Founder’s Message
By Dr. Jacqueline Elliot, President & CEO, PUC National

As 2021 comes to a close, I congratulate everybody for triumphantly completing another unprecedented year. I continue to be incredibly inspired by the unwavering tenacity and determination of our PUC family to continue on our mission of uplifting the lives of our students, families and communities regardless of the challenges that come our way. For the past 22 years we have been and continue to be a community of warriors with a remarkably strong spirit and a commitment to not only the students and families we serve but to the well-being of one another. This has never been tested so heavily or better demonstrated than it has been during the past two years. It is wise to remember that even when we face great adversity there is much to be grateful for and as we prepare to end 2021 and eagerly look forward to 2022, I am filled with gratitude each and every day for the camaraderie and caring of the remarkable professionals I have had the privilege of working with through these tough times. We also know that when a community faces and overcomes adversity together it strengthens the community and builds an even closer sense of unity among its members. I believe this has been the case for all of us and I know we will emerge from these historic times even stronger and more resilient than ever before! I wish you and your families a very joyous holiday season and a new year that brings good health, happiness, and much success to each of you and your families!
College Application Season Fall 2021

PUC School & College Counselors are educators with a unique perspective. They closely partner with students throughout their entire four years of high school. In doing so, they see the students through many triumphs and struggles and are part of their growth from goofy freshmen to confident high school graduates. Counselors help their students develop an awareness of who they were, who they are, and who they want to be.

The fall semester of senior year is when this counselor-student bond is especially close. It is an intense time in the life of a student that often brings a mixture of joy and apprehension. It is when a student must put into play all the hopes, dreams and plans they have developed over the course of 3 long years.

For students who plan to attend college, fall semester of senior year is when they must apply to college. In a “regular” year this process can be overwhelming, but this year it brought a whole new level of angst. The students were taking these important steps after 17 months at home and in the midst of internet glitches, other obstacles that the return to school delivered, and a global pandemic.

The students needn’t have feared though! At each of the 5 PUC high schools the counselors provided a combination of supports, including workshops, presentations, drop-in hours, one-on-one appointments, parent meetings, virtual college rep visits and class work time. Counselors offered incentives, contests, and competitions to keep the students motivated. It was a whirlwind of a semester with a lot of uncertainty, but the seniors took charge of their future, utilized their supports and made it to the other side. PUC seniors showed that when it came to their future they would persevere through anything. There are 363 students in the Class of 2022 across the 5 PUC high schools. To date, they have submitted 1526 college applications to 86 different colleges & universities with an average of 4.2 applications per student. And they aren’t finished yet!

To our Class of 2022 seniors: This time is unprecedented, but you are unparalleled. Your resilience was tested when you spent what is arguably the most difficult year in college-prep student’s life learning at home. You proved your independence, which is key to success in life. You have so much work left to do this year, but know we will be right there with you. It’s been great, but next semester, your final semester of high school, will be AMAZING. We’ll see you then!

Sincerely, Your School & College Counselors - Ms. Sanchez & Ms. Wolk (PUC TCHS), Ms. Gonzalez & Ms. Ramirez (PUC LCHS), Mr. Reynoso & Ms. Flores (PUC CCECHS), Ms. Perez (PUC eCALS), and Ms. Rodriguez (PUC CALS).
4th Graders at PUC CCES Engage in Community Improvement Project

Submitted by Morgan Pareja & Stephanie Beltran, 4th Grade Teachers, PUC Community Charter Elementary School

PUC schools are all committed to uplifting our school and neighborhood community. At CCES, we have additional commitments to create critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and agents of change. As part of those commitments, the 4th graders at CCES engaged in a community improvement speech project as part of our Opinion Writing Unit. Every year, students write a speech, and a selected few are chosen to present their proposal to someone who has the power to make those changes happen. In the past, students have written about improvements to their school environment. This year, students toured the school neighborhood to map the assets and possible improvements in the area directly surrounding CCES.

Before going on our neighborhood observation tour, students spent a week reading and reflecting on what makes a healthy, safe, and beautiful community. They looked at ways our local Los Angeles City Council Member, Monica Rodriguez, has improved the neighborhood with utility box murals, tree planting, trash collection, increased street lighting, street and sidewalk improvements, etc. They read about the importance of accessible playgrounds and sidewalks, the power of murals in public spaces, and the benefits of community gardens. They were excited to explore the assets and opportunities for improvement around our school.

