

Yvonne Chan

Principal

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center
Los Angeles, California

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Principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center

Education

Ed.D.	Educational Administration	U.C.L.A.	1980
M.A.	Special Education	C.S.U.N.	1976
B.A.	French and Spanish	U.C.L.A.	1968

California credentials/certificates: Life credentials in administration & supervision, elementary, learning handicapped, severely handicapped, physically handicapped, resource specialist, bilingual certificate of competence in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, computer in education application programmer.

Language competency: English, French, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Toishanese, Japanese, various computer languages.

Employment History

1993-present	Principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, L.A.
1990-1993	Principal, Vaughn Street School
1986-1990	Principal, Sylmar Elementary
1984-1986	Assistant Principal, Sharp Elementary
1976-1984	Teacher, specialist, Los Angeles School District
1980-present	Adjunct faculty, U.C.L.A., C.S.U.N. Consultant: Disney Channel, CBS; Hispanic Policy Development Project; Hawaii Department of Ed; Asian-American Research, Boston University

Professional Board Membership

Chair, President's Community Advisory Board, California State University, Northridge
Chair, State Superintendent's Charter School Advisory Board, California
Consortium for Policy Research and Education
Public and Private Ventures, Philadelphia
Aspiring Principals, Providence
World Class Champions, Florida

Honors Received

California State University, Northridge, Alumni Award (1999); University of California, Los Angeles, Alumni Award (1998); Rose Educators' Award, University of Southern California (1997); Excellence in Education, McGraw Hill Educator of the Year (1996); Community Service Award, National Chapter of Negro Women (1995); Phenomena Women, California State University, Northridge (1995); Community Service Award, United Chamber of Commerce (1994); China Breaker, Outstanding Education, RJR Nabisco Foundation (1993); American Hero, National PBS (1993); Education Hero in Service, Los Angeles Dodgers (1993); Outstanding Chinese American, Organization of Chinese Americans (1992).

Dr. Yvonne Chan
Principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center

Dr. Chan is a driving force behind bold public school reforms which include the implementation of academic restructuring, high learning standards, one-stop shop for all human and social services, and a comprehensive charter school that pushes public school reform to its limits.

Under her leadership, student achievement increased significantly and student attendance is near perfect. It is the first school in Los Angeles to reduce class size to 20 in all grades. Through her shrewd management skills, the school saved \$1.2 million dollars during the first year as an autonomous charter school. She turned a crack house to a school house, provided construction jobs to the community, built 14 new classrooms to relieve overcrowding and reduce busing, wired 218 computers, and extended the school year from 163 to 200 days. Vaughn Center was named the 1995 California Distinguished School and the 1996 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education; it was visited by First Lady, Mrs. Hillary Clinton, as a village successfully raising its children.

Dr. Chan is a first-generation immigrant who came alone to the U.S. at age 17 after fleeing communist China with her mother when she was just 12. She has realized her own American Dream. She is multilingual in 7 languages. She is married to Eugene Chan and they have two sons, Christopher, a Navy pilot and environmental engineer and Frank, a research and development specialist.

Vaughn is arguably the most successful charter school in the nation. It was a dilapidated school with one of the highest absentee rates and lowest pupil achievement rates in the San Fernando Valley. Half of the school's 1,300 students speak limited English and most are on free breakfast and lunch. Demonstrating her entrepreneurial skills, Chan applied a \$25,000 National Educator Award she won and used it as a matching fund to apply for a \$321,000 grant from the RJR Nabisco Foundation. She then used that grant to apply for matching funds from the State of California, obtained \$400,000 from the Healthy Start Initiative, and \$500,000 from the school restructuring program.

With an astonishing \$1.2 million, Chan purchased adjacent property that had been the site of two crack houses. On it she built a facility that is home to a community library, ten new classrooms, technology and science labs and a professional development school which houses a collaborative teacher training program for CSUN College of Education.

Her future plans include transforming the school into a pre-K – 12th grade college prep facility. She is equal parts educator, politician, and entrepreneur – with the best of American know-how. Due to her innovative pay scale, teachers can earn bonuses and top performers earn 20% more than other Los Angeles teachers. Dr. Chan has proved that change can turn around any school, any community with inspired leadership.

A CALIFORNIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

A CALIFORNIA DISTINGUISHED SCHOOL
A NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center

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Telephone (818) 896-7461

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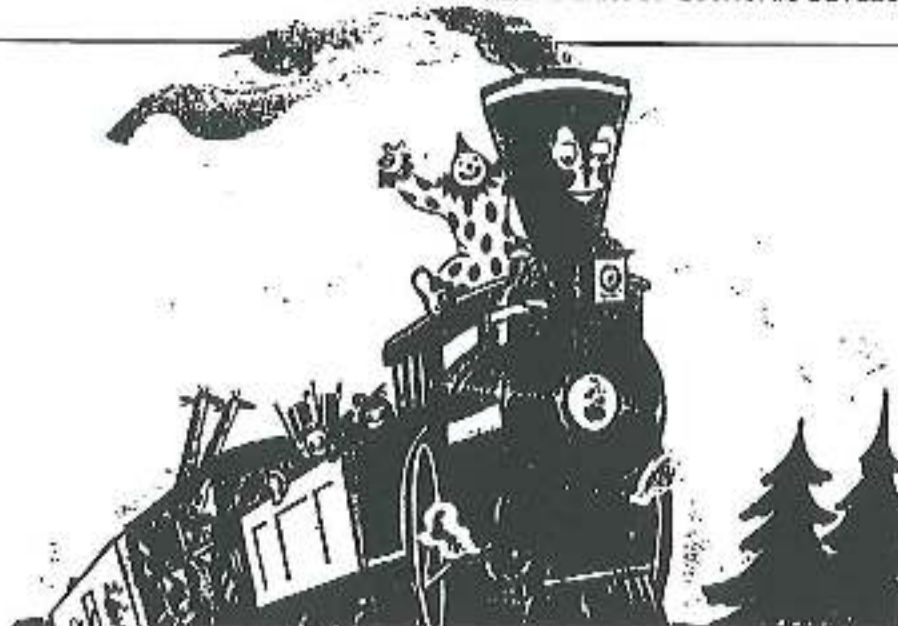
Website www.vaughn.k12.ca.us

DR. YVONNE CHAN
PRINCIPAL

Students served : 1220 PreK - 5th students (will expand to secondary in two years)
82% limited-English proficient students
99.7% free lunch recipients
94.5% Hispanics, 4.8% African-American, 0.7% other

**A Full-Service, Community-Based, 21st Century Urban Learning Center
A Little School That Could**

STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION	SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTER
GRADE-LEVEL ACADEMIES	CASE MANAGEMENT
INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMING	SCHOOL-LINKED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
SPECIAL EDUCATION FULL INCLUSION	FAMILY CENTER AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS CLUSTERS	PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT
ACCELERATED ENGLISH TRANSITION	HOME-SCHOOL CONTRACT
FULL INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY	ADULT EDUCATION & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT
STATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM	COMMUNITY LIBRARY
HEAD START	CSUN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER
CLASS SIZE REDUCTION, 20:1 IN ALL GRADES	PEER ASSISTANCE AND REVIEW
EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR TO 200 DAYS	PRINCIPALS-LEADERSHIP TRAINING
EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	PARENTS-CAREER LADDER SCHOLARSHIPS
MULTIMEDIA LAB	BUSINESS CO-OP, WELFARE TO WORK
SCIENCE DISCOVERY LAB	PERFORMANCE PAY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
TEACHER AND STUDENT MENTORING	MULTI-AGENCY AND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP
PROACTIVE AND SOCIAL PROMOTION ACTIVITIES	CHILD NUTRITION AND HEALTH
LA'S BEST- AFTERSCHOOL ACAD. & ENRICHMENT	MINI-MUSEUM
SERVICE LEARNING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**VAUGHN NEXT CENTURY LEARNING CENTER
AN URBAN CHARTER SCHOOL (Los Angeles, California)**

THE STORY OF TWO BROTHERS

On March 6, 1999, a teenager was shot to death in his driveway, apparently the victim of gang rivalry. Francisco, age 17, was shot several times in front of his Vaughn Street home, a block from his elementary school, Vaughn Street Elementary where he graduated in 1993. His younger brother, Eddie, is currently a fourth grader at the same school, now named Vaughn Next Century Learning Center. Eddie is a member of the Student Council and he is determined to go to college. The brothers lead a different life because their school offers them different types of opportunities.

