



# School and Organization Overviews

## **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Middle School, San Francisco Unified School District**

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[Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Middle School](#) (MLK) opened in 1980 as a public middle school located in the Portola neighborhood of San Francisco and is part of the San Francisco Unified School District. Today, the school serves [430 students](#): 35% identify as Asian, 31% identify as Hispanic or Latino/a, and 14% identify as African American. Seventy-one percent are from families earning a low income, 28% are currently classified as English learners, 10% identify as unhoused or in foster care, and 19% are students with disabilities.

Through a continuous improvement model, MLK has engaged students, families, staff, and partners in understanding and addressing school priorities, from math instruction to student health and well-being to pandemic-specific needs. After transitioning to a community school in the 2015–16 school year, MLK embarked on a 2-year process to reimagine teaching and learning with a project-based learning focus. These efforts have sparked new partnerships and catalyzed changes in classroom instruction and teacher professional development.

As part of its continued improvement model, MLK staff conducted empathy interviews to learn about students' and families' needs and assets. Empathy interviews are typically one-on-one conversations that utilize open-ended questions with the goal of gathering stories and learning more about the diverse lived experiences of people in order to unpack their needs and assets, identify the root causes of challenges, and promote human-centered and systemic change.

This [resource](#) provides more information on empathy interviews. It also discusses how to conduct them with an intentional, human-centered, and equity-focused lens, from planning to designing questions to preparing the team that will conduct the interviews.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

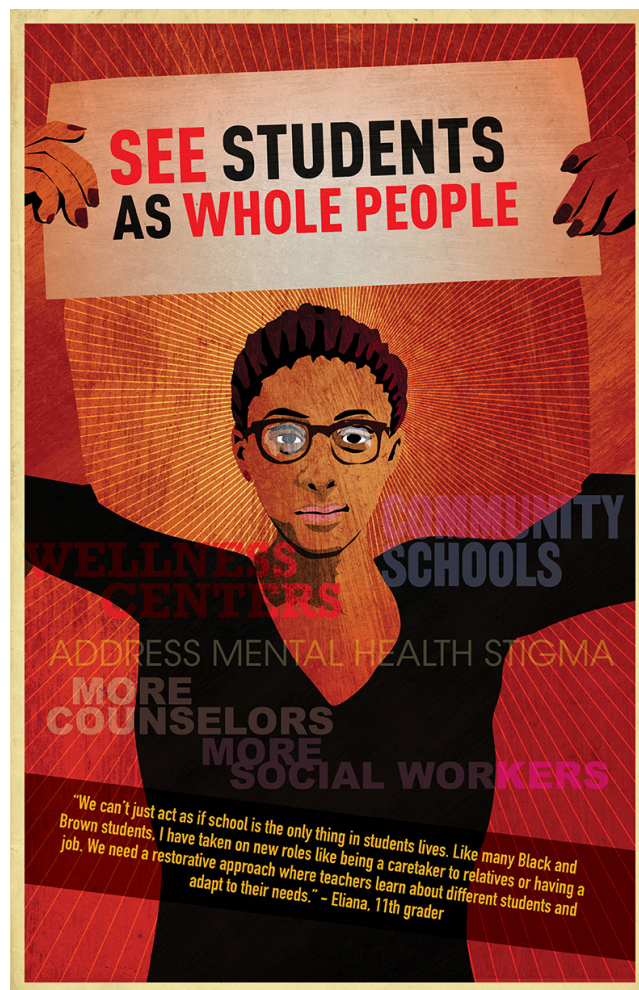
- [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Middle School's website](#)
- [Video: Panel interviews with MLK staff](#)
- [Classroom Teachers in the Community Schools Movement](#) (article includes discussion of MLK)
- [Empathy interviews overview](#)

## Mann UCLA Community School, Los Angeles Unified School District

[Mann UCLA Community School](#) opened in 1926 as a public junior high school located in the Chesterfield Square neighborhood of South Los Angeles and is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Today, the school serves [565 students](#) in grades 6–12 as a community school: 50% identify as Hispanic or Latino/a, and 48% identify as African American. Ninety-four percent are from families earning a low income, 21% are currently classified as English learners, and 27% are students with disabilities.