On Observation Day, students and school staff chaperones spent an afternoon with clipboards in hand, walking from our campus to the neighboring Sylmar Recreation Center. Students noted assets, such as sidewalks, trees, street signage, crosswalks, curb ramps, and trash cans. They also noticed places where sidewalks were missing or a lack of a curb ramp would make wheelchair or stroller access difficult. They spent an hour exploring areas of the local park space, too. Most students had spent time at this park on the sports fields, playgrounds, or inside the recreation center. Students quickly noticed walls for murals, spaces that could use more shade, tagging on tables or playground equipment, and places where accessibility might be an issue.

With their observations pages full, students returned to school. They began the work of choosing the community improvement they wanted to prioritize, finding evidence to support their proposal, and drafting their speeches. Next, students worked in groups based on their proposed improvement suggestions. Over three weeks, students drafted, revised, and polished their presentations.

The final part of this project will be presenting our speeches to a LA neighborhood representative. Our 4th graders are excited to welcome our guest, hear about how a neighborhood council member can impact our community, and have their voices and proposals heard. Six of our students (one from each of the proposal groups) will be able to present their proposal and listen to feedback. Hopefully, they will be able to see some of their observations and hard work come to life. Still, even if they don't, these students have been able to develop the real-world, hands-on skills and knowledge necessary to uphold all of the PUC and CCES commitments and uplift our community.
PUC Induction was proudly invited to present at the California Induction Conference this year in December to share our best practices. This conference welcomed educational leaders from all over California to “Inspire, Support, and Lead.” Trisha Mendinueto, PUC Inclusion Coordinator, had the opportunity to lead a session on the topic of “Data Driven & Differentiated Induction Mentor Development.” Conference participants were able to listen in on how PUC Induction inspires mentors to grow in their practice and become leaders in their field in order to support new teachers. Mrs. Mendinueto spotlighted PUC Induction’s process of collecting and analyzing multiple points of data to inform differentiated mentor development. As a result, PUC Induction mentor development is reimaged each year in response to the areas of growth that mentors identify in relation to the PUC Mentor Practice Framework. Conference participants had the opportunity to reflect on the data they collect to evaluate their own mentor development. As a result of this reflection, conference participants were able to create an individualized inquiry question that addressed an area they are looking to improve on in relation to their own mentor development.

PUC Induction would like to thank all of its mentors and candidates, present and past, for their honest feedback over the years and unrelenting commitment to ultimately serve students. Our amazing mentors and candidates are the backbone of what continues to push the practices of PUC Induction each year.

Click Below for the PPT
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1j3t1y804d-j2SKvJiZ1mACEP_BWWJJoCmNe4bXf6wWlJp4M/edit?usp=sharing
Winter Arrives at PUC TCHS

Submitted by Jennifer Dobson, Principal, PUC Triumph Charter High School

TCHS held its first ever Winter Fest this December, and it was a huge success. Students and staff enjoyed bonding over games, pizza, and cotton candy. TCHS leadership students, with the guidance of their teacher, Ms. Field, and Assistant Principal, Mr. Valdez, created a space for all students to “play.” During Winter Fest, students played Jenga, Connect Four, Cornhole, and Basketball. They also participated in grade-level competitions, which our Freshman dominated! We look forward to Winter Fest becoming a tradition here at TCHS as we continue to cultivate a culture of celebration and joy in our community. Happy Holidays from our Jaguar Family to yours.
PUC CCES Elects New Student Council and Gets Right to Work!

Submitted by Jennifer Lopez, 5th Grade Teacher, PUC Community Charter Elementary School

This Fall, the PUC CCES student body elected its student council group for the 2021-2022 school year. Students started by campaigning for different cabinet positions, including the President, Vice President, Secretary, and grade-level representatives. They campaigned by creating posters, flyers, and power points to share school-wide with their peers. Candidates also made videos to convince their student body of why they were the best fit for the position they were running for. Every student running did a great job and put forth a fantastic effort!

Our elected officials are:
- Michael Hernandez (President)
- Illeahana Reyes (Vice President)
- Dania Mata (Secretary)

Our grade level representatives are:
- Brooklyn Ward (Third Grade)
- Emily Vazquez (Third Grade)
- Jacob Segura (Fourth Grade)
- Sofia Lascano (Fourth Grade)
- Paulina Ulloa (Fifth Grade)
- Gabriela Martinez (Fifth Grade)

After entering office, our student council committee got right to work and hosted a fall candy gram sale in October. The proceeds raised went to purchasing new equipment for students at recess.

In November, our students focused on promoting gratitude. Students hosted a “Gratefulness Card” station before fall break at lunch. They provided students with thank you cards for writing to fellow peers, teachers, campus staff, or family members. Our school community was excited to spread gratitude on our campus!

