



Write Start

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE LACOE HEAD START AND EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY

P1

Executive Director's Message: HOPE on the Horizon



Keesha Woods

It's now been one year since we closed our centers in response to COVID-19. In those early days, who could have imagined the pandemic would carry on so long? But we continue to make the best of a challenging situation, as we have since the beginning.

Now, as the spring dawns, there is HOPE on the horizon. With the winter surge behind us, ongoing vaccine distribution is bringing promise of brighter days ahead.

And for the first time ever, two former Head Start children have been elected to the U.S. Senate. Both Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico and Reverend Raphael Warnock of Georgia serve as living examples of the hope that our programs bring to children and families.

On the streets of L.A. County, our two mobile classrooms—HOPE the Bus and HOPE on Wheels—are carrying a message of **HOPE**—Helping families gain Opportunity, Preparing children through Early learning. As we approach the new 2021-22 program year, let's do so with a hopeful spirit.

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health provides information on how to book a first dose appointment and secure a second dose appointment for the COVID-19 Vaccine at the link provided. The webpage offers updated information about which phase and groups are currently being vaccinated, vaccine safety, FAQs, and much more.

The link below provides information in both English and Spanish. Education staff are now able to secure appointments.

www.VaccinateLACounty.com



Healthy Teeth, Happy Smiles

The next time you are brushing your teeth, think about your smile. When an individual feels good about their teeth, they are more likely to smile.

Smiles are basic biological human expressions and have been studied by researchers. Smiles have been correlated with measurements of the success and well-being of the individual smiling as well as the length of their life.

Smiling can make us feel better when we may have been feeling stressed or down. Smiles, often used to express joy and satisfaction, have been known to inspire those who observe the smile.

Did you know that smiles are great for stimulating brain activity, which is important for learning, and are contagious? Just try to resist smiling when looking into the face of a smiling child. Remarkably, research has

also found that smiles appear to bring about more pleasure than consuming large amounts of chocolate!

Please check out the following link to hear more about the **Hidden Power of Smiling**.

https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_gutman_the_hidden_power_of_smiling/

LACOE Immigration Resources

LACOE regularly updates resources on immigration issues that affect our school communities.

Please visit: <https://www.lacoe.edu/Home/Immigrant-Relations>

For social media, visit: [@lacoeimrel](https://www.facebook.com/lacoeimrel) on Facebook and Twitter..

The 2020 Golden Apple Awards: Honoring Excellence in Early Education

Two outstanding early educators are the recipients of LACOE's seventh annual Golden Apple Award for teaching excellence: Adriana Provens of Pomona USD and Nancy Chavez of Children's Institute, Inc.

Provens, an Early Head Start home-based rover teacher for infants and toddlers, provides ongoing support to the entire home-based teaching team, including developing lesson plans, serving as a mentor, and covering other teachers' caseloads whenever called upon.

Vicki Vazquez, coordinator of Early Head Start programs at Pomona USD, described Provens as "an extremely dedicated professional who strives for excellence in all aspects of our program." Her peers, in turn, called Provens "a passionate, generous, dedicated, organized, and very resourceful teacher," who is "very resourceful and always willing to lend a helping hand."

Chavez, a Head Start preschool teacher, was recognized for going above and beyond in response to the pandemic. Daniela Troya, director of center-based services at Children's Institute, noted that Chavez and her co-teacher "created virtual lesson plans and weekly interactive videos that... support the education and development of the children" in the early days of the pandemic. Once sites began to reopen, Chavez returned to in-person teaching at a new center where she provided leadership support by assisting and mentoring her colleagues.

Throughout this challenging year, "our teachers adapted to difficult and ever-changing circumstances to continue providing the best possible services to children and families," noted Keesha Woods, LACOE Head Start and Early Learning executive director, during the awards ceremony. "LACOE is blessed with many extraordinary educators across the county who have risen to this challenge, and it's an honor today to recognize two of the best."



Seventh Annual Golden Apple Award selectees, (Left) Adriana Provens, Early Head Start teacher from Pomona USD. (Right) Nancy Chavez, Head Start teacher from Children's Institute, Inc.



In light of the pandemic, eligibility for the Golden Apple this year was expanded to include all early educators—including mentors, coaches, and home visitors, as well as teachers—and several impressive individuals were nominated. A committee of child development and education experts selected the two recipients based on excellence in showing dedication to children, creating positive environments, mentoring their peers, and adapting to unforeseen challenges to serve children and families.

"Thanks to teachers like Adriana and Nancy, we are closing the achievement gap to give all children—and I underscore all children—an opportunity to succeed, regardless of the challenges they may

face," added LACOE Deputy Superintendent Arturo Valdez.

The awards were presented during the January 12 meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Education. LACOE awarded each recipient with \$500 in classroom supplies from Lakeshore Learning, which also donated \$250 worth of materials to each awardee.

The two Golden Apple winners were selected from a remarkable group of dedicated teachers, including:

- Natalie Casillas (Mountain View SD)
- Maria EC Castillo (St. Anne's)
- Imelda Aparicio (Bassett USD)
- Juana Cruz (St. Anne's)
- Norma Rauda (Pomona USD)
- Christine Najar (Norwalk-La Mirada USD)
- Mary Sanchez (Bassett USD)
- Sandra Valdez-Soriano (ABC USD)
- Jaicy B. Gonzalez (Children's Institute, Inc.)