Mann’s transition to a community school started in 2015, when the school began partnering with the [UCLA Center for Community Schooling](#), transitioning over the next 2 years—with input from all stakeholders—from a traditional middle school with declining enrollment to a vibrant neighborhood community school. Each year, Mann gathers data from students, families, and staff to help determine the actions, resources, and partnerships that will best serve its students. A key area of focus, identified through the school’s ongoing inquiry process, has been the development of structures, practices, and partnerships that support a quality and sustainable teacher workforce and that enable stable, supportive, and trusting relationships between students and teachers.

One of the surveys that has informed Mann UCLA’s ongoing culture of change has been data from the [LAUSD School Experience Survey](#). This survey is administered annually throughout the district to students in grades 4-12, school staff, and families of LAUSD students in pre-k through 12th grade.



Art by Innosanto Nagara, @innosantonagara

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- [Mann UCLA Community School’s website](#)
- [Video: Panel interviews with Mann UCLA staff](#)
- [UCLA Center for Community Schooling website](#)
- [Integrated Data Systems: Informing Student Supports in Community Schools](#) (article includes discussion of how Mann uses data to inform the supports offered)
- [LAUSD School Experience Survey](#)

## Garfield Elementary School, Oakland Unified School District, and the East Bay Asian Youth Center

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[Garfield Elementary School](#) is one of the oldest and largest elementary schools in the Oakland Unified School District. It opened in 1928 as a public elementary school located in the San Antonio neighborhood of Oakland. Today, the school serves [604 students](#) in TK through 5th grade: 49% identify as Hispanic or Latino/a, 22% identify as Asian, and 20% identify as African American. Ninety-two percent are from families earning a low income, 46% are currently classified as English learners, and 16% are students with disabilities.

Garfield Elementary has a strong focus on literacy as part of its programming and has prioritized family–student–teacher communication and relationships.

The [East Bay Asian Youth Center](#) (EBAYC), a longtime community partner, is a nonprofit youth development organization serving a racially and culturally diverse membership of 2,500 children, youth, and families. EBAYC services—life coaching, peer support, case management, family support services, transitional employment, and expanded learning—engage young people in a neighborhood-based continuum of supports and opportunities. Since 1999, EBAYC has partnered with Garfield Elementary, including leading a cycle of inquiry with students, families, and staff rooted in a community-organizing model. The cycle of inquiry followed a [listening campaign model](#) to identify and address key areas of concern. In the case of Garfield, the areas identified were fostering deeper relationships and improving communication between teachers and families.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- [Garfield Elementary School's website](#)
- [The East Bay Asian Youth Center website](#)
- [Video: Panel interviews with Garfield staff](#)
- [Overview of the listening campaign model](#)
- [Community Schools Toolkit — Designing and Planning: Needs and Assets Assessments \(page 31-40\)](#)

## National Center for Community Schools

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As part of Children's Aid, one of New York City's oldest and largest child- and family-serving organizations, the [National Center for Community Schools](#) (NCCS) brings more than 25 years of experience building the capacity of schools, neighborhoods, school districts, human service providers, and other community stakeholders to work together in community schools. The Center's consultative and training practice is grounded in Children's Aid's experience of operating 19 community schools in New York City in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. Children's Aid also provides on-site and virtual technical assistance to practitioners, intermediaries, and policymakers across the United States and beyond.

As part of its community school capacity-building efforts, NCCS has developed a [Needs Assessment Toolkit](#). As NCCS explains, a needs assessment is a systematic process used to understand and create a profile of a community school's needs. This comprehensive toolkit includes an eight-step guide for conducting a needs assessment:

1. Getting started
2. Archival data review
3. Initial analysis
4. Surveys
5. Key informant interviews
6. Focus groups
7. Final analysis
8. Reporting

All artwork comes from artists commissioned through the California Partnership for the Future of Learning [2021](#) and [2022](#) Art Showcases, with individual artists attributed below each image.

[California Partnership for the Future of Learning](#) | [Community Schools Toolkit](#)