

Synergy Charter Academy Moves Into the Top 7% of All Public Schools in the State of California

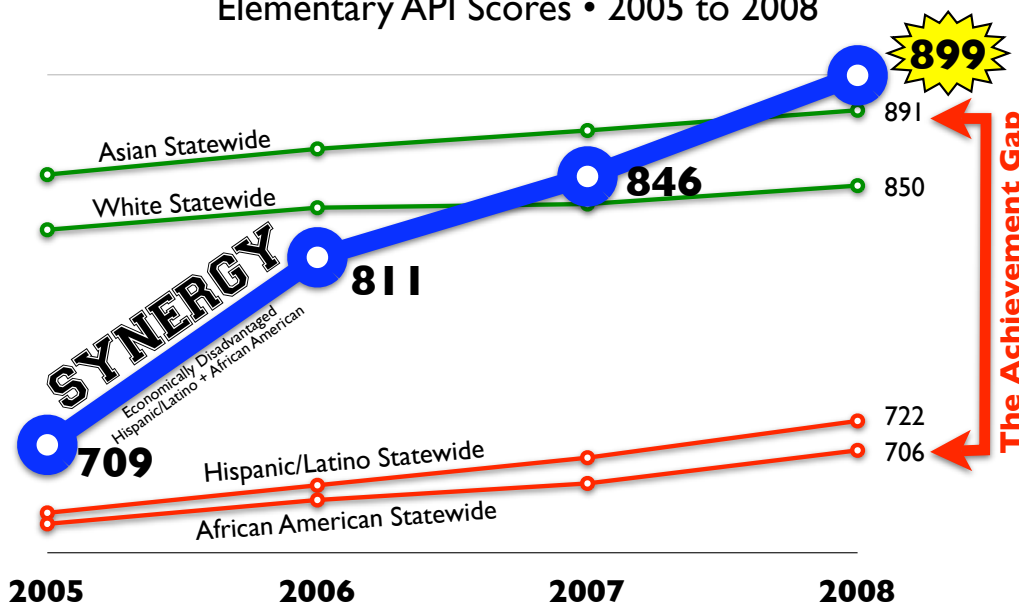
With the release of standardized test results from Spring 2008, Synergy Charter Academy's performance shows strong improvement over its already high scores

Synergy students, parents, and teachers cheered when they received the news that the Academic Performance Index score for Synergy Charter Academy reached an amazing new high of **899!**

For the third year in a row, Synergy Charter Academy is the highest-performing full K-5 school in all of South Los Angeles. Since Synergy Charter Academy opened in 2004, the school has been committed to **Defeating the Achievement GapSM** by showing that students in low-income communities are as capable and smart as students in other areas. The test scores earned by Synergy students show that they understand the California State Content Standards, which are taught rigorously at Synergy Academies schools. **Congratulations to all students, teachers, and parents for their hard work in achieving this new level of academic success!**

Synergy Defeats the Achievement Gap

Elementary API Scores • 2005 to 2008



See Inside for All the Latest News from Synergy Academies:

2008: An Amazing Year for Synergy Academies • Parent Empowerment Reaches New Heights • Spotlight on Corporate Giving • Creating Scholars at Synergy Kinetic Academy • Synergy in the News • How YOU Can Be a Part of Making a Difference for Synergy Students • and more!

QUICK FACTS about SYNERGY ACADEMIES SCHOOLS:

All Synergy Academies schools are free, public charter schools serving the students of South Los Angeles. Synergy's student population is typically over 85% socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Currently, Synergy Academies has two schools:

SYNERGY CHARTER ACADEMY

elementary school

- Opened in 2004
- Catapulted into the top 7% of all public schools in the State of California based on standardized test scores in 2007-2008
- Named a 2007 National Charter School of the Year by the Center for Education Reform
- Named 2008 California Charter School of the Year by the California Charter Schools Association
- Recognized as a California Distinguished School in 2008



SYNERGY KINETIC ACADEMY

middle school

- Opened in 2008
- Dedicated to continuing the high level of academic success achieved by Synergy Charter Academy
- Focused on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)

Synergy Kinetic Academy Starts Strong with a Well-Rounded Program *Creating Scholars at Synergy's New Middle School*

Synergy Kinetic Academy started its inaugural academic year this fall with approximately 90 sixth grade students. For many of them, it is their first time attending a Synergy school, and they are learning what it means to be a scholar. The uniform worn by Kinetic students emphasizes how the staff of Kinetic takes them and their abilities very seriously: the students wear shirts and ties every day.

Many of the new sixth graders had the opportunity to participate in a three-week summer school session before the beginning of the school year where they created and presented their own slideshows using iMovie, put on a play of Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, and visited the campus of USC for a tour that included a visit to the football team's practice and a meal at a college dining hall.

The sixth graders of Kinetic are working hard at strengthening their math and reading skills, while also learning about ancient civilizations, the scientific method, and much more. One parent said that her student never liked to read before attending Synergy and now he takes a book with him everywhere he goes!