Vaughn Street Elementary is a neighborhood public school, located in Pacoima, a designated "Empowerment Zone" in the city of Los Angeles due to its extreme poverty and high crime status. Since 1951, Vaughn was cited as one of the worst schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Single-digit test scores and poor attendance had been a pattern. It served 1050 kindergarten to 6th grade students: 94.9% Hispanic, 5% African-American, 0.1% Asian; 80.5% English learners who are Spanish-speaking; 97.4% free or reduced lunch.

Francisco attended Vaughn beginning kindergarten. He was always in classrooms with 32-35 students. The school provided 163 instructional days on a three-track schedule due to overcrowding. Francisco was bussed briefly to another school in 1991 for four months due to a court-ordered desegregation plan. Francisco had special needs but was not identified till grade three as Vaughn had a psychologist only one day per week. Counseling and after school tutoring was not available. As soon as he was identified as a severe learning disabled student, he was bussed to another district school for special education services. Vaughn did not offer special day class program due to lack of classroom space and personnel. In order for Francisco to return to Vaughn, his neighborhood school, his parents had to waive the right to intensive special education services beginning grade four. Chronic asthma prevented him from maintaining regular attendance. He did not qualify for public health care and Vaughn had a school nurse only one day per week.

During Francisco's entire education at Vaughn, he was taught by only one fully credentialed teacher. All his other teachers were on emergency permits. Vaughn was a "hard-to-staff" inner city school. Each year, the school lost 30% of its 39 teachers. Every week, Francisco's classroom was vandalized. New computers were stolen before they were unpacked. Student suspension rose to 12% and fights between Hispanic and African-American students occurred daily. When Francisco transferred to the neighborhood middle schools, he has not passed the bilingual redesignation test and was still reading in Spanish with limited skills in English.

Vaughn has converted to an independent charter school in 1993. Francisco's brother, Eddie started at Vaughn at age 3 in 1994. Prior to entering kindergarten, Eddie had two years of preschool education at Vaughn which provides space to the sponsoring district and the Los Angeles County Office of Education to operate the State Preschool and the Federal Head Start programs. Though Eddie is in the fourth grade, he is in a class with only twenty students as the class size at Vaughn is kept at 20 in all grades. Extended school year provides Eddie with a full 200-days of instruction in addition to daily after school academic and enrichment activities till 6:00 pm. Overcrowding and bussing is no longer a problem as Vaughn has eliminated the multi track schedule by building an additional 56 classroom rooms since the charter school conversion.

Though Eddie was also identified as a learning disabled student, he received intervention as early as kindergarten. Services are provided in an inclusive setting which include co-teaching of general and special education teachers, speech therapy, peer tutoring, after school tutoring, family

counseling, attendance and motivation activities. Eddie successfully exited from the special education program in grade three. When Eddie has health care needs, the Vaughn's site-based clinic operated by the Los Angeles County Health Department provides immunization, medication, medical tests and various primary care services.

Along with his friends, Eddie enjoys serving the Internet during class to conduct research, write reports and e-mail to his overseas pen pals in China. Eddie's mother is taking a GED class at Vaughn offered by the district Adult Education Division. Her classroom is right next door to Eddie's. She usually waits to her son after her class. On her way to the Vaughn Family Center where she volunteers child care services, she keeps an eye on the new construction site. She knows that Eddie, upon culmination at grade five at Vaughn, will continue his middle school and high school education at this Little School That Could.

As a traditional public school, Vaughn has failed Francisco miserably; however, as a conversion charter school, Vaughn has provided Eddie with unlimited opportunities and a world-class education. Vaughn Next Century Learning Center is located at the same site serving 1,300 students from special education infants to grade five: 95.3 % Hispanic, 4.6% African-American, 0.1% Asian; 76.5% English learners who are Spanish-speaking, 97.6% free or reduced lunch. The student demographics have not changed, it's the adults at Vaughn who have changed.

OUT OF THE BOX : WE COULD DO NO WORSE

Vaughn was a typical large, urban public school impacted by multiple social stresses. I was assigned to Vaughn in May, 1990 amid twenty-four teacher grievances, two lawsuits, ongoing intergroup disputes and after three death threats directed toward the principal. Vaughn was the third public school where I assumed the leadership. My main role was to promote racial-ethnic harmony and improve campus safety. Vaughn needed a battle field sergeant, not an instructional leader. Student achievement was never in the radar screen of anyone, including the parents. Who had time for teaching and learning? Besides, there was no consequences for failing kids!!

Staff morale was low, especially during the 1992-93 school year when all district staff members were notified of the 10% pay cut in addition to the 3% pay cut the year before. Waiver applications for increased personnel and fiscal autonomy were rejected by the school district and the teacher union. A group of teachers began to investigate other means to achieve more flexibility in the operation of our school. Parents of special education students wanted to return their children to the neighborhood school. I was also tired of performing the 3Bs instead of the 3Rs: B for bus duty, B for budget constraints and B for "but, you can't".

In November, 1992, our School Council sent twelve of us to Sacramento for a training conducted by Senator Gary Hart and his staff. We were thoroughly enlightened. Though scared by lawyers and district staff, we had 86% teacher votes to start the charter application process. We believe that we could do no worse. On July 1, 1993, we became the first independent, urban conversion charter school in the state of California and in the nation.

EARLY STRUGGLES AND BUILDING A POWERFUL COALITION

We had no clue the hard journey ahead. Skills needed to educate students were never a problem; the problems centered in legal and fiscal liability issues.

When no government funds flowed to us in July when our year-round school began, I mortgaged my house. All staff agreed not to be paid till August. When local banks refused to set up accounts due to our lack of legal status, we had to manage with our small donation account until IRS recognized our existence. When the labor unions demanded their monthly dues even when the

employees received no paycheck, I took out personal savings to pay all dues. When no reputable insurance companies submitted bids for our liability, workers' comp, and health care, we had to accept a lower-rated firm at high premium costs. When free/reduced meal program was threatened, we flew to the nation's capitol to beg for approval just one day before school opened. When very few applicants responded to our eleven open teaching positions, we started classes with seven emergency-permit teachers and four long-term substitutes. When the Assistant Principal, the Plant Manager and seven other classified employees left, we did not fill these positions as everyone was willing to pick up the snags.

Legislators and Media

We became media savvy immediately. As a failing, inner city school striving to be independent and accountable, our voice were heard by the press which portrayed our battle with the large LAUSD as the battle between David and Goliath. The Daily New and Los Angeles News published our stories practically weekly as we developed our charter, gained our teacher votes, battled through the approval process and all the subsequent problems on funding. Even the Sacramento Bee tried to defend the defenseless. We were invited to radio talk shows. Television channels joined in the advocacy. We were spotlighted in local news, in Diane Sawyer's Prime Time, Good Morning America, national and local PBS, Time Magazine, Business Week, Newsweek.

