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Neighborhood Charter Schools: Pioneering inclusive education in NYC

The K-8 public school empowers diverse learners with co-teaching models and robust support programs.

Daniel McCormick | Executive Director, Neighborhood Charter Schools

Neighborhood Charter Schools (NCS), with campuses in Harlem and the Bronx, is redefining public education through its commitment to inclusivity and academic excellence. Under the guidance of Executive Director Daniel McCormick, NCS has established a welcoming environment where every student, regardless of background or ability, has the opportunity to thrive. McCormick has 21 years of educational experience and sees NCS as a model for other organizations serving children and families.

"We believe in real inclusion. Our program is designed to support students with IEPs [Individualized Education Programs] in every classroom, and we're constantly shifting to ensure student needs are met," says McCormick. "We allow them to learn from each other and grow together in a safe, healthy and happy environment. This is our hallmark."

Welcoming children from New York City, NCS serves a diverse student body, including autistic children, those with IEPs and a growing number of multilingual learners. Its integrated co-teaching model, wherein two teachers oversee learners throughout the school day, is designed to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of each student.

Besides academic support, NCS prioritizes social and emotional development. It emphasizes social learning using the Social Thinking methodology in the classroom and social clubs run by speech-language pathologists. The program helps students communicate effectively and navigate social nuances in and out of the classroom.

NCS's holistic approach extends to its commitment to family and community engagement. It ensures that families feel safe and trust the school, knowing their children are receiving quality education in a nurturing environment.

In two years, NCS will expand its Bronx campus from K-6 to K-8, similar to what is currently offered by its Harlem site. Eventually, NCS aspires to cover the whole K-12 curriculum to ensure a continuous, supportive education.

"We're an organization that cares and believes deeply that all children can learn and succeed in school, academically and socially," says McCormick. "For families overwhelmed with the challenges of raising a child with a disability or other circumstances, we provide world-class education and do so with the empathy and nurturing that many schools do not offer."



Centralia Elementary School District advances with award-winning excellence

Empowering students and families through innovative education and holistic support

Norma E. Martinez | Superintendent, Centralia Elementary School District

At the forefront of educational excellence for nearly 150 years, Centralia Elementary School District is an award-winning institution recognized for its exceptional innovation and dedication to student success.

Serving approximately 4,000 students across eight schools, the pre-K-through-6 district has earned numerous accolades, including National Blue Ribbon Schools Awards and California Distinguished School Awards. This year's recognitions include the Readers' Choice 2024 Best Public School in North Orange County and platinum medal honors for all its schools for the PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) awards for fostering favorable school environments. Under Superintendent Norma E. Martinez, Centralia continues to raise the bar in education.

"Our board sets very high standards across our district with four core values spanning collaboration, student-centeredness, communication and equity," says Martinez. "All our efforts fall into supporting the whole child, pursuing higher academic achievement and making them future-ready."

One of the district's key strengths is its whole-child approach. Centralia ensures that students feel seen, supported and valued. Its schools are equipped with social workers, counselors and school climate paraprofessionals to address both social and emotional needs. Additionally, the district extends its care to families through its award-winning Neighborhood Resource Center, which provides everything from meals to laundry detergent and even hotel vouchers for evicted families.

In terms of academic excellence, Centralia is investing in teacher training and programs to help students catch up. The district is an early adopter of the science of reading and has rebalanced its afterschool program to include math intervention, especially in response to pandemic-related gaps.

College and career readiness is another core focus of Centralia. It has launched its first Student Leadership and Career Academy, where students learn from community business leaders and gain insights into soft skills and financial literacy. Meanwhile, Centralia's innovation labs, where students use cutting-edge technology and the design thinking process to solve real-world problems, earned the district a prestigious Golden Bell Awards in 2024.

"Every day reveals new challenges in education," says Martinez. "We're very responsive to our students and their families; we're a district of people who care."



Leadership and Legacy: How SSD is redefining special education success

The district's bold strategies set a new national benchmark in special education as well as career and technical training.

