



## Chapter 12: The Pillars of Our Communities

Historically, introducing students to the world around them has often meant gathering them together to embark on an exciting field trip. Now, educators are also devising innovative ways to *bring the community into our schools*, so that students can access the opportunities and myriad of resources that their community has to offer, right outside their classrooms. *This* is the wave of the future in education, and once again, L.A. Unified is at the crest of the wave, leading the way:

- **Perched on a circular platform inside Charles White Elementary School, a layered fabrication that resembles a mad-scientist's birthday cake rises like a pillar toward the ceiling.** This vibrant installation is [just one of many phenomenal art pieces](#) that are located within the Charles White [art gallery](#). Through an innovative partnership with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, select art pieces have been brought from the museum to our school, so that our students can soak in world-class art on a regular basis—simply by walking down the hall—and the broader community can access this awe-inspiring art on the weekends.
- **Every day, a fully-equipped dentist's-office-on-wheels pulls onto one of our school campuses, ready to provide free dental service to students in need.** This [mobile dental truck](#) is made possible through a partnership with QueensCare, and is serving students at 36 L.A. Unified schools this year. In addition, 15 of our schools operate [wellness centers](#), where doctors, dentists, and counselors attend to the multi-faceted health needs of our students and communities. Through a partnership with the L.A. Clippers and Vision to Learn, [free eye exams and eyeglasses](#) are being offered to students throughout the District at their school sites. The educational benefits of bringing healthcare to our students are profound and long-lasting—when we fill in the gaps of children's teeth, they stay in school, and teachers are able to fill in the gaps of their understanding.

- **Kale, bok choy, and water chestnuts are the instructional materials used in one of our forward-thinking Beyond the Bell summer programs.** Through a partnership with [Common Threads](#), students get hands-on experiences learning about healthy cooking and eating. They prepare menus that contain affordable yet healthy ingredients, and then those ingredients are purchased and brought to the students for transformation into delectable dishes.

These examples are representative of the countless programs being implemented throughout the District to bring the vast and wonderful resources of our communities *into* our schools. Because of your innovation and hard work, our schools are more than centers for classroom instruction—they are the pillars of our communities.

Thank you for being our pillar.

Vivian Ekchian  
Interim Superintendent

*Enjoying the Employees' Connection?*  
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