The student council recently hosted a food drive for MEND (Meet Each Need with Dignity) Poverty in Pacoima. With the help of the entire school, they were able to collect 1,570 items (i.e., canned tuna, chicken, fruit, granola bars, rice, beans, etc.).

Our student council committee has done a superb job this semester and is eager to host their next event for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January. Stay tuned for more news and pictures of their future projects and events!
On Friday, December 10th, 13 girls from PUC Community Charter Elementary School (CCES) participated in their 2nd annual Girls on the Run 5K at their Sylmar campus.

This was a culmination of 10 weeks of preparation through a nonprofit organization called Girls on the Run Los Angeles. The organization is “dedicated to creating a world where every girl knows and activates her limitless potential and is free to boldly pursue her dreams.” (Girls On the Run website).

The program was led by Ms. Camargo, a 3rd grade teacher, who followed a research-based curriculum which included discussions, activities and running games. Over the course of the 10-week program the girls in grades 3-5 developed essential skills to help them navigate friendships and establish a lifetime appreciation for health and fitness.

Prior to the actual 5k the girls had a chance to run their very own practice 5k at CCES! With the support of the After School program and CCES staff, the girls were ready to run their 5k!

For the 5k event the girls were supported by teachers and staff who volunteered their time to be running buddies.

We are so proud of the girls that completed the program and we are looking forward to bringing this program back in the Fall 2022!
Student Artwork Spotlight: PUC TCA’s Mayli Flores (Grade 6)

Submitted by Mario Rios, Art Teacher, PUC Triumph Charter Academy
PUC CCES Prioritizes Teacher Well-Being

Submitted by Jennifer Lopez, 5th Grade Teacher, PUC Community Charter Elementary School

Teaching during the pandemic has not been an easy feat. Educators have had to face challenges like never before with more demands than ever.

To support teachers through these times, PUC CCES created a space for teachers to prioritize their well-being. Last year during distance learning, 5th grade teacher Ms. Jennifer Lopez established the Self-Care Committee. The purpose of this group was to provide teachers with the time and space to support their self-care practices and overall well-being in an authentic manner. They met weekly via zoom to discuss various topics, from creating a nighttime routine to establishing exercise habits to practicing financial wellness. Each meeting included an opportunity to practice gratitude, engage in mindfulness, and commit to a new self-care goal for the weekly topic covered. The following week, teachers held each other accountable to the self-care commitments by connecting via a weekly text thread. This community provided a safe space for teachers to keep their well-being at the forefront of their minds.

Now that teachers are back on campus, the Self-Care Committee utilizes Dr. Tina H. Boogren’s book 180 Days of Self-Care for Busy Educators as their anchor text. The committee sends out a weekly email inviting teachers to practice a self-care goal, listen to a brief accompanying podcast, and reflect on their progress. Once a month, they meet as a collective to engage in the work and reflect on their practices. Overall, this group has reminded teachers that they cannot pour from a glass half full and must prioritize themselves and their well-being to be the best teacher they can be for their students. In the words of Ellen Ronalds Keen, “You’re a person first and a teacher second. You are worthy of your own care.”
Earlier this year I visited one of our schools to get athletics going and the first words directed towards me were “Sports are finally back mister?” As you all know the pandemic hit us all in many different ways. Before our initial close of schools in March 2020 our athletic program was at an all time high. It seemed like just yesterday I started my position as athletic coordinator for PUC middle schools. Our first Girls volleyball championship game was at the PUC Sylmar complex in 2020. The first Flag Football championship tournament was held at an official football field in El Cariso Recreation Center under my leadership. It was this year that I envisioned creating an environment conducive to competing at a high level such as that of high school. The girl’s championship tournament was full of excitement, music playing during warmups and myself as the MC. As the game concluded I spoke on the microphone to congratulate the winning team, Nueva Esperanza, and named a 7th grader the MVP of the game. She would go on to be a freshman at PUC Lakeview Charter High School and competes as part of the cross country and basketball team. After the completion of the 2019-2020 season, we hit the ground running with Boys & Girls Basketball. We almost competed the whole season before going into the shutdown. In memory of the late great Kobe Bryant, I had planned to have our first All Star Basketball game giving our top players a chance to showcase and win the Mamba mentality award. Unfortunately, we were never able to experience that moment. Our amazing 8th graders were unable to complete the season or end the year participating in sports. The priceless moments witnessed in the 2019-2020 seasons would serve as my new motivation to get sports back to our students when schools reopened.