Our legislative representatives lent us their ears. The first person who came our rescue was our Assemblyman Richard Katz. He made it clear to LAUSD that Vaughn was to receive its fair share of the state's education dollars. He or his staff represented us in meetings with USDA for food services for our students, with US Department of Education regarding Title 1 funds, with Department of State Architect regarding our new construction and with district lawyers regarding our right to buy and own land.

I became an instant national spokesperson on charter school movement. I served as a keynote speaker and have testified at state hearing in more than 32 states, including Alaska and Hawaii. In addition, I participated in small focus group discussion with President Clinton, VP Al Gore, Secretary Riley, leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties. A Congressional Hearing on school reform was held at Vaughn in 1997. Legislators who wanted to sponsor a charter school bill as well as candidates running for local offices visited us. In 1997, Mrs. Hillary Clinton's visit confirmed that Vaughn is a village fully capable of raising its children.

Businesses and Foundations

Various chambers of commerce and their board members rallied behind our struggles. They wrote letters and co-ed pieces. Their lawyer and accountant members helped us pro-bono. The San Fernando Chamber was trying to arrange a loan for us. The League of Women Voters spoke on behalf of us in front of the LAUSD Board of Education. The Valley Industry and Commerce Association adopted official policies in support of us.

Foundations watched our slow but steady efforts in improving the lives of the children and their families. Mayor Richard Riordan donated more than 100 computers and software. McGraw Hills Company shipped us obsolete books. Other foundations including the RJR Nabisco, Schwartz Family, Community Technology, Kaiser, Unihealth recognized our capacity and funded our grant proposals.

One of our greatest coach was the Los Angeles Education Partnership. This intermediary helped us create the Family Center and school-linked services. It planted the seed in our head for the need for a PK-12th urban learning center that provides comprehensive, community-based programs and services.

Universities and Organizations

Researchers were fascinated with our process. Vaughn participated in various free evaluative studies and long-term case study research. These include studies completed by the Consortium of Policy Research in Education, WestEd, the California Charter Development Center, the National School Reform Center, the Milken Family Foundation, Federal and State After school Program, and the Nutrition Network. Universities also sent students to conduct observations and to complete master and doctoral thesis. Professors invited us as class speaker and they brought classes to Vaughn for on site visit. Visitors came as far as Japan, Korea, China, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, New Zealand and England.

BUILDING AN INTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

The key to our success lies in our ability to build an internal accountability system. As an existing public school for 40 years, we were to answer to accountability measures established by the State and the District. When external accountability knocks, we didn't have to answer. In fact, we were seldom home! After the conversion into an independent charter school in 1993, we began to design an internal accountability system that we own and must answer to.

Leadership Accountability : Shared Governance and Responsibilities

There are three working committees with full decision-making authority: Instruction Committee, Business Committee, and the Partnership Committee. Each Committee consists of 20 members; 50% staff and 50% parents/community. All teachers must serve during alternate years. This structure aligns directly with our internal accountability model. This is done to assure a "bottom-up and maximum inclusion" design. This structure also allow us to develop greater organizational capacity, longevity of leadership, equalization of power and responsibility.

VAUGHN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Curriculum
Instructional delivery
Class organization
Instructional teaming
Professional development
Technology
Materials, tools, supplies

Business & Operations Committee

Personnel
Evaluation
Compensations
Fiscal & facilities

Partnership Committee

Parents & Families
Community, organizations
Universities, businesses
Joint venture

In addition to a stable governance that supports the goals of the charter, our administrative team remain intact since beginning of charter conversion in 1993. this is my eleventh year at Vaughn. No promotion can lure me away and I will not retire until our new high school is built. As many as 26 of the 39 teachers who lead the charter school conversion in 1993 are still with us. The entire administrative team remains intact.

Teacher Accountability and Professional Growth

We have devised a review and assistance system to help each teacher reach high teaching standards. Areas we stress include : lesson planning, classroom management, literacy, language

development, special education students in inclusive setting, integration of technology as teaching and learning tool, mathematics, science, social studies, and arts. We have developed specific rubrics or standards for teachers (especially beginning teachers) for each area. Systematic staff development that follows is based on observable needs. We have been able to help teachers move up these developmental levels that positively impact student learning. In addition, an elaborate teacher compensation system is linked to these demonstrated knowledge/skills. Thus, we have a teacher accountability system that links teaching skills to instructional supervision, to assistance and ongoing evaluation, to precise staff development and to incentives.

Parent Accountability and Family Capacity

Though 69% of our parents do not hold a high school diploma, most of them rise to the occasion when we help each other in building capacity. Our on-site Family Center is a one-stop shop that provides families with basic needs, drop-in counseling, prenatal care, family literacy, a parent exchange service bank, adult education classes, job referrals and services provided in collaboration with agencies.

All families sign a home-school compact each year. Each family, regardless of number of students enrolled at Vaughn, provides 30 hours per year in the involvement in their child(ren)'s education. These may include attending parent training, parent conference, evening parent forums, taking their own child to the public library during vacation, child care for another family's sick child who attend Vaughn, preparing materials at home, participating in neighborhood watch, cleaning up the community, and even singing in their local church choir.

As many as 30 Parent Educators participate in a Career Ladder and Advance English-Proficiency Program. Parents may participate from supervising students in the playground to preparing and serving foods in the cafeteria, assisting with clerical tasks, and helping handicapped students as one-on-one aide.

Educational Accountability

In order to monitor carefully and accurately our progress, we measure student achievement using multiple measures and ongoing assessments. These measurements include:

1. California Standardized Assessment Program using Stanford 9.
2. California Professional Development Institute at UCLA, RESULTS Project Assessment will be administered three time a year. The Project includes a comprehensive, research-based battery of criterion-referenced, diagnostic tests in every skill area of language arts and English language development which align with state standards. The subtests are given in August, February and June of each year. Data must be input by teachers, electronically transmitted to UCLA for processing and analysis.
3. Title 1 multiple measures using SAT 9, student report card rubrics, and writing samples.
4. LAUSD English Learner Profile with state standards for English language development and redesignation criteria.
5. Our progress is ranked by the state using the Academic Performance Index. Results for the past two years are as follow:

<u>1998- 1999 API</u>	<u>98-99 State Rank</u>	<u>Comparison School Rank</u>	<u>99-00 Growth Target</u>
443	1	5	18
<u>1999-2000 API</u>	<u>99-00 State Rank</u>	<u>Comparison School Rank</u>	<u>00-01 Growth Target</u>
494	2	9	15

We construct a safety net around students with special needs to ensure the success for all. Proactive activities to end social promotion include state preschool program beginning at age 3,

small group early literacy development, full-day kindergarten, three intersessions (winter warm-up, spring sting, and summer sizzle), tutoring, and cross grade teaming. Extended learning opportunities for as many as 600 students include a variety of closely supervised after school activities daily till 6:00 pm. Since we serve 119 identified special education students and 844 English learners, we have placed extra efforts in developing and implementing effective process and instruction to meet their needs. These efforts include systematic identification, highly structured service delivery, ongoing monitoring and follow up.

Fiscal Accountability

Vaughn has historically been and will continue to be fiscally and operationally sound. We have established sound fiscal standards to assure financial stability. These standards include:

1. Establish consistent, internal control by using effective budgetary and accounting procedures.
2. Complete interim budget projections to make sure that the school is financially sound.
3. Maintain adequate reserve and cash flow of \$2,000,000 in the Los Angeles County Treasury.
4. Review all contracts carefully prior to entering into agreement with vendors and providers.
5. Maintain comprehensive liability insurance coverage, \$15,000,000 per occurrence.
6. Prepay necessary contracts, liability insurance premium, employee health benefit insurance.