Dr. Michael Maclin | Superintendent, Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD)

Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD) stands out as a trailblazer in educating students with special needs. Long before such an endeavor was mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, SSD had already been committed to special education since its founding in 1957. Today, SSD serves over 23,000 students and collaborates with 22 partner school districts, supported by more than 5,500 dedicated staff members. Under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Michael Maclin, SSD is building on its rich history and forging a brighter future, prioritizing both special education and career and technical training to empower every student to reach their potential despite some current challenges facing the district.

Maclin became superintendent at a turbulent time for the district in January 2024, marked by leadership transitions and a significant deficit spending trajectory. At that time, the district was operating with a \$74 million deficit—a situation requiring decisive action. Within weeks, Maclin launched the "Righting the Ship" initiative, a five-year strategic plan designed to stabilize finances and refocus resources on student success.

The "Righting the Ship" initiative has already shown significant progress. Strategic decisions, including streamlining central office operations and reallocating resources, have reduced deficit spending and laid the groundwork for long-term sustainability. These actions, though difficult, reflect Maclin's unwavering focus on the district's mission.

SSD Board President Dr. Dan Cuneo, who has served the district for 24 years, expressed confidence in Maclin's leadership. "When we hired Dr. Maclin, we hit the grand slam." Maclin is the perfect individual for the job, given his extensive experience and advanced degrees. He has received numerous accolades, including the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Excellence in Education Award conferred to him during his first six months as superintendent. A parent, Monique Williams, referred to Maclin as a true game changer.

While Maclin's leadership sets the tone, he emphasizes the collective effort that drives SSD's success. "It is truly the work of individuals within the organization every day that makes us special," says Maclin.



Meg Bamford | Head of School, Miriam School and Learning Center

We aim to support children with learning differences by giving them the tools and strategies they need to succeed both academically and in life. We create programs that nurture the whole child, and this approach sets us apart. It's really helping our students, first and foremost, as well as the people around them to understand the gifts these kids have.



Sevin Yeltekin | Dean and Frontier Professor of Business Administration, Simon Business School

We don't teach students what they would do day-to-day but how to analyze data to understand how markets work, design strategies and solve problems. We teach them foundational knowledge and skills that are timeless and position- and industry-agnostic so they can carry and apply them wherever they go.



Dr. Kara Casimiro | Superintendent, Danbury Public Schools

This is an exciting time for everyone. We're extremely focused on student learning and providing opportunities for them to meet the demands of this new economy. We're changing the landscape of post-secondary education and what success actually looks like for different students while still meeting the needs of modern local economies.



Dr. Eric Semler | Interim Head of School, Concordia International School Shanghai

We see parents as true partners in their child's education, which sets us apart from other international schools. We know they want their child to learn a great deal, but they also aspire for a joyful and nurturing place for their learner. Parents are not alone in their child's learning journey, as Concordia will be with them every step of the way.



Mike Smith | President, Teaching Channel by K12 Coalition

Teaching Channel by K12 Coalition is leading the way in providing innovative tools and resources for educators. At the heart of this mission is a dedication to improving teacher practice through integrated, high-quality online content accessible 24/7. Our goal is to support educators' growth and ultimately drive student achievement and impact. We want to be a household name, supporting every public and charter school in the country.



Caleb Hicks | Founder and CEO, SchoolAI

SchoolAI aims to bridge the gap between students, teachers, parents and school leaders through a platform that enhances student engagement, promotes personalized learning and streamlines administrative tasks. We empower teachers to reach every student effectively while allowing them to zoom out to see overall data and trends, helping to improve their classroom and school performance over time.

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Ladue School District: Shaping future leaders through vision and community

With the support of its Board of Education and other stakeholders, the district fosters student growth and local engagement for lasting success.

Dr. Jim Wipke | Superintendent, Ladue School District

Nestled just 12.7 miles west of the iconic Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Ladue School District is a shining example of educational excellence. Recently ranked 6th nationwide by the education research company Niche—up from 8th in 2024—this achievement reflects the unwavering commitment of the district’s students, staff and community to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Superintendent Dr. Jim Wipke, who oversees the district comprising an early childhood center, four K-4 elementary schools, a fifth-grade center, a middle school and a high school, emphasizes the district’s ongoing curriculum advancements. “We’re constantly aligning our coursework with what will be expected from students when they enter the workforce and society. We want multiple opportunities awaiting them upon graduation,” he states.

