A Note from the Director

The Partners Program forges ahead after completing yet another very successful year of growth and development. As Director of Partners, I feel fortunate and honored to play a role in a program that benefits multiple cultures and communities.

Partners started 26 years ago based on a desire to better serve and support the local public schools. It began as an academic, skill building summer program for students who attended neighboring public schools in Oakland, California. Over the years, the idea expanded and developed into The Partners Program as we know it today—a 12-month, four-component program that provides academic services and social support for over 200 students each year.

Our four programs are: Academic Year Middle School Partnership, High School Transition Program, College Counseling Collaborative, and the Summer Academy.

The continued growth of our High School Transition and College Counseling Collaborative programs are vital to the development of a successful 12-month out-reach program. We are looking to increase the enrollment of students into our High School Transition program through improved communication with our families and frequent workshops to help parents make sound choices for their children. Moreover, the College Counseling program ensures that the Partners alumni have the proper resources and information needed to navigate the college application process effectively. Both of these programs, along with continued development and increased enrollment in our Summer Academy and Academic Year Middle School Partnership programs, are the foundation of our 12-month vision.

Partners has a rich history and its success is due to the dedication and resources of the Board, community, staff, College Prep faculty, and local middle schools. Our legacy and your support work together so that we can continue to grow and serve our surrounding community.

Sincerely,

Fields Nelson
Director, The Partners Program
From Partners to Prep to College

Crystal Havea
Assistant Teacher, Summer Academy

I’m an alumna of The Partners Program, a graduate of the 2009 class, and currently attend the University of Redlands. I am majoring in International Relations with a minor in Communicative Disorders. What I love most about Partners is that we are one big family. There is not one teacher, teacher assistant, or college intern that does not love being at Partners. Our ultimate goal is to help support the kids, by providing them with the necessary skills to succeed in high school and college. I keep coming back because I enjoy seeing the students grow. As much as I am a mentor to them, they teach me that we are all in it together and in turn, I want to be there for them to support them in furthering their education.

The Partners Program meant a lot to my family. If I had not attended Partners when I did, I would have never heard of College Prep. Partners provided my family and me with the resources to be able to apply to College Prep. Most importantly, the mentors made my experience at Partners the best three summers I could have ever had in middle school. My sister and aunt this past summer graduated from Partners. I was happy for them to go through the program like I did. Their favorite part about the program was receiving support and being mentored by the high school assistant teachers.

College life is great! University of Redlands is a small, tight knit community. I like how there are different clubs that I can be a part of. I am currently involved with Native Student Programs, a club on campus where students reach out to local native tribes in the Redlands/San Bernardino area. I tutor students every other week at a federal native middle school. I’m involved with University of Redland’s ballroom dance club, learning swing dancing and Lindy Hop. I am also a part of the STEP program, a program much like the Partners Program, but for college students. I have my very own mentor who is a sophomore, and he helps me transition into college life. I am grateful for the resources I have and I give much credit to the Partners Program for making me realize that anything is possible if I work hard. I would not be here if it were not for my Partners family.

I am currently a student at UC Berkeley studying Business Administration and History. I have been interning with The Partners Program since September 2012 through UC Berkeley’s Bonner Leaders Program, a service leadership program that helps me explore my role in creating social justice—through discussions with public service leaders, mentorship, and, of course, my work with Partners.

Last year, I took a more behind-the-scenes role with Partners, preparing the tutoring program’s quarterly reports and helping staff in whatever way possible. This year, I have the privilege to be the site leader for KIPP Bridge Charter School, a middle school in Oakland. As site leader, I collaborate with staff to prepare curriculum that is specific to my school and lead an enthusiastic and smart team of high school tutors to implement that curriculum. In our tutoring sessions, we do not just help our students with homework, we foster a community that our students can count on, encourage them to reflect on who they are, and teach them life and study skills that they can take with them when they go to high school. We accomplish this through our tutors, class discussions, and fun activities. This is the beauty of Partners and this is why I decided to come back for a second term. Thanks to Partners, I am considering a career in education.

A Social Justice Focus

Andy Tovar
Site Leader, Academic Year Middle School Partnership

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“I chose Envision Academy because I had always wanted to experience going to a small school where I would have the chance to know most of my classmates. It is a good fit for me because it reminds me everyday of my goals: finish high school, prepare for college, enter a 4-year college, and complete college.”

—Sharit Cardenas (Partners ’11, Envision Academy ’15)
For the last five years I have worked with The Partners Program as a teacher, coach, and mentor. What I love about Partners, in addition to the diversity of students and staff, is the opportunity to develop college and student mentors into potential educators. As part of my experience with Partners I am able to introduce a fairly new curriculum, commonly known as the Pathways program, to our students. This curriculum is based on self-assessment, personal accountability, preparatory methods, communicative skills, and a variety of other techniques to help students successfully network and navigate academic and professional environments.