For every dollar spent, we consider the students first. A yearly budget will be prepared and tentatively adopted each May for the following school year. The Business Committee utilizes a bidding process when needed, tracks its expenditures using computerized programs, reallocates funds, and makes adjustments. We follow systematic accounting practices with all revenues and expenditures accounted for at all times. All errors will be reconciled with a week. Final accounting reports are audited by an independent CPA. The State Controller has just completed a four-month comprehensive audit and found that we are accountable in all aspects audited.

We continue to make investments through the Los Angeles County Treasury. Currently, we enjoy a cash flow of \$4.5 million and \$2 million in C-D. PaineWebber manages our investment portfolio of \$1.2 million. The California Teachers' Credit Union where we have deposited \$500,000 is managing health benefit expenses of our retirees.

SOLVING THE URBAN SCHOOLING PROBLEMS

Charter school status has given us the opportunities to solve many pressing urban school problems which impact student achievement. These problems include overcrowding, teacher shortage, special education's unfunded mandates, lack of quality child care, poor health and malnutrition, high-stakes testing, incoherent preschool through 12th grade education, and the inability of a poor community to support its youths and schools.

1. Overcrowding and School Repair

Vaughn was the first multi track year-round school in the northern part of Los Angeles. We operated on a 3-track schedule for more than 20 years. Two-third of our students (680) were at school while one track (340) stayed home. Siblings were separated; students' language needs were ignored due to scheduling problems and teacher assignment preference. Our neighborhood does not have theaters, malls, library. It is filled with liquor stores and motels. We also transported 260 students out to other schools due to overcrowding. Teacher had no workroom. There was no space for computer lab, tutoring, intersession, parent education, and student enrichment. We ended the school year on June 30 and began the new school year on July 1. The district and the state couldn't do anything to help us resolve overcrowding and the lack of optimal learning environment and scheduling nightmare.

Our charter school status has changed all that. We have made the following improvement since charter conversion:

- 1993 - 22 teaching stations, was on 60/20 multi-track calendar (year of charter conversion).
- 1994 - Installed 6 portables and reduced class size to 27 in all grades
- 1995 - Built Panda Pavilion (cost=\$1.2 million) with 14 new classrooms; installed 8 portables; eliminated multi track schedule; reduced class size to 20 in grades K-3.
- 1999 - Built Panda Village (cost = \$3.2 million) with new community library, clinic, museum, multimedia lab, science center, professional development center, and 10 demonstration classrooms; reduced class size to 20 in every grade. Vaughn now has 78 teaching stations.
- 2000 - Purchased 2.5 acres across the school for a 600-seats primary center to house Preschool, kindergarten and grade 1 students. The main campus will then enroll Grades 6, 7, 8, (expand one grade per year). Anticipated completion date for this PandaLand Primary Center is July, 2002 (cost = \$8.0 million).
- 2001 - Purchased 3 acres four block away for a small 500-student high school academy (Panda Academy) with the focus on training future teachers beginning at Grade 9. Anticipated completion date is July, 2005 (cost = \$10 million).

By 2005, Vaughn will provide 2,500 students with optimal and personal learning environment on four campuses which are located within a 10-block radius, with approximately 600 students on each campus.

Our capacity building began in 1994. After the first year of charter school conversion, we realized \$1.2 million surplus from a \$4.5 million budget. As a traditional public school, I had no clue as a principal how much it would cost to run my school. The district paid for everything including waste and uncontrollable abuse. Our new internal accountability system demands effective deployment of human and fiscal resources. Savings came from reduced costs in administration, special education, food services, insurance premiums, substitutes, utilities, maintenance, and general purchases. Joint ventures with organization in delivering health and mental health care as well as parent volunteer hours added to our savings.

With \$600,000 of our savings, we turned a crack house into a school house with 14 classrooms in less than ten months. We awarded the project to a local contractor. The bid specified the requirement of hiring at least 70% of the labor locally, give preference to our parents who are in the construction trades and include reformed gang members living in the neighborhood as apprentices and using district high school students in career-to work program (Federal Perkins) to build the cabinets. Not only is this a cost-saving strategy, we have provided jobs in the community and training to at-risk youths. Our students stared with pride at their parents working on electrical and their siblings doing the plastering. Vandalism and theft are nonexistent at Vaughn.

In 1996, California began its class size reduction program. The state provided \$650 for each student (K-3) in class size of 20 and \$40,000 for each classroom built or leased for the purpose of class size reduction. With such a substantial reimbursement from the state, we paid off our first building within one year. Through shrewd reinvestment and timely land purchases, we went on to build the second building and paid it off this year. We still have \$4.5 million in our building fund.

We have solved the overcrowding problem. We can accommodate 1350 students with class size of 20 in each class. Bussing is reduced to 14 students. We are the only school in Los Angeles to eliminate the multi track calendar and offer 200 school days per year. There are rooms for 3 computer labs, a teacher resource center, a site-based clinic and counseling center, a large multipurpose room for fine arts, a piano studio, a museum, a large science lab, a brand new large

library with 17 books per student, a special education infant room, three resource rooms, and space for child care, parent education and community activities during school hours.

We are now able to provide space for district training including school nurse CPR training, special education workshop, beginning teachers seminar and early childhood make-and-take workshops at no costs to the district. Two universities hold their credential classes at Vaughn - UCLA and CSUN. Small rental lease is paid and our beginning teachers may take some of these mandatory credentialing class tuition free. Community organizations and governmental entities including the Department of Justice are now housed at Vaughn. It is now a bigger village that what Mrs. Clinton has envisioned.

We contract the district for routine repair by paying 2% of our base revenues. By helping the district pass a citywide bond fund (Proposition BB) and agreeing to provide a small percentage of match dollars, we have received \$1.4 million dollars worth of network infrastructure upgrade, E-rate support, modernization of the main office and various technology and safety projects. In collaboration with Fenton Avenue Charter School and the district, we applied for and receive \$3.8 million from the "Federal Qualified Zone Academy Bond". This is an interest-free loan with a twelve-year term. We used the funds for modernization, repair and equipment purchase. In the meantime, the bond funds are accruing interests.

2. Teacher Shortage and Teacher Quality

Without the union contract constraints and district personnel policies, we are able to assertively recruit and retain qualified teachers. We now have 69 teachers, 14 with a master degree, 19% on emergency permit, 38 are certified bilingual teachers, and the turn over rate is 7-8% each year. Tools are provided for every teacher to succeed.

Teaching Environment and School Culture

Our teachers form teams of three teachers responsible for sixty students. Each team consists of an experienced teacher with ten or more years of teaching experience. He or she is partnered up with a teacher with three to five years of experience and one emergency-credentialed, beginning teacher. Each team establishes team goals. The focused, targeted collaboration include frequent communication, weekly planning, search for common solutions, mutual support and help so as to reach collective goals.

Our teachers can share full-time positions in various ways including four-day work week, one semester assignment, six to ten-week positive switch between a general and a special education teacher. Every two grade-levels have a resource specialist, and an instructional coordinator. This structure strengthens the schoolwide teamwork.