Wipke developed the motto “See. Serve. Connect.”—a district philosophy centered on building authentic relationships with students and families.

This approach emphasizes fostering genuine connections and serving students well so they can contribute positively to the community. Home to over 4,300 students who speak approximately 65 languages, the district has created a rich learning atmosphere where students thrive academically and socially, feeling safe, respected and supported.

A significant milestone for the district was the passing of its \$126-million Future-Ready bond during the pandemic, which received the second-highest approval rating in its history. Wipke notes that this strong community support underscores the dedication to the schools and the educational opportunities they provide.

Some examples of innovative curriculum and instruction at the high school include a one-of-a-kind veterinary teaching clinic run by the comparative anatomy and physiology class; Construction Innovations, where students build tiny houses as part of a CTE course; and Catalyst, an advanced hands-on learning program in global business and entrepreneurship that presents various career paths.

Ladue students also participate in over 120 athletic and extracurricular programs. In spring 2024, student-athletes won two Class 4 State Championships in track and field, while middle and high school students ranked among the top 25 at the National Science Olympiad Tournament.

“Our students’ remarkable achievement testifies to the dedication of our amazing teachers and staff, strong parent partnerships and the unwavering support of our Board of Education and community. We’re committed to educating and empowering students to become passionate learners achieving their highest potential,” says Wipke, who has a doctorate in education from Maryville University and over 30 years of educational experience.

The Ladue School District exemplifies excellence in education, driven by a collaborative approach that prioritizes inclusivity, innovation and student success.



Dr. Jane Fernandes | President, Antioch College

Founded by visionary Horace Mann, Antioch College has been a pioneer in education for nearly two centuries. We were the first liberal arts college to offer coeducation and equal academic opportunities to African Americans while pioneering community-work-based education. We aim to grow our enrollment, confident that our initiatives will increase interest and understanding of Antioch’s unique value.



Dr. Michelle Keylon | Superintendent and CEO, Francis Tuttle Technology Center

It is important to continue learning and growing throughout one’s lifetime. We have a truly strong culture centered around the success of our students, making sure they are fully supported throughout their learning process. We give them the most up-to-date knowledge so that when they move into the workforce, they are thoroughly prepared.



Michael Young | President and CEO, New York Film Academy

We’re a college teaching everything related to filmmaking and entertainment fields—from acting and screenwriting to animation, game design and musical theater. The common thread is visual storytelling, and our goal is to help students find and develop their unique voices. We empower them through hands-on learning, giving them the tools to create from day one.



Dr. Nisha Patel | Superintendent, School District of Clayton

We are truly a place for everyone to grow as learners in both head and heart. The teaching and learning that happens every single day in our classrooms is something we are very proud of. Our strength lies in innovation, in the power of being stronger together and our commitment to care for one another like family.



Dr. David Gozal | Dean, Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine

We are training the next generation of hardworking, outstanding physicians, scientists and health care professionals who will work hard for their community and serve their patients with passion, dedication, integrity and the best knowledge.



Redefining Dayton Public Schools: A commitment to student success

How the institution’s “5 Cs” drive innovation and progress.

Dr. David Lawrence | Superintendent, Dayton Public Schools

Dayton Public Schools, under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. David Lawrence, is on a transformative journey driven by the core principles of customer service, collaboration, culture, commitment and communication. These five guiding tenets, known as the “5 Cs,” ensure that every decision made by the pre-K–12 school benefits students and the broader community.

“We believe in being student-centered, with all our actions reflecting our deep care for our learners,” says Lawrence, who oversees over 13,000 students in the district’s early learning center, 16 elementary schools, four middle schools and seven high schools.

Dayton Public Schools has made remarkable strides, particularly in pre-K–3 literacy, jumping from ninth to fourth place among urban districts in Ohio. Furthermore, the school invests in collaborative partnerships with organizations like Omega Child Development Center, Learn to Earn and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. These partnerships help enhance academic offerings, guarantee experiential learning and promote post-secondary education success through a dedicated College and Career Readiness Division.

