emCLP intentionally leverage its greatest asset: its members and their diverse set of college and professional experiences. Consideration should be given to charging membership dues to invest in the development of the organization's infrastructure. Currently, there is no dedicated staff member responsible for managing the organization's human assets or programs.

Recommendation #2: Develop a formal method of tracking scholarship recipients.

We see all emCLP scholarship recipients as potential resources for the organization's professional network and believe they can contribute to the development and implementation of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

Recommendation #3: Develop a strategy to share with other parents in the region how the parents of emCLP members helped their child earn a college degree.

Parents of emCLP members are a tremendous community asset and serve as inspirational role models, mentors, and support to other parents of school-age children in the region. The organization might consider sponsoring a video project that includes interviews and testimonials of the parents of emCLP members addressing common fears and concerns Latino parents have about their children going to college. Additionally, emCLP parents can dispel common myths and offer strategies to help parents support their child to reach his or her academic and career goals.

Recommendations #4: Partner with Asian Pacific Islander (API) professionals in the region to build a college-going culture and develop joint actions to support the El Monte Promise Initiative.

One strategy might be to forge a strategic alliance with Asian Pacific Islander professional networks in the region to strengthen community support for the El Monte Promise Initiative, Scholarship Endowment Campaign, and communications with the API students and their families.

Recommendation #5: Strengthen organizational capacity to mentor the next generation of El Monte educators and elected officials; continue to build the coalition and mobilize emCLP's professional network to support the El Monte Promise Initiative.

There are hundreds of emCLP members in the organization's database that could be tapped to serve as mentors, role models, and champions of the El Monte Promise Initiative. emCLP should survey individuals in the organization's database to explore ways this body of professionals can contribute to the goals and the implementation of the El Monte Promise Initiative.

Recommendation #6: Increase the knowledge of emCLP's members about community resources and services within the City of El Monte that can help students reach their academic goals.

Active emCLP members are educators (principals, teachers, counselors, school board members, and community college trustees) in the region and are well positioned to promote and disseminate information about community resources and services to support academic success to students and their families.

Recommendation #7: Raise community expectations for dramatically higher student outcomes. Establish an El Monte Promise Score Card that measures the progress made by all stakeholders toward improving student outcomes. Set goals and clearly establish transparent metrics to monitor progress and success.

Transform the culture in the region to expect educational excellence for all students by working with schools and community stakeholders to develop an accountability system that properly balances accountability – between the City and school districts (teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards) and with the community itself (schools, businesses, community based organizations, county services, parent networks, etc.).

### **Discussion and Recommendations: El Monte Scholarship/Endowment Fund**

As education and community stakeholders prepare to launch the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment Campaign, they will need to think carefully how the overall fundraising and campaign strategy connects to the larger El Monte Promise Initiative.

A goal of the El Monte Promise is to provide funding for tuition and education expenses for the first two years of college to students who, without financial assistance, might not attend college or aspire to the school of their choice.

Recognizing this, there was unanimity among Promise stakeholders that an El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment Fund should be established. The 300 + parents we spoke to underscored this need in expressing deep concern about rising college costs and their fear that their dream of sending their children to college would soon be beyond reach.

Aiming to help turn this vision into a reality, the California Community Foundation announced on July 28, 2011 at a joint meeting of the El Monte Community Building Initiative Advisory Board and the El Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team that it may consider providing up to \$100,000 in matching funds to leverage contributions made by local donors. Further, the City of El Monte announced it is exploring the possibility of contributing potential non-general fund dollars to serve as the lead gift for the creation of the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment Fund.

In addition to these generous commitments, the El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals unanimously approved on August 1, 2011 a pledge to contribute \$30,000 as community seed money for the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment. The organization also pledged the proceeds from their annual scholarship fundraiser commonly known as a Tamalada; the organization's fundraising goal for the 2011 Tamalada is \$20,000.

Subsequent to these pledges, the California Community Foundation (CCF) convened a meeting in August of 2011 with the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment Task Force, comprised of members of the El Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team. At this meeting the Task Force agreed that CCF should provide oversight for managing the endowment funds given that El Monte Pledge and Promise stakeholders are familiar with the Foundation and trust that it will

provide effective stewardship for the funds.<sup>9</sup> As a result, CCF offered its professional staff to help the Task Force develop their fundraising goals, strategic plan, and scholarship selection criteria.