Paraprofessionals with teaching career goal are provided with flexible work schedule and better compensation so they can complete their studies in a timely manner. Each year, two or three qualified paraprofessionals are selected to fill vacant teacher positions. Often times, the experienced teachers who train them become their team leaders. Our preschool and Head Start teachers are guaranteed elementary teaching positions upon completion of elementary certification requirements. Being a large school and a soon-to-be prekindergarten to 12th grade learning center, teachers have ample opportunities to rotate to other grade levels and subjects. In addition, teachers with specific expertise such as special education, technology, English language development can teach university courses at Vaughn. Both UCLA and the California State University, Northridge schedule eight different credential classes on campus in the evening and/or during weekends.

Teacher Training and Professional Growth

Our teachers have developed and adopted a set of teaching standards related to lesson planning,

classroom management, and various subject areas that are linked to the students' learning standards. Levels of performance in each area are clearly described using a 4-point scale with descriptive rubrics. Teachers know and understanding the collective expectation they have established collectively. (please visit our website for details www.vaughn.k12.ca.us)

We replaced the state teacher evaluation system with our Peer Assistance and Review System that takes place four times per year. Our teachers reflect on their own performance and rate themselves using the established teaching standards and scoring rubrics. Selected peer reviewers observe their colleagues and provide feedback as well as assistance. Instructional coordinators also conduct classroom visits and conference with teachers on an ongoing basis. Beginning teachers are assigned one-to-one mentors. Elected grade-level chairpersons are responsible for ensuring that teachers understand and focus on grade-level standards. The Director of Instruction and I conduct weekly visits, monitor progress of beginning teachers, and focus on schoolwide goals.

Based on individual teacher's performance review, teachers are provided with differentiated training. Training opportunities include small group workshops, individualized conferencing, observing another teacher, participation in seminars, conducting research, use of technology, and the assignment of a teacher buddy. We generally spend 5% of our base revenue in staff development (approximately \$200,000 per year).

Teachers must base teaching decisions on solid data rather than on assumptions. Data help us monitor and assess student performance. The Governor's Professional Development Institutes provide results-focused programs for 70,000 teachers this year (AB 1116). We captured the opportunity and all our teachers participated in UCLA's "Focusing on Results" training at no costs to us and our teachers were paid by the Institute to attend.

Teacher Compensation

The single-salary pay plan does not support standards-based instruction and does not work for Vaughn. In an effort to recruit and retain quality teachers, we developed a performance pay plan three years ago. In addition to a base pay and extra compensation for certification and advance degrees, we pay teachers the following:

Skills and knowledge pay - Level 1 skills include literacy, language arts, mathematics, working with special education students in an inclusive setting, classroom management, and lesson planning. A score of 2.5 or higher in the performance review earns \$4,500. An overall score of 3.0 in other subject matters (social studies, science, arts, English language learning, physical education) earns another \$5,300. Finally, any fully credentialed teacher whose average in all of the areas is 3.5 or higher earns an additional \$4,500. The maximum in bonuses that a teacher can earn by getting top scores on every part of the knowledge and skills review is \$14,300.

Contingency-based awards - Teacher can earn a total of \$2,000 a year for achieving certain goals in the areas of student attendance, discipline, parental involvement, and for working in teams.

Schoolwide student achievement bonus - All teachers and administrators get an annual bonus of \$1,500 if the school as a whole meets the Academic Performance Index goal (API) set by the state regardless how much the state provides. Noncertificated staff and part time staff members also earn a prorated amount.

Expertise compensation - Teachers in leadership role including grade level chairs, committee chairs, peer reviewers, mentors, faculty representatives receive additional stipends. A teacher who sponsors after school clubs, student government, field learning or teaches intersession, he/she is compensated with \$3,500 - \$4,000.

Gainsharing - Unused sick days will continue to accrue and \$250 is provided for every ten unused days as an attendance award. A separate investment account with more than \$1,000,000 is set up to guarantee these bonuses when earned. Teachers share the accrued interests as a form of stock option. The amount is estimated at \$1,000 per year per teacher.

Based on payroll records (excluding expertise pay), a first year fully-credentialed teacher earns \$46,000. A first year emergency-credentialed teacher earns \$39,000. A teacher with ten years of teaching experience and scores an average of 3.0 earns \$63,850.

Added benefits - To provide a further sense of security, we have purchased a long-term disability insurance policy for every teacher which provides 60% of their full pay till age 65. In addition, we have set up an account with \$500,000 in the Los Angeles Teachers' Credit Union to guarantee health benefits after retirement. We are in the process of developing further benefits for teachers including college and child care subsidies, cash reimbursement for out-of-pocket purchases for classroom use.

As a result, not only have we solved the teacher shortage problem, we have built a highly qualified, cohesive and dedicated teaching corp. Most recently we accepted veteran teachers who must resigned from the district to transfer to Vaughn. This team led Vaughn to win the California Distinguished Schools Award in 1996 and the National Blue Ribbon Schools Award in 1997. As many as 154 of us went to DC to accept the award in 1997. In 2001, as many as 84 teachers and support staff went to China, with all expenses paid. We spent 11 days together, teaching at three schools in Beijing and Shanghai. There's a huge sense of pride and accomplishment.

3. I.D.E.A. and Unfunded Mandates

Every district in the nation is seeking better ways to meet the I.D.E.A. mandates. Public schools must serve special education students effectively without huge encroachment costs to general education. As a traditional public school, Vaughn was totally out of compliance while costing the district huge encroachment costs. As an independent charter school, we are fully responsible for all the special education students attending Vaughn.

We are implementing an unique inclusion program which is staffed with three certified special education resource specialists, 3 special education assistants, and a team of seven support personnel. We make accurately identification, forge closely collaboration between the general education and the special education teachers, and maintain positive relationship with parents. Our inclusive program serves 87 identified special education students (mild and severe). They are meeting their IEP goals in a timely manner in an inclusive learning environment.

We entered into a "revenue neutral agreement" with the district. Vaughn receives all the funds for special education and is committed to serve all identified special education students living in the precharter geographic boundary. Low incident students whom we can't serve, we'll contract the district and pay for the costs. We make every effort to keep our special education students at Vaughn by providing our teachers and families with the needed support. We are meeting all I.D.E.A. provisions with success with minimum excess costs.

4. Access to Preschool Education and Quality Child Care

Children in our community need an early start but our parents can't afford the costs. There's no licensed child care center in our neighborhood other than a district-operated Children Center that has a multi-year waiting list. State Desegregation Program provided only 90 spaces for four-year olds four days per week and 2.5 hours per day. The majority of our students stayed home with no early childhood education opportunities.

In 1998, we read about the universal preschool strategy discussed by the State Department of

Education and the expansion of state preschool in poor neighborhoods. LAUSD received an expansion grant but was short of space. With our flexibility as a charter school, we collaborated with the district by converting the Desegregation-funded classes to a licensed preschool with eight state preschool sessions, four in the morning serving 80 students and four in the afternoon serving another 80 students, five days per week, three hours per day. We can even enroll the younger 3-year olds in the afternoon, many of whom are students with some identified disabilities. LAUSD passes through the grant funds to us and withholds 4% for administrative costs.

To further strengthen our preschool program, we learned that the Los Angeles County Office of Education was administering the expansion of Federal Head Start Program. The new initiative focuses on locating the program in elementary school sites where the articulation between formal school can take place. We became the first and still the only elementary site with such a "wrap around program" using our charter school flexibility. We now have 4 sessions of Head Start serving the same afternoon state preschool children till 6:00 pm. These younger and developmentally delayed children now receive 6.5 hours daily instruction and language development. We now serve as the model site for a unique, universal preschool education program.

5. Lack of Expanded Learning Opportunities

Prior to charter conversion, we kept our playground open as a voluntary, permissive after school child care program from 2:25 - 4:25 daily. We had two playground workers for as many as 400 students on certain days. There were no organized sports or clubs.