The Pathways program was created to address the abilities of students often referred to as “soft” skills. These skills are generally underdeveloped by way of traditional education. To address these needs, the Pathways curriculum covers subjects such as self-esteem, goal planning, success plans, and decision-making. This curriculum was created to support students in developing socially, emotionally, and academically in every discipline. These techniques and methods have been proven to help students navigate through high school and college successfully. Quite often skills learned become common practices of our students throughout their lives as they mature into mentors and leaders.

This past year I was given an opportunity to assist in the training and overall development of the Summer Academy curriculum. This included training site tutors over the summer who will in turn work at various schools in the greater Bay Area. Through these tutors, the Pathways program grows and develops within other educational communities. I truly cherish the opportunity to train young educators and share the insight and best practices I’ve acquired over the last seven years. My hope is to make an impact on our tutors through their inspiring work with our middle school students.

“\textit{I chose my high school because it was a school with a high graduation rate. It’s a good fit for me because it is a very diverse school.}”

—Jessica Nguyen (Partners ’13, Oakland Tech ’17)

I am currently at UC Berkeley, studying sociology and economics. I joined the Partners team in August, and I am serving as a site leader at Westlake Middle School. My experience has been great so far, and I am really relishing this opportunity to not only serve my community, but also learn more about being an educator.

I have always enjoyed working with young children, and during my freshman year at Cal I began to explore education as a career. As a literacy tutor at the Bay Area Hispano Institute for Advancement (BAHIA) in Berkeley, I worked with elementary school children to improve their reading and writing skills. There, I learned the importance of being an academic coach as well as a mentor for my students. This past summer, while working at the Superior Court of Alameda County, I observed personally the correlation between educational attainment and incarceration rates. The importance of developing an education system that is effective for all students cannot be overstated!

I firmly believe that strong communities and the presence of positive role models are crucial to the molding of successful students, both academically and socially. To me, this is why The Partners Program is so impressive. The network of mentors and opportunities this organization provides to families in the East Bay is one that every family deserves. I am very happy to be here, and I am looking forward to having fun with the students, learning, and working for an organization that does so much good!
Our Programs

Summer Academy
Stefani Berger, Assistant Director for Leadership Development

Another amazing and wonderful summer at Partners has passed, one filled with hands-on inspirational teaching, profoundly felt mentoring, and exciting, fun adventures.

As always, the heart of Partners is its mentoring program. This past summer 32 high school assistant teachers, 6 college interns and 103 Partners students developed strong mentoring partnerships through their interactions inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, students focused on building leadership skills through structured learning activities in small groups. Outside the classroom, students engaged with their mentors in one-on-one interaction. On a daily basis they ate lunch together, while participating in a variety of recreational activities (e.g. sharing a game of basketball, making friendship bracelets, and playing board games). Additionally, our Friday morning club activities, educational field trips, and family group time in assemblies and homerooms offered students and mentors more opportunities to develop lasting and meaningful relationships.

This summer we also incorporated a new context for social emotional learning into our curriculum. As in summers past we worked with a theme, this summer’s theme being HOME. We wanted to especially highlight the idea of building a community within the Partners Summer Academy. Our goal was to teach our students the value of treating oneself and others with respect, and the importance of using understanding as a foundation for all relationships. We wanted everyone involved with the Academy to model the idea that “while at Partners, we will treat each other and ourselves as if we are all members of the same family.” This shared attitude was made visible in our curriculum, assemblies, family groups, graduation, dance performances, and of course, the relationships that developed between the Partners students and their mentors.

At Partners, we consider participation a key ingredient for success, and have implemented strategies to encourage positive behavior and attitude on all levels. New this past summer was our Student of the Week Program, where students nominated by their teachers were awarded Student of the Week honors. Awards were presented to the students during assemblies to appreciate and highlight their accomplishments as positive examples of success. We also continued with our Citizen Bucks program, rewarding students’ good behavior with chances to win raffle prizes, and with our PROPs Box program (People Respecting Other People), which gives any member of our community the chance to write and read a commendation for anyone who has made a positive contribution to the program.

To see pictures from the summer Academy 2013, please visit this link for the Partners Slideshow: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7099YC3g628

High School Transition Program
Lexy Green, Assistant Director of Summer Academy

Most everyone knows that choosing the right college is a challenge. Students have to know their options. Where are they likely to get in? What learning environment works best for them? How much can they afford to spend, and what aid is available? What many do not know is that these questions are not just for high school seniors; Oakland students who plan to go to college need to answer these questions when choosing where they will attend high school because choosing the right high school is a big part of being prepared to go to college.

The High School Transition Program at Partners offers a series of weekend workshops each fall to help eighth graders choose and apply to a wide range of high school options. During these workshops we help students and their families consider what sorts of programs work best for them, we provide information about their traditional public, charter, parochial, and independent school options, and we assist them in completing their applications. I tell families that the key to sending your student to a good school is applying to a number of good schools. The more places you apply, the more likely you are to have good options to choose from in the spring. Our goal is to help each student find a place in a school where he or she can excel and prepare for college.