Recommendation #1: Thoroughly vet the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment’s fundraising goals, strategic plan, and scholarship selection criteria with education and community stakeholders.

As the work of the Task Force moves forward, it is critical that the Scholarship/Endowment’s strategic plan be shared with education and community stakeholders– including parents and students – so agreement is reached about the vision and goals of the campaign. It will be important for *all* stakeholders in the region, especially parents and students, to have a clear understanding of what the Scholarship/Endowment is and how the Campaign connects to the larger El Monte Promise Initiative.

Recommendation #2: Agreement must be reached among all stakeholders about the goals of the El Monte Promise Scholarship Program *before* the Endowment Campaign is publically launched.

Developing a common understanding of the Scholarship Program’s goals and what stakeholders seek to achieve with scholarship grants will inform the fundraising campaign goals and objectives, administration, program outreach, etc. It will also inform the coordinated actions of collaborating partners in preparing more students for college.

Recommendation #3: Given that a goal of the Scholarship Program is to expand access to higher education, improve college persistence, and degree completion for students, all stakeholders – including parents and students - need to understand college access, persistence, and completion rates in the region so they can co-develop strategies to jointly address the problems.

These education trends should be disaggregated by high school, gender, race/ethnicity, and other student background characteristics known to impact college access, retention, and completion rates. For example, stakeholders should know how many EMUHSD graduates *actually* enroll in college immediately after high school, the types of institutions they attend, persistence rates from year-to-year, how persistence rates vary among students enrolled in two-year versus four-year colleges, and what the average time to degree is by institution type.

This information is a key starting point for building an effective case statement, which is the core document that will sit at the center of the Scholarship/Endowment campaign plan and strategy. The case statement will explain to stakeholders what the money will be used for and what the benefits will be if a donor gives to the cause.

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<sup>9</sup> Since 1915, CCF has served the people of Los Angeles County and has earned a reputation for helping nonprofits, donors, advisors, and others achieve their philanthropic goals like no other organization in the nonprofit, public or private sectors. Their experience managing more than 1,600 charitable funds and foundations for individuals, families and corporate donors has allowed them to achieve more than \$1 billion in assets, helping them to make a collective impact in the region and beyond through grants, loans, scholarships and fellowships.

Equally important, accurate postsecondary enrollment and persistence pattern data will help the Scholarship Endowment Task Force set benchmarks and establish measurable goals and targets for the Scholarship Program. This information will make it easier to track progress, set realistic goals, and develop a detailed plan for reaching the Scholarship/Endowment Campaign goals as well as the Scholarship Program goals.

Recommendation #4: Community stakeholders – especially parent and student leaders – should be integrated into the leadership of the El Monte Scholarship/Endowment Campaign so they may fully understand the issues to be faced.

This is important because community stakeholders, particularly parents and students need to understand that the Scholarship/Endowment Campaign is a special fund-raising campaign that raises money to *invest* rather than spend and that giving to the endowment will yield income in perpetuity and create a fund that is sustainable.

Recommendation #5: Student and parent leaders in the region should be engaged to help develop the messaging and collateral materials for the Endowment Campaign and the Scholarship Program.

It is essential that community stakeholders not get the impression that the El Monte Promise Scholarship/Endowment is a silver bullet and there is no need for parents and families to save for college because students' first two years will be paid by the El Monte Scholarship/Endowment.

The Planning Grant Team sees the Endowment Campaign as an opportunity to educate El Monte students and families about the benefits of going to college as well as their need to start planning and saving early for college.

Recommendation #6: Campaign leadership should test messaging at a *soft* launch to better understand what inspires donors and the community about the effort and to prepare for a public launch.