Our charter school status allows us to apply as a local educational agency (LEA) for competitive afterschool grants. Using the same grant application in 1999, we won the Federal 21 Century Community Learning Center Grant, the State Safe School and Neighborhood Grant, and the City-funded LA BEST Program. All three revenue sources now support a well organized after school program for as many as 600 students with daily tutoring, homework, sports and 16 interest clubs.

Again, as a LEA, we applied for the state Early Literacy and Accelerated English Learning Grant which provides intensively intersession instruction to ELD students. We have been funding 20 extra instructional days for three years, now the State is funding what we have started.

6. Lack of Health Care and Malnutrition

Due to poverty and lack of documentation, many of our students do not receive adequate health care. By building a little onsite clinic, we convinced the Los Angeles County Health Department to provide primary care services to all Vaughn students and their siblings up to age 18. A team of nurse practitioners, doctor, and medical assistants are onsite daily providing immunization, CHDP, blood and urine tests, health education, medication, treatment for communicable diseases, and referral to the nearby UCLA/Olive View Hospital for critical care. The program is funded by a Federal match grant to the County for its dollar-for-dollar expenditures on health care in Empowerment Zone communities. The focus is to offer primary care at school sites and reduce costs for emergency care at County-operated hospitals. Vaughn provides the facilities and in-kind costs for utilities, maintenance, a part time school nurse and a health advocate. After six months of infrastructure building and operation, the Unihealth Foundation agrees to assume our in-kind costs.

Oftentimes, the school meals are the only meals our students receive throughout the day. In an effort to provide more nutritious meals and more choices of healthy foods within the same USDA Child Nutrition budget, we took over the operation from the district beginning 1994. Since 95% of our students qualify for free/reduced meals, we take advantage of a new policy offered by the USDA. Once every four years, students apply as a base year. During the subsequent years, paperwork is kept to minimal. This universal feeding program eliminates the loss of valuable

instructional time while trimming costs. All students are provided three free meals daily : breakfast, lunch and late snack. They have five choices of entrees, fruits and vegetables.

Last year, we were admitted to the Nutrition Network as a separate public entity. The Network, through the State Department of Health provides match grants for nutrition education, health awareness projects and community outreach efforts. As a charter school, our inkind budget spent on health and nutrition related programs leverage approximately \$25,000 per year from the Network. More importantly, our students and their families now receive additional health and nutrition services.

7. High-stakes Testing and Sanctions

In 1996, our standardized test scores dipped because of the inclusion of all special education students as well as English learners with low English proficiency levels. Such departure from the norm resulted in many negative comments regarding our academic accountability. Two years later, the State of California passed the Prop 227 Initiative and subsequently required that all English learners take the SAT9. Again, we were ahead of the curve.

In 1997, our test scores improved. However, due to an anonymous phone call to the district office alleging "cheating", we were in the front page of both local newspapers for months. Four teachers were investigated by the district. We called in a team from McGraw Hills and UCLA Assessment Center to readminister another standardized tests (Terra Nova) to cross validate our student achievement. At the end of five months, additional expenses and investigative sessions, we were exonerated.

As a charter school, we are in a fish bowl. We must develop and implement alternative and multiple assessments so we won't be subjected to SAT9 testing only and the subsequent sanction when applied. For two years, we administered an additional standardized pre and post testing (Terra Nova) in addition to the SAT 9. External proctors from UCLA were assigned to each class, and data were analyzed by Mc Graw Hills. In addition, three time per year, we administer block testing on reading and math and collect writing samples. Each student has a portfolio of work that goes from teacher to teacher throughout the student's educational years at Vaughn.

Beginning 2000-2001, as the entire district focuses on Open Court and Success For All, we have the autonomy to participate in the Governor's Initiative on standards and assessment. We began to transition to a comprehensive instructional and assessment system (Focus on Results) managed by the UCLA Professional Development Center at no cost to us.

We met our 1999-2000 API goal and received monetary award from the state. Instead of issuing \$591.32 to each full time staff, we offered \$1,500 each as a guarantee of our performance pay program. To continue the incentive even when the state discontinue the award, we will provide every teacher with \$2,000 each year if together we meet the future API goal.

8. Lack of Community Resources

Urban schools are competing for limited community resources. Low-income communities have a hard time supporting its members and children. We utilize our charter autonomy and flexibility to help build a healthier and even wealthier community. For instance, we forged partnership with a neighborhood for-profit dump site to build a community library on our campus to illustrate social injustice. Our site-based clinic provide health care and our counseling center staffed with out-sourced personnel from nonprofit agencies helps many families deal with various social realities. Our Family Center provides one stop shop for social services including food and clothing, housing assistance, employment referrals, taxi coupons, and prenatal care. Adult classes are onsite during the day and in the evenings including using our Media Center for computer training. We bought as

many dilapidated buildings and crack house as possible. By building new schools, we beautify the community and provide many jobs. Property value in the neighborhood has gone up. Two Universities, UCLA and California State University, Northridge, establish a Professional Development Center and offer teacher credential classes during the week and on weekends. Our future Business Co-Op operated by the parents will add economic development to our neighborhood. Little by little, our community begins to look like a learning village with Vaughn as its anchor.

9. Disconnected PK- 12th Education

As our charter school flourishes, we are saddened seeing our graduates, especially those with special education needs, are not succeeding in the large neighborhood middle and high schools. There's little articulation between elementary, middle and high school levels. Every school stays in its box and maintains its turf. In fact, there's frequent finger pointing among the three levels. We witnessed our 14-year old former students becoming pregnant and our 15-year old joining gangs. In a problem solving mode, we have decided to build a middle and a high school so as to provide a seamless preschool through 12th grade education at Vaughn. Instructional program will be well articulated throughout the grades, all under one leadership team with collective mission and vision. The four campuses (primary center, elementary, middle school, and high school academy), with 600 students in each, are within walking distance. High school students can mentor the middle school students who in turn can tutor the elementary peers who will assist the preschool teachers. It is our goal to usher every graduate to a post secondary education. Vaughn will have ample, internal human capital to make sure that every child succeed. Since two universities are already on campus, Vaughn can easily develop into a Pk -16th learning center when opportunities allow.

Our consistent strategy is to redeploy our human and fiscal resources to meet the needs of our students as we research into the educational and political trends that match our programs. Then in a timely manner, we lobby or compete for the resources targeted for these programs. We have never failed once. Even if we don't implement certain programs ourselves, other organizations will be knocking at our door.

IMPACT ON SPONSORING DISTRICT

Our relationship with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) was very difficult during the first three years of charter conversion. We consistently challenged their existing practices and pushed reform to its limits. After building capacity and proving our worth, LAUSD has adopted new policies that we have set in place including the USDA Universal Child Nutrition Program, per-pupil budgeting, special education inclusion, Qualified Zone Academy Bond Project and various end social promotion activities. In addition, LAUSD has contracted Vaughn for the following services: State Preschool, modernization of existing school building, special education services, and Beginning Teacher Training. Vaughn was also asked to provide guidance to the District Accountability Team regarding performance-based evaluation. Most recently, I participated in the district committee to adopt criteria for the selection of the new superintendent. When Vaughn speaks, LAUSD listens!!

THE AMERICAN URBAN SCHOOL DREAM

In 1993, we were given a license to dream. The dream is not about power, wealth and status; it about opportunities, opportunities to solve urban schooling problems that we have faced for over 40 years. It's the American Urban School Dream. For eight long years, we pursue this dream with all our passion, energy, enthusiasm, teamwork and new-learned skills. We are now a successful full-service, community-based public charter school that has turned a mission impossible possible. Yes, we are proud to be the Little School That Could !