Dayton Public Schools similarly emphasizes communication to connect with families and the community. It is critical that parents stay engaged and that the district keeps an open dialogue. This transparent approach strengthens the relationship between the school and the local community, ensuring that stakeholders are always aligned.

To further emphasize its customer service orientation, the district is streamlining systems to ensure students and families receive prompt and effective support. This approach guarantees that resources are accessible and issues are addressed efficiently. Its focus on fostering a positive culture within schools empowers educators to model behavior that encourages both student achievement and well-being.

“We’re creating a culture of professionalism and maintaining a laser focus on our goal, which is to forge systems that will thrive long after we’re gone. That’s what truly sets us apart,” says Lawrence, who has nearly 30 years of experience in public education and a doctorate in leadership and change.



Plato Academy Schools: Where tradition meets innovation

Celebrating 20 years of excellence in education

Amy Hayes | Chief of Schools, Plato Academy Schools

Founded in Florida in 2004, Plato Academy Schools was born out of a vision to provide students in the Tampa Bay area with an education rooted in Greek culture, heritage and language. Since its inception, the academy has grown from a single school to a network of nine K-8 charter schools across three counties, with its Tampa site offering high school.

“Our mission is to foster rigorous academics and character development, guided by the Socratic method of teaching,” says Chief of Schools Amy Hayes, who has 16 years of experience in public education. “We emphasize critical thinking and the ability to question, ensuring students learn through experience.”

The unique blend of tradition and forward-thinking education continues to set apart the Cognia-accredited school. Students are introduced to advanced academics from an early age. Plato Academy offers accelerated math, and by eighth grade, many students have earned several high school credits.

However, it is not just academics that make Plato Academy special. With solid support from the Plato Education Foundation, the school’s commitment to Greek culture is seen in everything from language classes to authentic Greek dance and art programs.

When asked about the secret to Plato Academy’s success, Hayes points to the school’s dedicated staff. Many of its teachers have been with the school for over 15 years, which creates a sense of continuity and commitment.

For parents considering Plato Academy, Hayes has one message: “Be involved. A parent’s active engagement in their child’s education makes all the difference. It’s crucial for both academic success and character development.”

Moving forward, the tuition-free public school plans to explore other innovative education opportunities in the Tampa Bay area and beyond. However, as Plato Academy continues to evolve, its mission remains clear: to offer students an education that honors the past while preparing them for the future.



Matthew Hemphill | Founder and CEO, Reverse Mortgage Academy

As a seasoned expert, I’ve condensed a decade’s worth of experience in reverse mortgages into an engaging online course. Going beyond mere theory, I teach loan officers how to communicate and confidently engage senior citizens in the reverse mortgage process.



Craig Larrabee (back row, 4th from left) and Kim Acker Lipp (back row, 2nd from right) with key stakeholders, business partners and former JMG students.

JMG: Building Maine's Future Workforce Through Partnership and Ingenuity

Equipping students with skills and opportunities to prepare them for success in education and beyond

For over 30 years, JMG Inc. (formerly Jobs for Maine's Graduates) has been at the forefront of addressing Maine's growing workforce challenges, offering equitable solutions to economically disadvantaged and underserved students. From a dropout-prevention program to a statewide leader, the organization now serves over 12,000 students annually across every county. This growth is a testament to JMG's commitment to providing the right support at the right time to help students succeed from middle school through postsecondary education and into the workforce.

"We've built something very special, and we're really excited about sharing our story," says Craig Larrabee, president and CEO of JMG. "The success of our organization is really built on being student-centered and results-driven, meeting students where they're at and developing models of direct services that help them raise their aspirations and become productive citizens."



President and CEO, JMG Inc.

JMG's journey began as a program engaging high school students who were at risk of not completing their education. Over time, the organization evolved to encompass students in middle school, high school and postsecondary institutions. Its work is no longer limited to helping students graduate but extends to ensuring they are prepared for whatever comes next, whether it is higher education or the workforce. As Maine continues to face significant demographic challenges, including an aging population and a shortage of skilled workers, JMG's mission to provide students with relevant, career-ready skills has never been more critical.