## Appendix A



*Whereas the parties to this Compact agree that collaborative endeavors assist high school students in making a thoughtful and successful transition to College and University, and*

*Whereas the parties to this Compact agree to support such thoughtful and successful transition to College and University,*

*We, the undersigned, do pledge to provide services, priorities, and access to higher education as follows for students in the El Monte Union High School District.*

### *El Monte Union High School District will:*

- Provide information to all students who have reached the eighth grade, and to their families, regarding services and resources to prepare students for college and careers;
- Encourage students to explore college and career options throughout their high school program;
- Work cooperatively with Rio Hondo College officials and staff to help guide students with regard to higher education opportunities for their future;
- Encourage students to graduate from high school, by meeting all graduation requirements to finish high school in California; to take classes to prepare for college, by enrolling in college prep classes, for admission to the University of California and the California State University (known as A-G) and/or career technical coursework; to be proficient in reading, writing, and math, by passing the STAR Test; to apply for financial aid, by completing and filing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) during the senior year and submit grade point average to the Student Aid Commission by the application deadline; and to go to college, by applying for university admission or enrolling directly in community college within the first semester after high school graduation.

### *Rio Hondo College will:*

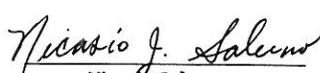
- Pledge to offer all EMUHSD graduates a one-time priority registration beginning with the Fall, 2011 semester;
- Provide outreach personnel and materials to help students learn more about college opportunities;
- Provide El Monte Union High School students who matriculate to Rio Hondo College with information and assistance meeting the Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) requirements for transfer to University of California, Irvine.

### *University of California, Irvine, will:*

- Pledge that all El Monte Union High School students who successfully complete a high school curriculum and who are designated as UC Eligible in the Local Context (those students in the top 4% of their high school class) will be offered admission to UCI and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree;
- Pledge that all Rio Hondo Community College students who apply for and successfully complete UCI Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) transfer requirements will be offered admission to UCI and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree.

*Note: Students in either pathway mentioned above would need to complete a UC undergraduate admissions application to be fully considered.*

*This Compact signed this date August 16, 2010*

  
Nicolas Salerno  
Superintendent  
El Monte Union High School District

  
Ted Martinez, Jr., Ph.D.  
Superintendent/President  
Rio Hondo College

  
Dr. Manuel Gomez  
Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs  
University of California, Irvine



## Appendix B



*Whereas the parties to this Compact agree that collaborative endeavors assist high school students in making a thoughtful and successful transition to postsecondary education, and*

*Whereas the parties to this Compact agree to support such thoughtful and successful transition*

*We, the undersigned, do pledge to provide services, priorities, and access to postsecondary education as follows for students in the El Monte Union High School District.*

### *El Monte Union High School District will:*

- Provide information to all students who have reached the eighth grade, and to their families, regarding services and resources to prepare students for college and careers;
- Encourage students to explore college and career options throughout high school;
- Work cooperatively with California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA) and Rio Hondo College officials and staff to help guide students with regard to higher education opportunities for their future; and
- Encourage students to graduate from high school by meeting all graduation requirements to finish high school in California; to take classes to prepare for college, by enrolling in college prep classes (known as A-G) for admission to California State University and/or career technical coursework; to be proficient in reading, writing, and math, by passing the STAR Test; to take the Early Assessment Test (EAP) their junior year to gauge their college readiness in Math and English, and to address any needs prior to enrollment; to apply for financial aid by completing and filing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) during the senior year and submit their grade point averages to the Student Aid Commission by the application deadline; and to go to college by applying for university admission or enrolling directly in community college within the first semester after high school graduation.

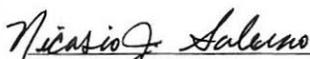
### *Rio Hondo College will:*

- Pledge to offer all El Monte Union High School District graduates a one-time priority registration beginning with the Fall 2011 semester;
- Provide outreach personnel and materials to help students learn more about college opportunities; and
- Provide El Monte Union High School students who matriculate to Rio Hondo College with information and assistance to meet the minimum community college transfer requirements for transfer to CSULA.

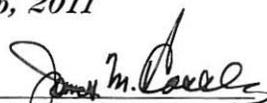
### *California State University, Los Angeles will:*

- Pledge that all El Monte Union High School students who successfully complete minimum college preparatory requirements, and who are designated as CSU eligible, will be offered admission to CSULA and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree;
- Pledge that all Rio Hondo Community College students who successfully complete minimum community college transfer requirements will be offered admission to CSULA and have an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree;
- Assist with the CSULA admission process; and
- Host campus tours and workshops for admission and financial aid.