A well-deserved award

LA Times
Editorial

ONCE again, the spotlight shines on Yvonne Chan for her inspired leadership as principal of the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima.

Chan was one of three recipients of the ninth annual Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education, a national award for making positive, sweeping changes in American education. The award, which comes with a \$25,000 cash award, was made a week ago in Washington, D.C. Chan was recognized for her educational, cost-saving and fund-raising

efforts at the Pacoima elementary school. Under Chan's leadership, Vaughn improved its test scores and its attendance, and managed to save more than \$1 million through its fund-raising and cost-saving initiatives.

Her achievements prove positive results are being achieved in public education. Hers is the kind of leadership that can and should be duplicated at the school and district levels throughout Los Angeles. We congratulate Chan on receiving well-deserved national attention.

Valley school principal earns national award

Leaders in education honored

Daily News

Yvonne Chan, principal of a Pacoima elementary school, received a national award Tuesday in Washington, D.C., for making positive, sweeping changes in American education, officials said.

Chan, one of three recipients of the ninth annual Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education, which comes with a \$25,000 cash award, was recognized for her educational, cost-saving and fund-raising efforts that generated remarkable improvements at the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center.

Vaughn was the first Los Angeles Unified School District campus in the San Fernando Valley to become a charter school, giving the campus virtual autonomy from the district.

With that autonomy and under Chan's leadership, Vaughn improved its test scores, its attendance and managed to save more than \$1 million through its fund-raising and cost-saving initiatives.

Chan, who has been an outspoken advocate of charter schools nationally, also led efforts that resulted in abandoned housing being converted into classrooms, reducing class sizes, getting all students on line and mobilizing the community to increase drug awareness, contest officials said.

"The McGraw Prize in Education recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge through education and whose efforts and achievement make a positive difference in the learning community," said Harold W. McGraw Jr., chairman emeritus of the McGraw-Hill Cos., the world's largest educational publisher.

"By recognizing leaders in American education, we hope to provide effective models for future generations and inspire others to strive toward similar accomplishments," McGraw said in a written statement.



Yvonne Chan
Also receives \$25,000

"The McGraw Prize in Education recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge through education and whose efforts and achievement make a positive difference in the learning community."

— Harold W. McGraw Jr.
McGraw-Hill Cos.

In addition to Chan, award winners included Donald Ingwersoll, superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, for continuing to implement school reforms; and Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, for his leadership and efforts to set education standards.

Professional Achievement Awards

The Professional Achievement Award, established in 1962, pays tribute to the superior achievements of Bruin alumni in their chosen fields. Each recipient has a superb record of distinguished career accomplishments and has made outstanding contributions to his or her profession. All those honored have set new standards of excellence to which others in their fields may aspire.



Yvonne Chan '68, EdD '81

Principal of the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center (formerly Vaughn Street School) in Pacoima, which serves 1,200 elementary students living in poverty, Dr. Yvonne Chan is a driving force behind bold public school reforms. She has been instrumental in implementing academic restructuring, raising learning standards, improving social services, and creating a comprehensive charter school that pushes school reform to the limits.

Thanks to Chan's leadership, student achievement has increased significantly and attendance is nearly perfect. Under her skilled management, the school saved \$1.2 million during its first year as an autonomous charter school. These funds were used to reduce classroom overcrowding which, in turn, created construction jobs in the community. She also has increased student Internet access, extended the school year, and lead a public/private venture that will create exciting opportunities to further improve her students' and their parents' lives.

An educational consultant for CBS Education-Entertainment and various national foundations, Chan is also an adjunct professor at UCLA where she earned an Ed.D. and at California State University, Northridge, where she earned an M.A. in special education. She serves on the Board of Public/Private Venture in Philadelphia, the President's Advisory Board-California State University, and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, and chairs the California State Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Charter Schools.

A first-generation immigrant who came to the United States from Hong Kong at age 17, Chan was awarded the National Educator Award by the California State Department of Education in 1991. Her donation of the entire \$25,000 cash prize to her school has leveraged more than \$1 million in matching grant funds. Vaughn was named the 1995 California Distinguished School, and the 1996 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, and was visited by First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Chan's outstanding efforts have been recognized by Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, California State University, and many others. She was named Educator of the Year by the National Council of Negro Women and the 1996 McGraw Hill Distinguished Educator.



Yvonne Chan

Yvonne Chan, principal of the highly successful Vaughn Next Century Learning Center says charter law gave her a *License to Dream*



Excerpts from *America's Agenda*, Spring 1997

Yvonne Chan knows about turnarounds. At 12, she fled Communist China with her mother, eventually winding up in Hong Kong, where she attended private school on a full scholarship. At 17, she immigrated alone to America, sold the basketful of Chinese herbs she'd brought with her for \$300, then used the money to make her way to Fresno, California, where she entered a community college.

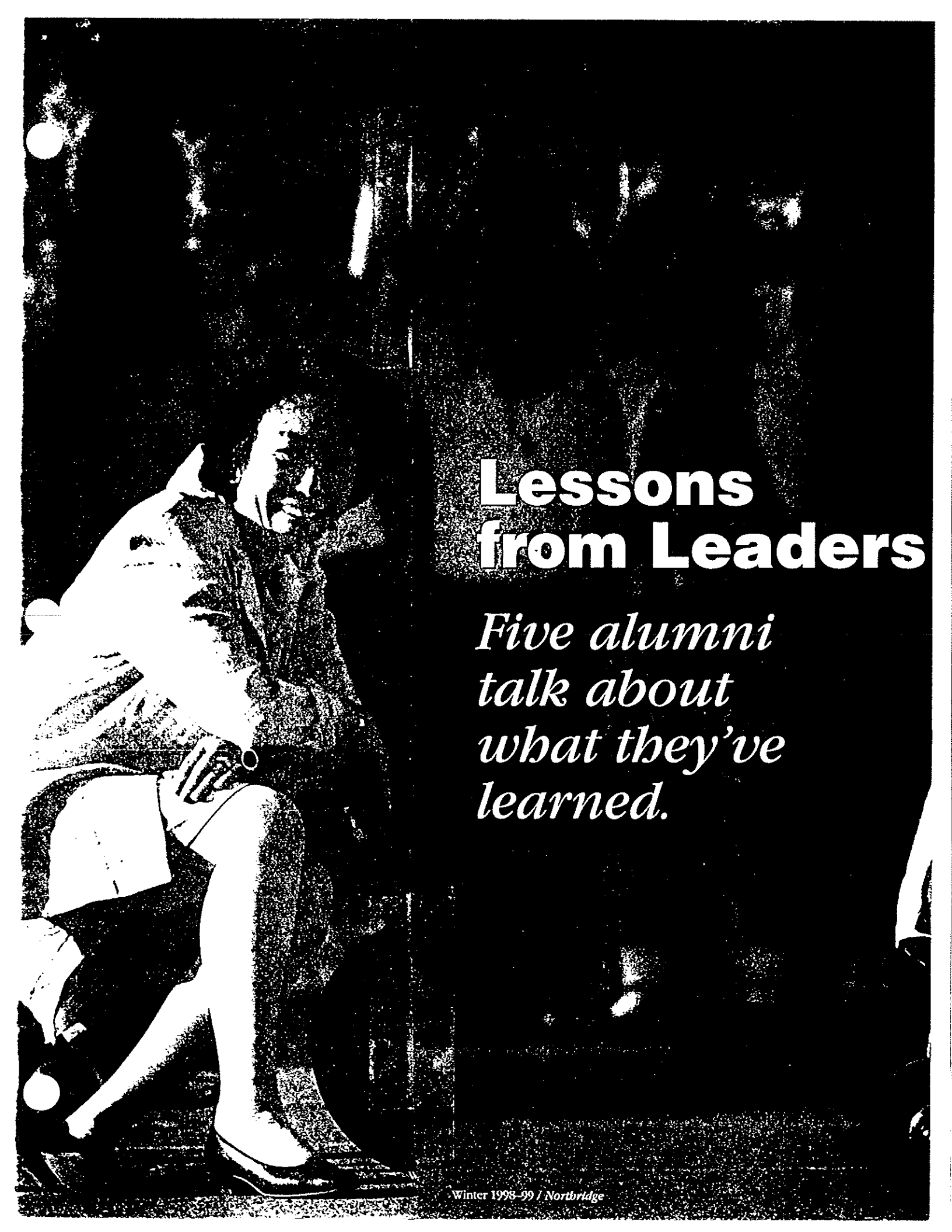
Eventually she earned a Ph.D. in education from UCLA and spent 16 years in the classroom, mostly teaching Special Ed. Today, Chan is among the most well respected – and well-tested – educators in the country.

