Supporting diversity, equity and cultural competency in school settings is not an endeavor an organization takes on alone. It requires creating an ecology that fosters this awareness and actions that might support it. Developing partnerships grounded in the intentionality to create spaces where diversity and equity are both respected and fostered is key in this work. These synergistic relationships can catapult a vision of equity and access forward.

Members of ACSA Region 16 collaborate with selected faculty and staff from several Los Angeles area school districts and institutions of higher education to promote more equitable educational outcomes for students. We elaborate on how our respective programs and spaces, including leadership in K-12 settings, higher education institutions and community partners, contribute to developing an ecology supporting diversity and equity in education.

These diverse lenses provide insights into the necessity to understand each other’s spaces, while working toward a common goal. Developing an ecology supporting diversity and equity involves awareness, intentionality and collaboration.

Leadership in K-12 settings

The Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at California State University, Northridge is committed to preparing and inspiring educational leaders who are prepared to maximize student learning and access through its cohort administrator preparation program. Best practices are identified through collaborative community partnerships with school districts in and around Los Angeles.

The curriculum in all courses is grounded in the belief that educational administrators support public and private K-12 schools and their students to compete in an economy in an increasingly diverse world. That belief includes instilling upon new administrators that it is possible for all students to be successful in school and life, regardless of their gender, or if they are poor, underprivileged, face physical and mental challenges, or are from minority backgrounds.

Educational administrators from the pro-
gram realize they have the responsibility of selecting and preparing caring and sensitive teachers and staff who are prepared to educate a diverse student body with a broad range of needs at the same time schools are undergoing a variety of reforms. As the higher education community prepares new administrators, the K-12 leadership must also be focused on ensuring administrators in their districts are prepared to work with students from diverse environments.

Strategies and practices that must be promoted and implemented by educational leaders include:

- Professional development that provides teachers and staff with personalized instructional skills that help all students learn and be successful.
- Identification of teacher and staff personal and professional qualities that help and/or hinder student learning.
- Providing schools with the highest diverse student populations the district’s most experienced and successful teachers and staff, and compensating them accordingly.
- Promoting cultural proficiency and sensitivity in the school’s instructional program and all school activities.
- Praise, encouragement and feedback to all teachers, staff and students.
- Opportunities and resources for teachers and staff to visit the homes of students.

Ongoing professional development for leaders will ensure that they gain the understanding required to lead equity. K-12 leadership must be culturally proficient and be able to translate their beliefs to their staff and help lead the equity challenges in the district. Leaders having only an awareness of biases may not be able to create the ecology needed to transform their district or school.

Courageous leaders provide equity-driven practices and procedures that support students and adults. The courageous equity leader must be able to identify the policies and practices that need to be eliminated in their district and schools to support the performance of the site leaders and teachers to impact student outcomes.

To maximize student outcomes, best practices and courageous leadership are required to close the achievement gap. The commitment of such programs as Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at CSUN, along with K-12 district leadership, in preparing and inspiring educational leaders aims to ensure an ecology for diversity and equity in education.

IHES and teacher vision

Institutions of higher education contribute to the broader ecology of developing transformative educators. For this piece, we focus on how the University of California, Los Angeles Teacher Education Program works with K-12 institutions within ACSA Region 16 to better develop teachers in partnership. UCLA’s Teacher Education Program (TEP) is founded on developing transformative educators working toward equity, access, social justice and transformation in traditionally underserved students in Los Angeles.

UCLA TEP is a credentialing and master’s in education program. Within TEP, a new urban teacher residency program, Inspiring Minds for a Professional Alliance of Community Teachers (IMPACT), is housed and, like its umbrella program, shares a congruent vision. The residency model affords greater time in the field. Thus, the relationship and the partnership with school administrators becomes much more essential.

UCLA TEP is strengthened by the paradigm of developing relationships within the various constituents of the program, including students, faculty, guiding teachers, schools and community partners. These relational pieces are developed as a vision of learning from and working with partners in developing and actualizing the work.

An example of this partnership is work with YOKA, Young Oak Kim Academy. YOKA is a public LAUSD middle school that sits in the heart of Koreatown, an immigrant mecca considered the Ellis Island of the West. Our pre-service teachers are immersed in the community, both outside and within YOKA’s boundaries.

The current principal, Edward Colación, welcomes collaboration. He has created a strong school ecology, one where parents, community and personnel work together in innovative and holistic ways. YOKA has a STEM focus and builds on student capacities and curiosities. Some UCLA pre-service teachers are placed at YOKA, and some have also been hired.

Colación has noted how the pre-service teachers from the UCLA program readily connect with students in the K-12 classroom. He is committed to the partnership that supports the actualization of equity and access in the K-12 classroom. Principals who are cognizant and supportive of the importance of building a collaborative and inclusive community in K-12 classrooms can better support teacher education candidates who have that shared vision, and students ultimately benefit.

Looking more closely at the program, UCLA TEP implements a cohort model that allows the development of relationships that cultivate critical friendships. These are important in that students learn to improve their practice through critical feedback pro-
Teachers then engage in better understanding their students, their backgrounds, the power dynamics in the room and the diverse “isms” and experiences that might impact a student’s willingness to speak in class. These reflective conversations will often veer into the school and community context as well as better understanding of a child’s strengths and needs. UCLA TEP nurtures a learner’s stance and works toward the broader goal of transformative education.

More specifically, UCLA TEP has developed a diversity in education series, or courses that focus on self, community and families with the ultimate goal of developing transformative educators. This series has a purpose of engaging the community and emphasizes the numerous assets in communities often depicted in a negative light by mainstream media.