The 2013 program started off with a private school workshop in September. There we helped students complete applications to A Better Chance (a program designed to assist students of color gain admission to independent schools), discussed the parochial school admissions process, and looked at the range of private school options in the area. Our October workshop focused on charter schools. We shared information about how to evaluate the various charter options and finished the morning off by helping each family complete their applications to several charter schools. In November we held our OUSD Options Process workshop, in which we introduced the wide range of high school options available and helped families strategize how to rank their choices on the Options form. Our final workshop in December was a make up session at which families could get help with applications to all types of schools. We also had volunteers ready to assist students in editing application essays, and to help families in navigating the admissions processes at the schools to which they are applying.

Come spring, high school seniors will find out where they have been admitted to college, and Partners eighth graders will learn where they have been admitted to high school. College may seem like the distant future to them, but their road to college is paved by the decisions they make along the way. Choosing the right high school is an important part of helping students reach their destination: college graduation.

Let me hear you say PARTNERS!
Academic Year Middle School Partnership
Francesca Cervantes, Program Leader

Much like the middle school students we serve, who seem to grow taller overnight, Partners’ after-school program is thriving in new and exciting ways. Through continuous reflection, discussion and planning, our staff has worked diligently over the last year to add depth, variety, and continuity to our academic year program.

Now in its third year, Partners’ Academic Year Middle School Partnership has become a familiar member of after-school life on the campuses of Westlake and KIPP Bridge Middle Schools in Oakland. Our most recent partner, Claremont Middle School, welcomed us this spring and our able tutors and site leaders are quickly becoming familiar faces there, too.

Knowing that a key to school success is cultivating a strong, caring learning community, our staff and teams of high school tutors take great personal interest in their middle school students and their academic journey throughout the school year. Working 1:1 or in small-group ratios of 1:2, under the guidance and training of Partners’ program directors, tutors learn the individual learning styles of their students and assist them as they complete weekly assignments, set academic goals and improve their understanding of school content. The same tutoring team visits a partner school each week from 4 pm to 6 pm, thereby providing consistent academic support and deeper, more meaningful mentoring.

As Academic Year Middle School Partnership has grown, we have made it our goal to create a seamless system of year-round support for all of our middle schoolers by linking our after-school program with our traditional Summer Academy. Students at Westlake, KIPP, and Claremont can now enroll in a single, year-round program rather than two, creating continuity and a well-knit community for students from the sixth through the eighth grades.

A final milestone this year has been the introduction of academic enrichment in math and language arts. Each week, after completing homework, students can exercise academic choice and play creative games or engage in some hands-on learning with their tutors and other students to further strengthen their skills. Always interactive and often informal, these activities are designed to expand academic interests in a variety of fun ways.

The best after-school programs accomplish two things: they engage students in active, meaningful activities that nurture a desire to learn, and they build upon what students are learning during the school day to extend the knowledge they already have. At Partners AYMSP we are striving to do just that, knowing that by fostering a sense of community, collaboration and commitment, we can provide each student with the academic support he or she needs to fulfill their potential.
The College Counseling Collaborative, also known as the CCC program, continues to work with our Partners families to ensure academic opportunities post high school for our students. This collaborative effort is now in its third year and we are working hard to increase the number of students enrolled in the program to better serve our community. The focus for this year is to work more diligently with our alumni to better support them during their high school years. We want all of our students to carry a B average or higher, while successfully passing their A-G requirements for college eligibility. This focus on college preparation for our Partners alumni will continue to bridge the gap between our College Collaborative Counseling and High School Transition programs, to ensure that our students have the opportunity to compete in the college application process. Achieving these academic goals for our students also lends support to our CCC program mentors, allowing them to better identify the best colleges for our students. The CCC program provides a staff of educators the opportunity to share with our Partners alumni the exciting, yet anxious moment of hitting the send button on the their first college application.
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Thank You!

Partners Newsletter  I  7
This past year has been one of enormous growth and changes for Partners. Our Academic Year Middle School Partnership has grown into a core piece of Partners, now providing weekly academic year tutoring for nearly all Partners students at their middle schools. With enrollment in Partners, students and their families are also committing to participate in this after school enhancement. The consistency of working with our students year round is already having a powerful impact on their continued academic growth as well as their understanding of how they can help to take charge of their education as they set goals for the future.

This last year also brought us Fields Nelson as our new director replacing John Fanning who has gone on to new challenges and successes with an exciting charter school group on the Peninsula. Although we will miss John’s enthusiasm, creativity, and amazing ability to build powerful teams focused on success for our students, we are extremely excited to have Field’s experience and understanding of the challenges our students face. Fields has smoothly taken the baton and is continuing our process of improvement and, when appropriate, reinvention in all of our programs as we seek the best methods, approaches, and curriculum to fire that love of learning in all of our students and help them achieve success.

Thank you to all of you who have helped to make Partners the success that it is. Your continued support is what keeps us going.

Steven Berger
Chair, Board of Directors