There were times when I thought sports would never make a comeback and I felt like throwing in the towel. However, I would think of all the student athletes that wouldn’t have an opportunity to compete again. Some individuals would not have a healthy outlet to release their frustrations from being at home so long and being isolated from their friends and teachers. My vision for the athletic program at PUC has always been to create memorable moments for our students in athletics. I strive to give them a glimpse of what high school athletics would look and feel like. I aspire to prepare student athletes to compete at the high school level. My athletic program boosts morale, builds confidence in student athletes, teaches camaraderie, leadership and how to manage their academics while participating in extracurricular activities. The program would guide students to perform well in school in order to participate in the sport whilst decreasing poor behavior. Our program at PUC middle schools is like no other because it allows students to participate in a league where they compete at a high level against other PUC Schools for a sense of accomplishment and pride. Sports at PUC Middle Schools are at no financial cost to any student. There are no league fees, referee fees or uniform fees. I believe this makes PUC Middle Schools’ leagues unique.
Sports Are Finally Back, Mister! (cont.)

Before the start of the Coed Flag football season this year we had to conduct tryouts. This was the best indicator of how much our students’ missed sports. Prior to the pandemic about 10-20 students would participate in try-outs but this year 40-50 students per school participated! By then the word was out and athletics were back with full force! Upon visiting the schools, I felt the energy of each and every student who were excited to play sports once again! Personally, sports are what motivated me to do well academically and kept me out of trouble. I strongly believe participating in sports motivates our PUC student athletes as it did for me. Now, sports have returned and will serve to motivate students to perform well on and off the field in order to be able to participate on a team. As plans were set in motion for sports to make a comeback it was evident that we needed to rebrand the uniforms for all schools. It was difficult to find a vendor who understood my vision for a new vibrant uniform focused on each school mascot. Ultimately, the finished uniforms were unique, and the students were so eager to wear them after I shared the mock-ups of the uniforms. Once the student athletes wore the uniforms they took even more pride in their schools, competed even harder and looked fresh.

We have now completed about 4 games for each school, and I couldn’t be prouder of our student athletes. I will never forget that first morning of the first game. It was extremely cloudy and foggy, so much so that at first glance you couldn’t even tell if there were athletes on the field. Soon enough, the sun would come out and burn the fog away. It was a surreal moment. I looked around and noticed how many families came out that morning to support their student athletes. This made it all worth it, this is why I didn’t give up, this is why I put all my heart and soul into this program. Everything the PUC Schools sports program does is for the students, their families and the community. It inspires me to create a program for all student athletes to flourish. If you get a chance, come out to see our students play! You will all be in for a special treat! Girl’s volleyball and boys’ basketball are expected to start next semester! I want to thank every coach for being leaders to our youth in the first set of sports returning to PUC middle schools. Our student athletes look up to you all. Thank you to the PUC School leaders for trusting my vision and making sports accessible again. Lastly, thank you to our families for supporting all our students! This is only the beginning for PUC athletics, and I look forward to what the future holds. As Kobe Bryant once said “The most important thing is to try and inspire people so that they can be great in whatever they want to do.”
PUC National Launches Webinar Series

Submitted by Dr. Jacqueline Elliot, CEO, PUC National

In accordance with PUC National's commitment to the professional development and success of the greater educational community, we are excited to be presenting a webinar series this year.

All executive directors and principals of charter schools in California are invited to attend the webinars. A fee is charged to participate in the webinars. However, the administrators of PUC Schools are able to attend free of charge.

We kicked off the series with a well-attended webinar on November 18, which was presented by Pete Frias, Director of Media Communications, and entitled, How to Leverage Communications Platforms to Promote Your Charter School.

The topics and dates for upcoming webinars are as follows:

- **Human Resources**
  - **Tough Conversations and Documentation**
    - Presented by Malena Otero, Chief of Human Resources
    - Thursday, January 20 @ 10:00 am

- **Legal**
  - **Understanding Contracts A – Z**
    - Presented by David Jackson, Chief Legal & Operations Officer
    - Tuesday, March 22 @ 10:00 am

- **Finance**
  - **Planning Your School Budget**
    - Presented by Lisa Tovar, Chief Financial Officer
    - Thursday, May 19 @ 10:00 am
https://pucschools.org/alumni

Check out our website for support!

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T-Mobile offers exclusive discounts for PUC Schools employees. Click here to visit T-Mobile’s promo website. To enroll by phone, contact Advantage Direct at 866-464-8662 and use promotional code 20356TMOFAV.

Sprint is pleased to offer monthly service discounts to eligible employees, students and organization members. Click here to visit Sprint’s promo website.
FOR SALE

PUC Polo Shirts - $20

PUC Laptop Bag - $40

Items can be purchased throughout the year.

Please contact Human Resources at hr@pucschools.org to place an order.

Please be sure to indicate your shirt size. Polos are available in both men's and women's sizes.