*This Compact signed this date June 16, 2011*

  
Nicasio Salerno  
Superintendent  
El Monte Union High School District

  
Ted Martinez, Jr., Ph.D.  
Superintendent/President  
Rio Hondo College

  
James M. Rosser  
President  
California State University, Los Angeles



## **Appendix C**

### **EL Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team**

#### **Biographical Information**

##### **René Bobadilla / City of El Monte City Manager**

Mr. René Bobadilla was appointed City Manager by the El Monte City Council in January of 2010, and previously also served as Interim City Manager for approximately three months. He has served the City of El Monte in various capacities, and was first hired as the City's Public Works Maintenance Superintendent in January 2008, and later promoted to Deputy City Manager for Community Development in April 2009, then worked as the Interim City Manager. As City Manager, Mr. Bobadilla oversees the operation of all City departments including financial and administrative services, police, community development, community services, public works and redevelopment. Mr. Bobadilla has also worked for the County of Los Angeles as a registered Civil Engineer, and as a Staff Engineer for the San Gabriel County Water District, as well as for the private engineering firm, Krieger & Stewart, City of Riverside. He was born and raised in the City of El Monte, and attended local elementary schools and graduated from El Monte High School. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Cal Poly Pomona and received his professional engineering license in 2000.

##### **Vera de Vera / Director, Community Building Initiative for the California Community Foundation**

Ms. Vera de Vera directs the Community Building Initiative in El Monte, a 10-year neighborhood revitalization initiative that focuses on improving physical infrastructure, human capital and social services in one community. Before joining the California Community Foundation in August 2005, De Vera was the senior director for the western region of the Fannie Mae Foundation for more than six years. She led that foundation's efforts to build strategic partnerships to develop solutions to the nation's affordable housing challenges. Ms. De Vera was also a field representative for U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, a senior policy analyst for the California Association of Realtors, and a staff assistant for former Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley. She earned a law degree from Southwestern University and a master's in urban planning and a bachelors' degree in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is an alumna of the Leadership Southern California, Ambassadors Within and California Tomorrow Fellows programs. She serves on the Regional Advisory Council for Southern California Public Radio.

##### **Reuben De Leon / Senior Program Officer for First 5 LA**

Mr. De Leon is a Senior Program Officer for First 5 LA, a grant-making organization that has allocated more than \$700 million toward grants and programs that improve the wellbeing of young children and families in Los Angeles County. He is currently on the management team for Best Start Communities, which is First 5 LA's targeted investment in 14 communities throughout Los Angeles County. Mr. De Leon is overseeing Best Start's portfolio in El Monte & South El Monte, East Los Angeles, and Long Beach. For the past several years at First 5 LA,

## **Appendix C**

### **EL Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team**

#### **Biographical Information**

he has played a key role in planning and leading in the development of a variety of community, policy, and research initiatives. Prior to coming to First 5 LA, Mr. De Leon worked for

Community Partners, a technical assistance and intermediary organization serving grassroots, non-profit and philanthropic organizations. Mr. De Leon also worked at the Local and Comparative Research Department of the Getty Research Institute where he assisted in the development of *Mapping Local Knowledge*, a curriculum for teachers to help their students broaden their understanding of the built environment, local history and culture. Mr. De Leon earned an M.A. in Urban Planning from UCLA and a M.S. in Public Policy and Management with an emphasis in non-profit management from Carnegie Mellon University. He completed his B.A. in Social Welfare at UC Berkeley and is a Woodrow Wilson National Foundation Fellowship Recipient.

#### **Norma Edith García / Deputy Director of Planning and Development for Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation**

Norma Edith García presently serves as the Deputy Director of the Planning and Development Agency for Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation, where she oversees environmental & regulatory permitting, land acquisition & obligation, park & facility master planning, architecture & design, and water & environmental planning for an inventory of 94 public properties. Previously, Ms. García served as the Community and Environmental Deputy to Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor Gloria Molina and also has served as an Associate Regional Planner for the Southern California Association of Governments. Ms. García actively participates in numerous civic and professional organizations, including the El Monte Coalition of Latino Professionals, Latino Urban Forum, and Hispanics Organized for Political Equality (HOPE). Ms. García currently serves as the Chair of the California Community Foundation's Community Building Initiative, and formerly served as the Chair of the El Monte City Planning Commission and the Watershed Conservation Authority for the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles River Watersheds. Ms. García has been honored as the 49th Assembly District Latina of the Year in Community Involvement, graduated from the HOPE Leadership Institute, and was awarded a Conflict Resolution Fellowship through the U.S. State Department. Ms. García is a life-long resident of El Monte. She attended Citrus Community College, transferred and graduated from UCLA, earning a B.A. in Political Science and M.A. in Urban Planning.