Policy Council Highlights

- The new members for the 2020-21 Policy Council are now trained and in place for the 2020-21 program year. The officers are as follows:
 - * Chairperson, Cynthia Barboza (CII)
 - * Vice Chairperson, Jennifer Cutlip (Norwalk-La Mirada)
 - * Treasurer, Cindy Au-Yeung (Garvey SD)
 - * Parliamentarian, Ingrid Olivares (Plaza de la Raza)
 - * Recording Secretary, Trisha Talbot (Plaza de la Raza)
 - * Correspondence Secretary, Alejandra Herrera (MAOF)
 - * Sergeant at Arms, Joana Perez (St. Anne's)
 - * PTA President, Tania Alday (Former Parent Community Rep)
- All officers and subcommittee members are trained on their roles, tasks, and functions.
- The officers were introduced to the County Board of Education on February 9. Cynthia Barboza, PC Chairperson, shared that she looks forward to working with Keesha Woods to lead the Policy Council and support the families enrolled in our program.
- Several PC members attended the Head Start CA Annual Conference on February 22–26, 2021 and the NHSA Winter Leadership Institute on March 9–11, 2021.
- Members attending the NHSA Conference met to prepare “their story” to share with congressional leaders about the benefits of the Head Start program.
- Congratulations to Suki Martinez and Xiomara Gamboa, parent office assistants. Suki Martinez was hired at Norwalk-La Mirada USD, and Xiomara Gamboa is working with GEARUP 4 LA – LAUSD Grant 3 as a part-time parent education support assistant.

A Former Parent’s Perspective: Maria Zepeda Shares Her Story

When my younger son was five months old, I enrolled him in Early Head Start. A teacher coming to our house



Maria Zepeda and son

quickly became part of our weekly routine. After a few months, she told me that she was noticing some delays in my baby’s development: he didn’t produce certain sounds, he couldn’t control his tantrums, and he didn’t like certain sounds and textures.

This news was devastating for my husband and me, but the teacher comforted us and told us to see the positives to be able to help our baby. My son began to receive regular occupational, speech, and behavioral therapy and continued to spend time with the teacher.

Persistence and patience began to generate results when my son was two and a half. He started to connect syllables, use sign language, and not cry as much. It was just incredible. He sang during the teacher’s home visits and became interested in books and music. Little by little, he showed progress.

Early intervention in Early Head Start changed our lives. I would like to give special thanks to Miss Gaby for going above and beyond. I am proud to be part of the Pomona USD Child Development Program.



Early Learning Resource Center Update

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Early Learning Resource Center will remain closed until further notice. Due dates on all materials currently checked out will be automatically extended until we reopen again, so please continue to enjoy all materials borrowed until we reopen.

If you have any questions, please contact us at: HS_Resourcecenter@lacoedu.edu.

THE Write Start

Important Dates to Remember

April-May 2021

April	National Child Abuse Prevention Month
April	World Autism Month
Apr 1	Delegate Agency Directors Meeting
Apr 2	World Autism Awareness Day
Apr 12-14	Region IX Early Childhood STEM Virtual Institute
Apr 13	Policy Council Meeting
Apr 15	Delegate Agency Directors Meeting
Apr 20-22	NHSA National Head Start Virtual Conference
Apr 29	Delegate Agency Directors Meeting
May	Healthy Vision Month
May	Mental Health Month
May 3-7	Teacher Appreciation Week
May 4-8	LACOE Prenatal to Five Early Learning Virtual Conference: Helping Families Gain Opportunities & Preparing Children through Early Learning
May 7	National Provider Appreciation Day
May 11	Policy Council Meeting
May 13	Delegate Agency Directors Meeting
May 31	Memorial Day—LACOE Offices Closed

Write Start Submissions

The Write Start welcomes your articles pertaining to Head Start activities and events. Please submit them to roy_stephaney@lacoedu.edu. The deadline for the next edition Friday, Friday, June 18, 2021.



**Los Angeles County Office of Education
Head Start and Early Learning Division
is now on...**

twitter

facebook

Events, parenting tips, developmental milestones, and more... LACOE Head Start and Early Learning Division is your reliable source for early childhood education and early care information.



Facebook: @lacoheadstart

<https://www.facebook.com/lacoheadstart/>



Instagram: @lacoheadstart

<https://www.instagram.com/lacoheadstart/>



Twitter: @lacoheadstart

<https://twitter.com/lacoheadstart/>



THE Write Start

An official newsletter of the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Head Start and Early Learning Division, 10100 Pioneer Blvd., Ste. 325, Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670 (562/940-1770). prekkid.org. **Superintendent:** Debra Duardo. **Board of Education:** Monte E. Perez, President; Douglas R. Boyd, Sr., Vice President; James Cross; Betty Forrester; Alex Johnson; Ellen Rosenberg; and Thomas A. Saenz. **Executive Director:** Keesha Woods. Produced by the LACOE Communications Department in partnership with the Head Start and Early Learning Division Write Start Team. **Contributing writers** for this issue: Kathrine Davis, Colin Legerton, Dawn Meggerson, Stephaney Roy, Gabriela Trejo, Keesha Woods, Sandra Ybanez, and Maria Zepeda. **Editor:** Colin Legerton. **Graphics/layout:** John Paster.