Building Workplace Competency

By combining experiential learning with competency-based education, JMG prepares students for real-world challenges, giving them a competitive edge as they enter the workforce or postsecondary pathways. JMG has over 150 programs, partnering with schools and a network of employers across the state to ensure that students are equipped with both academic knowledge and workplace competencies.

One of JMG's key innovations is developing Maine's first statewide micro-credential framework, allowing students to earn and stack qualifications that demonstrate competencies to employers. As the students earn their micro-credentials, they get a badge that can be published on social media or LinkedIn, which can be seen by colleges and employers. The program has been so successful that JMG created another nonprofit, Generation US (GenUS), to offer the initiative to partners. This past August, Digital Promise Global published a research paper about JMG's micro-credentials and design approach entitled "The Promise of Micro-credentials and Learning and Employment Record Technologies for Youth and K-12 Schools." Later this fall, JMG will be presenting its micro-credential framework at the Aurora Institute Symposium, a national conference for education innovators who are working to transform K-12 education.

"Our micro-credential framework allows high school students to show that they can persist while allowing them to have agency and choice in their learning," says JMG Executive Vice President Kimberley Acker Lipp, who has been with JMG for more than 20 years. "Highly personalized to every learner, micro-credentialing gives students an effective currency to colleges or future employers."



Executive Vice President, JMG Inc.

Partnership Driven

In addition to this practical focus, JMG's work is deeply rooted in Maine's spirit of collaboration. Since its inception, the organization has received strong nonpartisan political support. Governors, legislators, school administrators and the business community have all recognized the value of investing in Maine's youth.

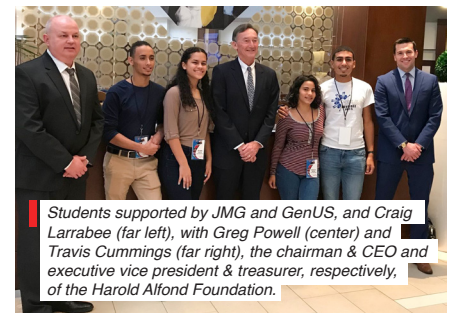
"When you think about Democrats, Republicans and Independents all coming together in a nonpartisan way, that's a story in itself in today's world," says Larrabee, who joined JMG as a classroom specialist when it began in 1993. "To have that happen in our state for over 30 years is something that is difficult to overlook. It's really about the State of Maine and its leaders understanding the importance of children for our future."

JMG's ongoing success is also tied to the support it receives from Maine-based foundations. One of its most significant supporters is the Harold Alford Foundation, which awarded JMG a \$10 million grant to expand its College Success programs. This funding has allowed JMG to provide targeted support to students across all of Maine's public university and public community college campuses.

Similarly, the MELMAC Education Foundation has been a key partner in supporting JMG's mission to make postsecondary education more accessible to all Maine students. JMG and the MELMAC Education Foundation are working with individual schools in an organic way to create change within districts to make them more student-centered and results driven.

Scaling Services and Scope

Looking forward, JMG continues to innovate. The organization is exploring partnerships and funding opportunities through GenUS that will allow it to broaden its work beyond Maine. JMG's impact extends beyond individual students. By helping them develop career-ready skills and achieve academic success, the organization is also addressing Maine's broader economic challenges. JMG plays a critical role in preparing the next generation of leaders, workers and entrepreneurs.



Students supported by JMG and GenUS, and Craig Larrabee (far left), with Greg Powell (center) and Travis Cummings (far right), the chairman & CEO and executive vice president & treasurer, respectively, of the Harold Alford Foundation.






MUSC carries the weight of a 200-year legacy.



The academic health system is educating the next generation of health care professionals and advancing cutting-edge research.

The Medical University of South Carolina Directs Future of Health Care Innovation

From transformative research to cutting-edge education, MUSC leads the way in reimagining health care for the 21st century.