#### **Lillian Maldonado French / Superintendent Mountain View School District**

Lillian Maldonado French is the Superintendent of the Mountain View School District. She has more than 25 years of experience in public education, including 19 years in the Santa Ana Unified School District where she served as a Bilingual Teacher, Curriculum Specialist, Assistant Principal, Principal, and Director of Curriculum and Staff Development. Previously, Ms. Maldonado French spent six years with the Los Nietos School District in Whittier, serving two years as Director of Instructional Services, Assessment and

## **Appendix C**

### **EL Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team**

#### **Biographical Information**

Special Projects and the last four years as Superintendent. Ms. Maldonado French has expertise in addressing the needs of English Language Learners, providing specialized training for principals and teachers, and maintaining effective and positive employer-employee relationships through consensus building and collaboration. A native of Southern California, Ms. Maldonado French was raised in Boyle Heights, California, and received her B.A. in

Linguistics from U.C. Irvine and an M.S. in Educational Administration from Cal State Fullerton. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Urban Education from Claremont Graduate School. She is bilingual and biliterate in Spanish, and also speaks French.

#### **Dr. Ted Martinez, Jr. / Superintendent/President of Rio Hondo College**

Dr. Ted Martinez, Jr. is the eighth Superintendent/President of Rio Hondo College. He held a variety of administrative positions at El Paso Community College in Texas and the seven-college Dallas County Community College District. He then became the Associate Vice Chancellor of the City Colleges of Chicago, and served as President of Richard J. Daley College in Chicago. Most recently, Dr. Martinez served as President of Grossmont College, where he led the College through accreditation, established enrollment management strategies and developed new strategies for the measurement of student learning outcomes. As Superintendent/ President of Rio Hondo College, Dr. Martinez is committed to creating and facilitating collaboration within the college itself, and with the communities it serves. Dr. Martinez grew up in Texas and earned a master's and a bachelor's degree from Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. He went on to receive a doctorate in Educational Administration from the University of Colorado in Boulder.

#### **Ciriaco "Cid" Pinedo, Ed.D. / Interim Vice President for Administrative Services and External Relations for the Chaffey Community College District**

Dr. Ciriaco "Cid" Pinedo is the Interim Vice President for Administrative Services and External Relations for the Chaffey Community College District, where he oversees the leadership and direction of the District's administrative services and information technology programs. As chief facilities officer, he manages the District's \$230 million bond program, acts as the chief administrative officer of the Chino and Fontana campuses, and in conjunction with the superintendent/president, acts as governing board liaison for the District. He also leads the District's external programs for legislative, governmental relations, foundation, and alumni relations programs. Dr. Pinedo is active in the community, and serves as secretary/treasurer of the San Gabriel Children's Center and board member of the Network of California Community College Foundations and the LA County Fair Association. In 2005, he was appointed to the City of La Verne Planning Commission and was elected chairman by his peers. Dr. Pinedo grew up in the city of El Monte, CA. He completed a bachelor's degree in philosophy at St.

## **Appendix C**

### **EL Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team**

#### **Biographical Information**

John's Seminary and completed his doctorate in organizational leadership at the University of La Verne.

