



We Are LA's BEST!

Thank You

Damián Mazzotta, Chair, Board of Directors

First and foremost, I would like to thank all our supporters for being part of the LA's BEST community. Thanks to your partnership, we continued to implement programming to support students, families and staff during 2021-2022, as you will see in this annual report.

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David P. "Anderson," MSSE, President & CEO

On a blazingly hot afternoon in September 2022, I met with LA's BEST students at Rio Vista Elementary. I asked them what they wanted to be when they grew up. Their answers included: scientist, robot maker, gamer, veterinarian, baseball player, investor, astronaut, teacher, doctor, actor (it is LA!), engineer, singer, and paleontologist.

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Impact

Student Enrichment at 198 LAUSD Elementary Schools



LA's BEST staff worked tirelessly to support students' academic and emotional needs. In the wake of the pandemic, students are still struggling with learning loss. LA's BEST program staff have been proud to help students with their homework, which helps students make improvements in self-efficacy in the areas of literacy, language arts, and science.

And, as always, we incorporated social-emotional learning techniques into all elements of our program. For example, the



students at one school site used their 30 minutes of physical activity time to create their own sport, which involved two soccer balls and an intricate set of rules that the students enjoyed creating together.

Although some of our formal enrichment clubs were unable to operate last year due to COVID-safety restrictions and national labor challenges, students remained engaged and staff curated activities to spark their interests. For example, 160 LA's BEST students participated in one of the arts enrichment residency clubs, where they learned dance styles from professional dancers. LA's BEST students have the opportunity to discover new skills, express themselves, and spend time with caring adults.

Staff Development

LA's BEST caring and hardworking staff work directly with students, creating vital bonds. They are at the heart of our impact and "We Are LA's BEST" community. Uniquely, LA's BEST invests in the future of our workforce, as many staff are starting their career journey. As with our students, they too learn about career trajectories and pathways to reach their professional goals.

Especially because of the national labor shortages, we continued finding innovative ways to train and support existing and new staff. For example, the "Live From LA's BEST" podcast created space for sharing successes, challenges and solutions happening at the site level.



125

new staff trainings

with sessions on the values of LA's BEST, Successful Learning Environments, Activity Planning and more.

17

sessions

on topics such as Program Management, Child Safety, Evaluations.

LA's BEST has an extremely driven workforce, many of whom are simultaneously working towards furthering their education and career pathways. The training opportunities available for our staff strengthen, prepare and provide staff with the resources and skill sets to support their pathway goals.

~ Katherine Lucero, Staff Development Director

Staff Online Resource Hub

100+

activities posted on the site

750

unique site users

810

views of the Homegrown Activities page

Another major success for the LA's BEST staff community at the end of last fiscal year was the launch of a user-friendly, curated online resource hub. It's a place where staff easily obtain activity plans to keep students engaged and having fun while learning.

The website also fostered community among LA's BEST staff members. By highlighting various staff members, the community got to know each other better. The resource hub also inspired staff to create their own, homegrown activities for students. These special activities were based on the staff members' and students' interests and creativity that often culminated in a project and/or new skill.

An Important Summer Back

Students were in need of extra social-emotional support during the summer of 2022, due to stresses caused by the pandemic. That's why our sites incorporated a social-emotional learning routine, featuring story books about emotions, discussions about understanding emotions, and time for journaling and drawing.

LA's BEST also incorporated a variety of wellness activities. Students enjoyed six sessions of making infused waters, and received their own canteens, which they personalized as a form of self-expression. Every student cultivated a mini-garden, and participated in a workshop about healthy snacks. Plus, staff members received video yoga training and yoga cards to enable them to lead students in sitting and standing yoga, as well as breathing and meditation exercises.

128 school sites
ran the LA's BEST Summer Program

8000+ students
enrolled in the program

178 field trips
took place including to: the LA Zoo, Aquarium of the Pacific, King Gillette Ranch, the Getty Museum, and the El Capitan theater for a private showing of *Buzz Lightyear*

Advocacy: A Big Win

\$4 Billion for universal afterschool and summer learning programs across California

This was an amazing year for our advocacy work making progress towards the state goal of universal access to afterschool and summer learning for elementary school students. A historic \$4 billion in funding for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) will help LA's BEST serve more kids with higher quality programs! Our partners at the federal and state levels, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the City of Los Angeles, have recognized the importance of expanded learning.

Our community of supporters reached out through calls, texts, meetings, and emails, and thanks to those efforts, our voices were heard. Now more than ever we need to encourage all our public partners to work together and collaborate to support our kids. Our big goal over the next couple of years is to build towards afterschool for all by increasing access to all kids who want to be in the program. But we can't do this without continued advocacy and public/private support.

There is still work to be done. Afterschool for all will require significant funding increases -- not just to keep up with the cost of living, but also to invest in our workforce and quality programs to support that growth. We are grateful to everyone who is part of our movement, and we look forward to continuing this work together.



Free meals for every kid.
More tutoring.
More arts and music.
More counselors in schools.
More before and after school programs.



New Impact Stories



One way that LA's BEST builds community is by sharing its success stories with the entire LA's BEST family. We are constantly adding new stories to the LA's BEST Stories page on our website, we invite you to read and enjoy them.

An inspiring story comes from Site Coordinator Mariah Spillers, who we interviewed in February 2022 about her nine years with LA's BEST.

"As a Site Coordinator, I collaborate with site staff and school administrators to bring our students the best opportunities possible. I am excited to graduate college with my bachelors degree and continue my education by pursuing a master's degree in special education. I have fun doing my job and appreciate the time I spend learning and fine-tuning my leadership skills while working with kids from my own community. It fills me with gratitude and eagerness to fulfill my dreams and goals while working in such a motivating and inspiring environment. LA's BEST has prepared me for a promising career in special education."

Read how your donations have an impact.



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COVID-19 RESPONSE

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LA's BEST 2021 – 2022 Annual Report Executive Summary

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