 The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) has established itself as a trailblazer in health care innovation, shaping the future of medicine through an unrelenting commitment to discovery, education and patient care. As the only comprehensive academic health system in the state, MUSC carries the weight of a 200-year legacy. Yet, it is the institution's forward-thinking approach that is driving unprecedented growth and impact, both locally and nationally.

"We're changing the future of health care through discovery and innovation," says MUSC President Dr. David Cole, a practicing physician and surgeon with over 30 years of health care experience. "We envision leading health innovation for the lives we touch, addressing effectively many of the intractable challenges in health care, from health disparities to poor access and outcomes."



At its core, MUSC's role as an academic health system sets it apart. While community health systems provide essential care, MUSC adds a crucial dimension: educating the next generation of health care professionals and advancing cutting-edge research. With six colleges, 37 degree programs, over 3,000 students and more than 900 residents and fellows—about half of all those currently training in the state—MUSC educates health care providers across every dimension.

Passion for Innovation

One of MUSC's most significant differentiators is its culture of innovation. Its research program is the largest in the state, having secured more than \$360 million in external funding last year alone.

"When we think of innovation, we want our students to find ways to use it to transform both how they learn and how they deliver health care," says Dr. Lisa Saladin, executive vice

president for academic affairs and provost of MUSC. "We want all of our students and faculty to be part of that movement."



MUSC's leadership has created a structure that promotes and facilitates new ideas, ensuring that groundbreaking research and practices move quickly from the lab to patient care. It has formalized its commitment to innovation with initiatives like the Chief Innovation Officer and Associate Provost for Education Innovation positions, faculty innovation ambassadors in each college and even a *Shark Tank*-style competition to bring new ideas to life.

This commitment has led to some remarkable outcomes. For instance, MUSC students who won South Carolina's statewide innovation competition developed a device aimed at improving survival rates for patients experiencing cardiac arrest. They found a way to channel more blood to the brain and heart instead of the extremities during a heart attack. The students have patented the invention, secured angel investors and formed a company to bring their life-saving idea to market. With 55 such startup companies launched by faculty and students and hundreds of patents already filed, the institution's innovation ecosystem is robust.

MUSC is also taking progressive steps in embracing AI to revolutionize both education and health care delivery. Since 2018, the academic health system has partnered with Clemson University on an AI hub, which supports faculty and student research. From machine learning models for heart transplants to AI-driven disease modeling for outbreak preparedness, MUSC is at the forefront of using technology to tackle complex health care challenges. These initiatives complement the university's wide array of other dynamic endeavors, including digital dentistry, precision medicine and genetic counseling.

Collaborative Spirit

MUSC's passion for discovery and innovation has spread beyond South Carolina. Recently, the university hosted a conference for about 250 faculty members, addressing the use of AI in education and setting the groundwork for a strategic plan to integrate the technology into its practices. Dr. C. Edward Watson, vice president for digital innovation at the American Association of Colleges and Universities, was so impressed by MUSC's initiatives that he requested the institution host a national conference on AI in education in 2025.

Cole also emphasizes the academic health system's goal, in collaboration with existing and future partners, to build an innovation district, a concept that mirrors innovation hubs across the country anchored by academic health systems. This initiative would attract partnerships with industry leaders, educational institutions and communities. MUSC envisions this district as a nationwide destination for cutting-edge health care research and clinical practice, further enhancing its ability to impact health outcomes through national caliber programs.

Forging Ahead

As the university celebrates its bicentennial this year, it sets its sights on a bolder strategic vision. By setting long-term goals, including improving South Carolina's health outcomes to rank within the top 20 in the nation and positioning MUSC as a top 20 academic health system, the institution is demonstrating its commitment to progress. These goals are ambitious, but they reflect the momentum MUSC has built over recent years, as well as its potential to shape the future of health care both regionally and nationally.

"We've almost quadrupled in size over the last seven years, transforming into a \$7 billion organization," notes Cole, who began his role as MUSC president in 2014. "We realized that in order to serve South Carolina effectively, we needed to expand beyond Charleston and create partnerships across the state and even farther."