#### **Dr. Anthony (Tony) R. Ross / Vice President for Student Affairs and Associate Professor in the Charter College of Education at Cal State University Los Angeles**

Dr. Tony Ross is Vice President for Student Affairs and Associate Professor in the Charter College of Education, at California State University, Los Angeles, which he joined in 2000. Previously, he served as Vice President for Development with Edison Learning in 1999. From 1994-99, Dr. Ross served as Associate to the President and later, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs at Wichita State University. During his tenure as Associate to the President, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education from 1995-99, and was named Chairperson of the association in 1997. Dr. Ross has also held several key positions at Northern Arizona University, including that of Assistant Vice President for Student Services, Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Students, and Assistant Dean of Students from 1983 to 1994. A native of New York, Dr. Ross served as Director of the Higher Education Opportunity Program at St. Lawrence University from 1976-81, and began his career at Utica College in 1975 as a counselor in the Higher Education Opportunity Program. He earned his bachelor's degree in Sociology and his master's degree in Counseling from St. Lawrence University. Ross received his doctorate in educational administration and leadership from Northern Arizona University. His leadership training includes the Harvard Graduate School of Education Institute for Educational Management in addition to the NASPA Richard Stevens Institute for Leadership. In 1997 Dr. Ross received the NAACP Image Award from the Wichita, Kansas branch of the NAACP.

#### **Nick Salerno / Superintendent of the El Monte Union High School District**

Nick Salerno was appointed Superintendent of the El Monte Union High School District in April of 2009. Mr. Salerno began his teaching career at Arroyo High School in 1976 where he taught math, science, and physical education, and also coached football and baseball. In 1987, he was appointed counselor at Arroyo and in 1988 moved to the administrative ranks as Assistant Principal-Activities at Arroyo. In 1990, he was appointed Assistant Principal-Student Services. In 1991, the Board appointed Mr. Salerno to the Assistant Principal-Instruction position at El Monte High School where he became Principal in 1992. In 1999, he moved to the district office as Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and in 2000 was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services. Mr. Salerno is the proud recipient of the H.B. McDaniel Outstanding Counseling Award, the Milken Family Foundation's National Educator Award, and the Alumni of the Year Award at Cal Poly Pomona. He graduated from Arroyo High School in 1970 and attended California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, graduating with a B.S. in physical education before earning an M.A. in education at Azusa

## **Appendix C**

### **EL Monte Promise Executive Leadership Team**

#### **Biographical Information**

Pacific University. He earned his administrative and pupil personnel credentials at the University of La Verne.

#### **Jeff Seymour / Superintendent of the El Monte City School District**

Jeff Seymour has worked in the El Monte City School District since 1970, and has served as the Superintendent of the El Monte City School District since 1987. Since 2004, he has also worked as an adjunct professor at Cal State Polytechnic University at Pomona. His previous professional experience includes acting as teacher and Principal of the Columbia School,

Assistant Principal of Frank M. Wright School, and serving as a teacher and Teaching Assistant Principal at Anne Le Gore School. Mr. Seymour is a participating member of the Association of California School Administrators, California Association of Bilingual Educators, as well as various professional associations at the University of Southern California. He also sits on the Board of Directors for numerous pro bono initiatives, including the Boys Republic of Chino Hills, California, the El Monte/South El Monte Emergency Resources Association, and the San Gabriel Valley Boys and Girls Club, among many others. He is the recipient of numerous distinguished awards, including the Superintendent of the Year Award from the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Mr. Seymour graduated from Mount Saint Antonio Junior College and earned a bachelors degree (cum laude) and a masters in educational administration from the University of Southern California.

#### **Andre Quintero / Mayor of El Monte**

Andre Quintero was elected to serve his hometown as Mayor of El Monte on November 3, 2009. He previously served two terms on the Board of Trustees of the Rio Hondo Community College District. During his term on the Board of Trustees, Mr. Quintero was an advocate for numerous critical initiatives, including fighting against student fee increases and supporting outreach programs that encourage students to enroll in college after high school graduation. Among many contributions, he is especially proud of the College's efforts to aggressively pursue grants for student outreach programs. Mr. Quintero currently works for the City Attorney of Los Angeles as a Deputy City Attorney in the Criminal Branch as the Neighborhood Prosecutor for the Central Bureau. He previously worked in a law firm that specialized in municipal and education law, and he also worked as an Applicant's Attorney representing injured workers. During law school at University of California, Los Angeles, Mr. Quintero was selected to participate in the California Senate Fellows Program and was a key staff person to Senator Joe Dunn. A graduate of the University of California Riverside, Quintero received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. While at UC Riverside, he served as Student Body President and also served as President of the statewide U.C. Student Association. Mayor Quintero grew up and attended schools in El Monte, Monterey Park, and Rosemead.