At all Synergy Academies schools, the education students receive goes above and beyond the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Students receive daily instruction in PE to improve their athletic abilities, sportsmanship, and character. Kinetic students have also had the opportunity to learn about the challenges of those worldwide who are less fortunate than they are through a visit to the Doctors Without Borders "Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City" (see photo, right). Through academic and personal development, Synergy Academies seeks to fulfill its vision of enabling all our students to meet or exceed the California Content Standards so that they are prepared to take college-preparatory classes in secondary school and eventually attend the four-year university of their choice.

Synergy's Supporters Encourage Corporate Generosity

During what are difficult economic times for many individuals and corporations, Synergy's supporters have encouraged their employers to give generously to help fund Synergy's work educating students in South Los Angeles.

Tiffany Sanders is the Board President of Synergy Academies. She arranged for Nuveen Investments' monthly fundraiser during the month of August to be donated to Synergy. Nuveen employees gave very generously and their donations were matched by the corporation.

Lety Ojeda is a parent of two Synergy students and the Treasurer of the Parent Council. She believes strongly in what Synergy is doing and has worked tirelessly this year to raise money for the school. She encouraged her employer, Transamerica, to make a large donation to Synergy Academies.

Several other Synergy supporters have made a personal donation to the organization that has been matched by their employer. If you or your employer has any questions about making a corporate donation to Synergy Academies, please contact Erika C. Chua, Director of Operations and Development at (323) 459-2463.

THANK YOU to all of these individuals and corporations for their contributions toward Synergy's mission of Defeating the Achievement GapSM in South L.A.!



Jamaal B. and his mother inside a classroom at Synergy Kinetic Academy. Parents have attended several special events at the Kinetic campus, including a dramatic reading of Edgar Allen Poe's classic poem, "The Raven."

Synergy Academies in the News



USC's **Daily Trojan** student newspaper mentioned Synergy in an article about charter schools on October 2, 2008 -- and included a photo on the front page of the Synergy Charter Academy campus.

Meg Palisoc is quoted as saying: "As students and their families become more educated via charter schools, this should have a direct impact on decreasing crime and gang activities around USC," she said. "We hope to prove that our students can compete academically on a global scale."

Synergy Charter Academy elementary students were featured in an **ABC 7** story that ran on October 22nd about a trick-or-treating event they attended at UCLA.



The **Los Angeles Times** highlighted the visit of Synergy Kinetic Academy students to the Doctors Without Borders mock refugee camp exhibit set up in Griffith Park in an article on October 23, 2008. Synergy students visited "A Refugee Camp in the Heart of the City" on a field trip to learn about the wider world around them, and were astonished to learn of the difficult circumstances faced by refugees world-wide. Photo courtesy of Synergy Academies



During the week of November 10th, both the **Los Angeles Times** and **LA Opinión** featured Synergy Charter Academy as one of the top 15 schools in the entire state of California serving students in poverty.

2008:

Synergy Academies' Year in Review

As 2008 draws to a close, this is a good time to reflect on the accomplishments and milestones of Synergy Academies over the past calendar year.

- Synergy Charter Academy was named 2008 California Charter School of the Year (March 2008)
- Synergy Charter Academy was recognized as a California Distinguished School (April 2008)
- Synergy Charter Academy's Year-End Culmination featured a celebration lunch for all Synergy families and an inspiring speech by Donzaleigh Abernathy, actress, author, and daughter of Civil Rights leader Rev. Ralph David Abernathy (June 2008)
- Synergy Kinetic Academy began its inaugural school year (September 2008)
- Synergy Charter Academy was recognized by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for its high levels of academic achievement (September 2008)
- Synergy Charter Academy was named to the California Business for Education Excellence and Just for the Kids-California 2008 Honor Roll of highest-performing schools in California (November 2008)

**We're looking forward to
an even better 2009!**



Parents Ms. Pasillas and Ms. Moore worked together to provide drinks for the Food Festival

The Power of Parents at Synergy's Schools

The parents of Synergy Academies have been involved in new and exciting ways during the 2008-2009 school year. Parent education and empowerment has always been a priority at Synergy, but the parents this year have taken on new leadership roles that have contributed significantly to the success and sense of community at Synergy's schools this year.

The Parent Council, which includes representatives from both the elementary and middle schools, takes very seriously its responsibilities to support fellow parents and raise funds for the needs of Synergy Academies. The largest fundraiser organized by the Parent Council this school year was the Fall Food Festival, which brought together parents from both schools to share their homemade dishes and special desserts. Overall, the Parent Council's fundraisers have earned a total of more than \$3300. Perhaps more important than the money raised, though, are the opportunities the Parent Council has created for a large number of parents to get involved and contribute to the life of the school.

Synergy's parents will also be able to participate in a more academic way this Spring. Both Synergy schools are starting a Math Counts program, which tests the students on their math abilities and requires them to hone their skills for competition with their peers. Before the program begins, all Synergy parents attend a special meeting where they are trained in the math skills they need to help support their students. Some Synergy parents do not have much formal education themselves, while others are already strong in mathematics. The parents are taught Synergy's unique methods for studying and solving math problems so that they can help their children prepare for the Math Counts competition.