By empowering the next generation of educators, UC Irvine School of Education is investing in a future that is more equitable, just and informed.

UC Irvine School of Education Champions Academic Equity and Transformation

Fostering future educators through research-practice partnerships and a commitment to social justice

In an ever-evolving educational landscape, the University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine) School of Education has emerged as a transformative force, dedicated to preparing the next generation of educators and innovators. With a bold commitment to equity, groundbreaking research and dynamic partnerships, the School of Education has secured its place among the most respected institutions in the field, ranking No. 8 among public schools of education in 2024 (and No. 17 overall) by *U.S. News & World Report*.

“This remarkable ascent in the rankings over just 10 short years reflects the collective efforts of our faculty, staff and students, united by a shared vision to reshape education and equip students for success in a globalized, data-centered and technologically driven world,” says Dr. Frances Contreras, dean and professor at UC Irvine School of Education. “We continue to distinguish ourselves by prioritizing community impact, with an unwavering commitment to equity, social justice, cutting-edge research and innovative partnerships.”



Dr. Frances Contreras

Dean and Professor, UC Irvine School of Education

Proudly offering a robust curriculum spanning undergraduate to doctoral studies, UC Irvine School of Education serves as an academic home for educators at all career stages in California and beyond. Originally focused on credentialing high-quality and justice-centered teachers, the School of Education now

prepares and serves future teachers through programs like Master of Arts in Teaching, Cal-Teach and bilingual certificates in Spanish and Asian Languages, addressing the evolving needs of pedagogy from early learning to adulthood.

Bridging Research and Practice

Central to the School of Education’s success is its focus on research that addresses critical issues in education. With over \$142 million in active grant funding in 2024 and a total tenure-track faculty of 37, the school stands at the forefront of educational research and innovation.

“This level of funding is an extraordinary achievement for our age and size,” notes Contreras. “It amplifies our ability to tackle the most urgent educational needs and ensures that our research has a tangible, meaningful impact. By empowering the next generation of educators, we are investing in a future that is more equitable, just and informed.”

The faculty at the School of Education leads cutting-edge studies that not only advance theory but also deliver real-world solutions to pressing challenges, from classroom equity to the integration of technology and AI in teaching. With over 16 active grants related to AI and education, the school is leading in this space across the P-20+ education continuum.

Contreras further emphasizes that research is only as valuable as its application: “The most effective research can be turned into curriculum and applied in real-world settings. This guiding principle drives our efforts to address education’s most pressing challenges, from improving equity in classrooms to integrating new technologies into learning environments.”

Innovative Partnerships: A Catalyst for Change

At the heart of UC Irvine School of Education’s approach is its dedication to reimagining education through partnerships. Notable collaborations with Anaheim Union High School District and Santa Ana Unified School District led to the school’s first university-assisted partnership with James Monroe Elementary School in Santa Ana. This innovative facility will integrate research directly into a K-5 dual immersion school, emphasizing language and STEM. This partnership with Monroe Elementary builds on a two-decade-long collaboration with UC Irvine’s Center for Educational Partnerships, further strengthening the university-district relationship. The School of Education aims to co-design innovation, inform pedagogy and work with practitioners to improve student outcomes.

Both partnerships are part of the larger Orange County Educational Advancement Network (OCEAN), a coalition of scholars advancing education through collaborative research. These efforts reflect the school’s mission to serve the region by applying research to drive innovation and transformation. Through collaboration with faculty, staff, students and community partners, the school fosters change in today’s world while shaping tomorrow’s leaders.

A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, UC Irvine School of Education remains steadfast in its mission to address the challenges of the 21st century. Through pioneering research, robust community engagement and innovative programs, the school is poised to continue leading the charge in educational transformation.

“For our students, alumni, partners and the communities we impact, the message is clear: Investing in education today is investing in the future,” says Contreras. “Our vision is firmly rooted in a commitment to academic excellence and social responsibility, ensuring that the school remains a leader in educational transformation for years to come.”

UC Irvine
School of Education

Nationally Top-ranked School

education.ucl.edu

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SERIES 2024 **Part 4**

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