## Appendix D

### Parent Speak Focus Group

## **INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR FACILITATORS/TRANSLATORS**

*Thank you for volunteering your time today. We have put together a series of questions to learn more about the experience and point-of-view of parents of children enrolled in the El Monte Union High School District, Mt. View Elementary School District and El Monte City School District.*

*The following is a step-by-step instruction sheet on what the process will look like in the breakout sessions following the opening meeting in the main conference room. We recommend reviewing the questions in advance for clarity and to practice translation, etc. Above all, have a great time! And thank you again!*

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Parents will be instructed to go to the breakout rooms according to their primary language (Spanish, English, Vietnamese, and Chinese). We will attempt to keep the groups small between 10 to 25 people each.
2. Explain that parents will be asked a series of approximately 15 questions; we will record their responses and include them in a report that will be shared with the school district. Parents' responses will serve as recommendations to help school administrators plan for the future in developing strong partnerships with students and their families.
3. Please emphasize that all responses are confidential and will remain anonymous.
4. Time is limited to approximately 75 to 90 minutes.
5. Present each question to the full group and allow individuals to speak openly and freely.
6. Record responses on the chart paper. (Recorders will be provided as a back-up.)
7. Given time limitations, please keep the group on point and move on to the next question.
8. Some responses may require a follow-up question. Be sure to record what the follow up question was so that we may understand its context. In any event, keep it short as you have 15 questions to get through. For example, if a parent is describing an experience or practice at a school, be sure to identify the name of the school and grade level.

## Appendix D

9. Allow at least *five minutes* before ending the session to hand out the college information brochure, “College Making It Happen” and thank them warmly for their time and responses.
10. If you complete the questions and still have some time, ask “is there anything else you would like to share?”
11. If a parent asks about next steps, remind/advise them that we have their contact information and we will send them the report.

### DO’S AND DON’TS

- Do be encouraging – get the quiet parents to speak up
- Do be an active listener
- Do foster a safe space for dialogue
- Do let the parents know to respect their differences, even if they don’t agree with each other
  
- Don’t impart any personal opinions or advice even if you know the parent response to be inaccurate
- Don’t engage in any dialogue about your personal experiences—its about the parent
- Don’t let the same parents talk the entire time
- Don’t stay too long on one question

## Appendix E

### El Monte Promise Parent Focus Group Agenda

#### **I. Welcome & Overview (15 min)**

Purpose of meeting will be reviewed along with recommended process. Parents are invited to briefly state their name as well as the number and grade level of their children.

#### **II. Parent Speak Polling (15 min)**

#### **III. Parent Small Focus Group Questions (85 min)**

Parents will be asked to respond to the following questions:

##### **Parent Expectations:**

- 1) What is the highest level of education you hope your child will achieve?
- 2) What are your fears or concerns about your child going to college?
- 3) When should we start to prepare our children for college and/or their career?
- 4) What ways have you started to prepare your children for college and their career?
- 5) Do you expect your child to work to help support the family?

##### **Parent knowledge in supporting their child's learning at home and at school**

- 6) Have you ever attended parent education workshops to help you support your child's education? If so, where? What topics were discussed?
- 7) If you haven't attended parent education workshops, might you be interested in attending workshops on how to help your children prepare for, and pay for college?
- 8) Are you familiar with the district's high school graduation requirements?
- 9) What activities (in-school or after-school) do your children participate in that may help them do better in school?

##### **Parent knowledge about how to best supporting their child's college and career aspirations**

- 10) Are you familiar with the A-G minimum requirements for college admission?
- 11) When visiting your child's school, have you ever seen information that informs students how to prepare for college and future careers? If so, can you give some examples of the information you've seen? (i.e., fliers/posters, etc.)
- 12) Does your child's school inform you about the necessary steps to prepare your child for college? If so, what kind of information do they provide, and how often?
- 13) Have you ever attended a college fair with your child?
- 14) Would you like to attend a college fair, or attend another one?
- 15) Have you ever visited a college campus with your child?
- 16) Would you like to visit a college campus, or visit one again?
- 17) What do you want to learn to be able to help your child graduate from high school, prepare for college and their future career?