As pre-service teachers inquire and begin to alter the depiction of dominant negative societal constructs, they also reflect upon their own biases and experiences that have led them to their commitment to teaching. They are asked, “How does who you are affect how you teach?” This developing teaching identity is reflected upon through various experiences and engagement with curriculum throughout the program.

The concentration is on conversations about race, socioeconomic class, gender, identity, and diverse types of otherness. These conversations are challenging in that students and facilitators all come from different experiences and backgrounds, but they are very necessary. Students often cite this course as being a transformative experience.

Assignments in the coursework are tied to theory and practice and focus on equity and access, while developing pedagogical practice. Further, the assignments and experiences are intentional about developing educators who are change agents, both within the classroom and in the broader community.

Equity and access do not end with coursework and reflection; the biggest challenge is actualization. A framework has been developed for equity and access in the classroom focused on content rigor, content discourse, equitable access to content and classroom ecology. This framework aligns with the Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core and guides pre-service candidates to actualize and reflect upon teaching for equity and access. The framework is used to guide conversations after field visits, and it also drives methods courses.

UCLA innovates while keeping the development of transformative educators centered on equity and access at the forefront. For example, UCLA TEP recently received a grant with a focus on science, technology,
engineering, arts and math (STEAM). As a tier-one research institution, UCLA has access to current research and technology that might be used in an educational setting. TEP chooses to use these resources, but ground the conceptualization and specific pedagogical tools in “humanizing STEAM.” Through this conceptualization, a purpose to STEAM is embedded that centers on developing equity-focused tools to guide and develop teacher practice.

In partnership with urban communities in Los Angeles, pre-service teachers engage in some of the most challenging spaces, seeing the assets and humanity in the neighborhoods. Intentional and frequent reflection, having a learner’s and an inquiry stance, engaging in doing, collaborating on diverse levels and developing relationships are critical to creating humanizing spaces and actions.

These frames are carried forward into the community when the candidates are full-time teachers, where they can flourish and grow. Developing greater partnerships with ACSA-16 like-minded leaders can provide a better ecology that fosters equity and diversity in and out of the classroom.

**Community partners and civic engagement**

The Center for Community Based Learning at Occidental College has a long history of establishing community based partnerships. The CCBL works to solve social justice and equity related issues by bringing together students, faculty and community members as co-thinkers and collaborators. CCBL has partnered with many public schools in the Los Angeles area, with the goal of reciprocity benefiting both college students and LAUSD students.

One example of the benefits of community partnerships was the partnership between the CCBL and a nearby Los Angeles elementary school. As part of an offering to incoming first-year college students, the California Immigration Semester provided an opportunity for students to learn about California education, literature, sociology and immigration.

Part of this unique program was outings to local museums, historic sites, and surrounding immigrant communities, including field work at a local elementary school, where college students were paired with K-6 students to provide tutoring and mentoring services.

Prior to visiting the elementary school and meeting their mentees, Oxy students received professional development from the partnering elementary school principal. Topics included school demographic and achievement information, expected code of conduct in an elementary school setting, review of tutoring and mentoring strategies, research review of the positive impact tutoring/mentoring has on social competencies, classroom expectations, and an overview of the surrounding neighborhood.

For most of the college students, this would be the first time they were on an elementary school campus since they themselves attended as students, and it would also be the first time they would be serving in a tutoring/mentoring capacity.

Teachers at the elementary school were asked to identify a student in their classroom whom they believed would benefit from the partnership, regardless of their academic
Leadership or social-emotional standing. Occidental students visited the elementary school two times per week for approximately six weeks. Each visit was two hours long, and the late afternoon was strategically selected to enable college students to be present in the classroom during the last hour of instruction for tutoring, and to be present one hour after school for individualized mentoring under the supervision of certificated school personnel.

Two activities were planned for the end of the program: a campus visit to Occidental College and a culminating luncheon at the elementary school. Mentees and their parents were invited on a field trip to the college, where they met their mentors. This college visit included a campus walk/orientation, selected activities and presentations by college students, and a group lunch.

This activity helped to promote a college-going culture for elementary school students and helped college students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the local community.

At the elementary school, a luncheon was held for participants that included speeches from students and the presentation of thank-you letters from students to mentors. The special bond that developed between college and elementary students was clearly visible. Teachers reported they saw positive effects on their students’ academic achievement, social-emotional well-being and overall self-esteem. College students appreciated the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with their mentees, school staff and college faculty.

**Opportunities going forward**

While there have been experiences that demonstrate some promise toward fostering an ecology for diversity and equity, the work is still developing and will require greater support at the school sites, in professional education programs and within the larger community.

These pieces would benefit by increasing the opportunities toward developing a shared vision of an ecology for diversity and equity in education. Opportunities for dialogue to develop a shared vision are essential to going forward.

Marco A. Nava is administrative coordinator, LAUSD Professional Learning and Leadership Development Branch; Kimberly Hendricks is Cooper Academy administrator in Fresno USD; Robert E. Kladifko is associate professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, CSU Northridge; Imelda L. Nava is UCLA TEP faculty advisor; and Celestina Castillo is director of the Center for Community Based Learning, Occidental College.

CONTACT: SCOTT SMITH
SVP Sales and Engagement
ssmith@forecast5analytics.com

**FORECAST 5™ ANALYTICS**

SMART ANALYTIC TOOLS FOR CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

- **5Maps.** Geographic referenced data on a Google map
- **5Cast.** Budget analysis, multi-year forecasting and reporting
- **5Share.** Peer collaboration and data sharing
- **5Sight.** Multi-dimensional data analysis & visualization

GEOGRAPHIC REFERENCED DATA ON A GOOGLE MAP
BUDGET ANALYSIS, MULTI-YEAR FORECASTING AND REPORTING
PEER COLLABORATION AND DATA SHARING
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL DATA ANALYSIS & VISUALIZATION

22 Leadership