All of these partnerships between Synergy and the parents of Synergy students exist because of this fundamental belief held by all members of the Synergy family: **Together, We Are Better.**



Brianne (in red jersey) and other Synergy students at USC Football game

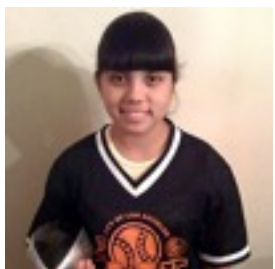
Student Spotlight: Lessons gained at Synergy lead to continued success

When Brianne O. first came to Synergy as a 3rd grader, she struggled with both reading and math. She improved quickly in both areas, and started reading constantly. "Because [Synergy] targets the specific area they're behind in, the students advance a lot quicker," says Brianne's mom, Ana, who is now the President of Synergy's Parent Council.

Brianne is currently in seventh grade. Because of the strong foundation she received in mathematical thinking, she is enrolled in Algebra Honors as a seventh grader, skipping Pre-Algebra altogether.

Math and reading skills weren't the only things Brianne has taken with her from her time at Synergy - she also has a great passing arm. Brianne is a quarterback on a local football team, and is constantly being recruited by rival football teams.

Brianne has a bright future ahead of her, and is interested in becoming a teacher to inspire future generations of students. Not only did Synergy empower her with academic knowledge, but she also has the courage and confidence to pursue her dreams. We wish her the best!



Brianne today in her football uniform

Your Financial Support Can Ensure a Bright Future for the Students of Synergy Academies' Schools

This year, the State of California - which provides the majority of funding for Synergy Academies' schools - is facing an unprecedented budget crisis. Synergy is concerned that education funding will be cut this year due to the budget crisis. **Any financial support you can offer will help provide stable funding as we continue to educate the students of South L.A.**

In addition, Synergy Academies is pursuing some options for constructing (or renovating) a building of our own so that we can expand our educational program and serve even more students in a building designed specifically for Synergy's academic program. Constructing or renovating a building is a significant expense, and can only be accomplished with the financial support of many partners, including individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Please consider making a donation to Synergy Academies during this season of giving. Your gift - in any amount - will help Synergy continue to have the same positive impact it had for students such as Brianne, who is profiled inside this edition of the SPOTLIGHT. All donations are tax-deductible and can be made either using the enclosed giving envelope or through our website: www.WeAreSynergy.org. Thank you for your support!



*So far this school year, generous donations have enabled Synergy to provide healthy snacks to middle school students; purchase new classroom supplies and computers for teachers; install awnings to keep the school slightly cooler during the blazing summer months; and fund field trips, including bus transportation. **Your contribution is a part of ensuring that the students of South Los Angeles continue to have a rich educational experience at Synergy Academies' schools!***

Synergy Academies would like to send you our best wishes for Happy Holidays and a 2009 where ALL students have access to a high-quality education!



The Staff of Synergy Academies -- Front row (L-R): Barbara Shannon, Renee Roberson, Stephanie Partida, Jennifer Epps, Radhika Khandelwal, Maria Varillas; Second row (L-R): Ricardo Cortez, Katy Aquino, Rhonda Deomampo, Karen Scannell, Brandon Louie, Russell Lawton, Jorge Santana; Back row (L-R): Kim Bárcenas, Disnarda Funes, Randy Palisoc, Erika Chua, Meg Palisoc, Jennifer Hazelton, Reina Morales. NOT PICTURED: Edwin Fuentes, Karla Torres

Synergy Academies' Board of Directors

Tiffany Sanders, President
Viviana Escobar, Secretary
Jing Liu, Treasurer
Ana Ordoñez, Parent Council Rep.
Dr. t.r. Porter, LAUSD Representative
Karen Bracher
Matthew Hudson
Nicole Le Hudson
Brian Shuford

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Synergy Charter Academy Staff

Randy Palisoc, Co-Founder & Co-Director
Jennifer Epps, Co-Director
Kim Bárcenas, Teacher
Rhonda Deomampo, Teacher
Jennifer Epps, Teacher
Russell Lawton, Teacher
Brandon Louie, Teacher
Stephanie Partida, Teacher
Renee Roberson, Teacher
Karen Scannell, Teacher
Katy Aquino, Office Manager
Maria Varillas, Campus Assistant
Edwin Fuentes, Campus Assistant
Karla Torres, Campus Assistant
Erika Chua, Director of Operations and Development

Synergy Kinetic Academy Staff

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Dr. Barbara Shannon, Co-Founder & Co-Director
Ricardo Cortez, Teacher
Disnarda Funes, Teacher and Resource Specialist
Jennifer Hazelton, Teacher
Radhika Khandelwal, Teacher
Reina Morales, Office Manager
Jorge Santana, Campus Supervision Assistant