##### **Communication/Outreach**

- 18) How can your child's school do a better job communicating with you?
- 19) What are the best ways for your child's school to inform you about how to prepare your child for college and careers?

**During discussion, parent's feedback is recorded on flip chart paper. Emerging trends and/or common themes are reported.**

#### **V. Closing, Acknowledgements and Next Steps**

**(5 min)**

## Appendix F

### El Monte Promise Planning Grant

#### Inventory of Existing School/District Programs and Resources Currently Assisting Students with College Preparation

1. What specific interventions, programs, and/or information does your school/district share with students and their families to communicate to them that college preparation is an integral part of their childhood and youth?
2. How does your school/district communicate to parents and students that college is attainable and that they will need to plan ahead to be ready for college?
3. What are the ways your school/district engages parents as advocates for their child's academic success? (i.e., report cards, parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, etc.)
4. What are your school/district's most effective strategies for engaging parents as advocates for their child's academic success?
5. What evidence or information does your school/district use to evaluate effective parental engagement strategies?
6. What strategies are used in your school/district to engage *all* stakeholders in the development of a college-going culture?
7. What type of on-going professional development does your school/district provide staff to ensure grade-level academic success for *all* students?
8. What type of on-going professional development plan would you like your school/district to provide staff to ensure grade-level academic success for *all* students?
9. What kind of information and professional development support exists at your school/district to develop a college-going culture?
10. What kind of information and professional development support is needed at your school/district to develop a college-going culture?
11. What strategies are used to address the *gaps in staff's knowledge* of the milestones and requirements necessary for college preparation?
12. What strategies are used by your school/district staff to address the *gaps in their student's family knowledge* of the milestones and requirements necessary for college preparation?
13. How does your school/district leverage alumni, parents, students and community partners to plan and implement college and career programs?
14. What challenges does your school/district face that hinders you from helping students see college-going as integral to their identity?

## Appendix F

15. What opportunities exist that can support your school/district to help students develop a college-going identity?

16. How do educators, community members, students and their families in your school/district work together to ensure that *all* families have access to essential knowledge of college preparation?

17. What outreach strategies have your school/district found to be effective to ensure that *all* parents receive information on college preparation?

18. How does your school/district help families establish home environments to support children as students?

19. How does your school/district identify and integrate community resources to strengthen school programs, family practices and student development?

20. How does your school/district address the language needs of your students and their families?

21. List all community based organizations, businesses or other entities your school/district partners with to sponsor programs, events and activities to assist students prepare for college.

22. How does your school/district help families monitor student progress throughout the academic year and provide them information they need to plan appropriate, timely interventions to ensure student academic success?

23. What support services are available in your school/district to help students reach their academic goals? (i.e., tutors, material resources, counseling services, summer academic programs, test prep and other timely assistance)

24. How does your school/district communicate to parents and students the academic support services that are available to them?

25. How does your school/district evaluate the impact of the support services available in your school/district on student outcomes?

26. How does your school/district explain to parents that mastery of core academic skills in subject like English Language Arts and mathematics lay the foundation for future educational opportunities? (i.e., higher pass rate in the California High School Exit Exam, successful completion of college preparatory course and higher test scores on college entrance exams)

27. Please complete the attached matrix to summarize the activities, programs and/or resources your school/district provides students and/or their families to plan or prepare for college.

###

## Appendix G

<b>School Name:</b>  <b>Name, Title and Contact Information of Individual Completing Matrix:</b>	<b>Program Offerings</b> (i.e., after-school, during school, weekends, etc.)	<b>Service Provider</b> (i.e., School/District staff, GEAR UP, AVID, LEARN, Community Based Organization, Business, etc.)	<b>Funding Source</b> (i.e., District, State, Federal and/or Private)	<b>End Date of Funding Source</b>	<b>Sustainability Plan</b>
<b>Activities</b> (i.e., College Visits, College/Career night, Career Exploration, etc.):  1.  2.  3.  4.					
<b>Program(s)</b> (i.e., I'm Going to College):  1.  2.  3.  4.					
<b>Resource(s)</b> (i.e., Flyers About College Savings Plans, College Making It Happen Brochures, etc.):  1.  2.  3.  4.					