She is perhaps less proud of her personal achievements than the turnaround she spearheaded at the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, a 1,140 student elementary school in Pacoima, California. When she came on board in 1990, Vaughn was a “throwaway” school marked by overcrowding, single-digit test scores, poor attendance, gang violence and vandalism.

The school is located about two miles from the Rodney King incident. The annual income per family, mostly first-generation immigrants, is \$15,000, with many children living in garages and trailers and in poor health, confronting physical as well as drug and alcohol abuse, along with the lure of gang affiliation - all of which hinders learning.

In January of 1993, California passed its charter-school law that allowed 100 schools in the state to be autonomous public schools free of education codes and district regulations. For Chan this was a **license to dream**. Transforming Vaughn into a charter school was a teacher-led movement. The school became immersed in funding, special education, transportation, facilities and personnel matters. Staff members agreed to delay payroll for a month and Chan put her house up for a second mortgage until a cash-flow loan was made possible. After months of drafting, discussions, revisions, and negotiations with the school district, the charter was approved by the Los Angeles Unified School Board.

Now Vaughn is arguably the most successful charter school in the nation. Test scores have skyrocketed, attendance has dramatically improved, class size has decreased, and students, teachers and parents work hard to maintain the school's first quality image.



Lessons from Leaders

*Five alumni
talk about
what they've
learned.*

When Yvonne Chan was named principal of Vaughn Street Elementary in 1990, it was a dilapidated school with one of the highest absentee rates and lowest pupil achievement rates in the San Fernando Valley. The school enrolls about 1,200 students, half of whom are Hispanics who speak limited English and 95 percent of whom are so poor they qualify for free breakfast and lunch.

In 1993, Chan petitioned and won charter status for her school. It is one of 15 such schools in the Los Angeles Unified

With the money she raised, Chan purchased adjacent property that had been the site of two crack houses. On it she built a facility that is home to a community library, ten new classrooms, technology and science labs, and a Professional Development School, which houses a collaborative teacher training program developed by CSUN's College of Education.

Expressing zero tolerance for absenteeism, she began calling the parents of absent children to inquire why their children were not in school. The current attendance rate is 99.5 percent.

Chan also insisted on involving parents in the education of their children, requiring them to participate in the life of the classroom and in school events. Test scores improved markedly. Between 1991 and 1996, fourth grade English reading scores jumped from the 11th percentile to the 36th.

*"You learn
through training,
being mentored, and
living and dying
in the process."*

—Yvonne Chan

Chan also added 37 days to the school year, discarding the year-round, multitrack schedule to maintain all students on the same 200-day schedule. She has added new computers and an after-school soccer program—and more teachers. Future plans include transforming the school, which now ranges from pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, into a 12-grade college preparatory campus.

She has been described as equal parts educator, politician, and spitfire saleswoman—with the energy of a locomotive. Asked to devote half an hour to this interview, she replies, "I'm very busy today. Let's see if we can do it in 15 minutes." It's done in 10.

Besides having earned her master's degree in special education at CSUN, Chan is a member of the University Advisory Board and teaches classes in special education at the College of Education.

—Dorena Knepper

Alumni Leaders continued from page 8.

saw our forests: Instead of a source of wood, they were becoming an investment that needed to be profitable. To become a major player in lumber real estate, we had to increase the size of our holdings. Over about 10 years, I took steps to double the size of our land holdings, from 175,000 acres to 375,000 acres. This has turned out very well.

The skills I needed were, first, an ability to analyze the company's needs and then communicate them to the owners so they could understand the risks and opportunities involved. Then I had to work with our top staff to expand their horizons in terms of both management and marketing; I had to show the value of both of them to the company.

Then I had to develop contacts to buy the properties and negotiate the deals, integrating this with both our own staff and outside firms. Then I had to develop and execute a long-term plan—keeping in mind that you need to reevaluate your strategies along the way and rechannel your resources to adapt to changing times. A good leader can distinguish between changes that are only trendy and those that are substantive.

Chan: In putting through the Charter School and getting resources devoted to it, I needed to show that I was credible—that I would keep my promises. I also shared authority and responsibility. Using these qualities I could get everyone's buy-in for the project.

Bowlus: When I became president of PacificCare in November 1997, we quickly took the organization through a strategic planning process. We wanted to create a high degree of engagement at all staff levels. In a series of planning sessions, our directors met with staff and put together five initiatives with supporting goals, objectives and tactics for each. The discussions focused not only on directions for the company but the rationale for those directions.

Because staff at all levels of the company took part in these discussions, individual employees felt they "owned" these goals. To make sure the strategy is in place and that people are acting on it, we've followed up with extensive communication—brown bag lunches and employee team meetings that I often sit in on.



David Bohrer

School District, with authority for budgets, hiring, curriculum, and scheduling. The name Chan gave it—Vaughn Next Century Learning Center—champions its new identity.

Demonstrating her entrepreneurial skills, Chan took a \$25,000 National Educator Award she won and used it as a matching fund to apply successfully for a \$321,000 grant from the RJR Nabisco Foundation. She used that grant to apply for matching funds from the State of California and wound up obtaining \$400,000 to participate in the state's Healthy Start Initiative and \$500,000 to take part in the California School Restructuring program. Total take of money: an astonishing \$1.2 million.



Gene Blevins/Special to the Daily News

CSUN recognizes women activists

Five women were honored Saturday with the California State University, Northridge, Women's Studies Department's first annual Phenomenal Woman Awards. Judith Baca,

from left, Louanne Kennedy, Yvonne Chan, Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jackie Goldberg and CSUN President Blenda J. Wilson were chosen for embodying feminism in action.

9/24/95



Yvonne Chan, principal



Jackie Goldberg,
city council member

Educator Award, for her leadership in education;
■ City Council Member Jackie Goldberg, for her lifelong political activism.

Date: Saturday, September 23

Time: 5-7 p.m.

Place: University Club

Tickets: \$35, available by calling (818) 885-3110

Alumni Breakfast Seminar Series

Topic: "Financial Planning for the '90's and Beyond"
by Beverly Chrisman

Date: Thursday, October 12

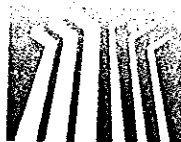
Time: 7:30-9 a.m.

Place: University Club

Admission: FREE

Bring your business card to exchange with other alumni and register for door prizes. For information and reservations, call the HOTLINE at (818) 700-6000 or call (818) 885-3621. Sponsored by the School of Business and Economics and the Alumni Association.

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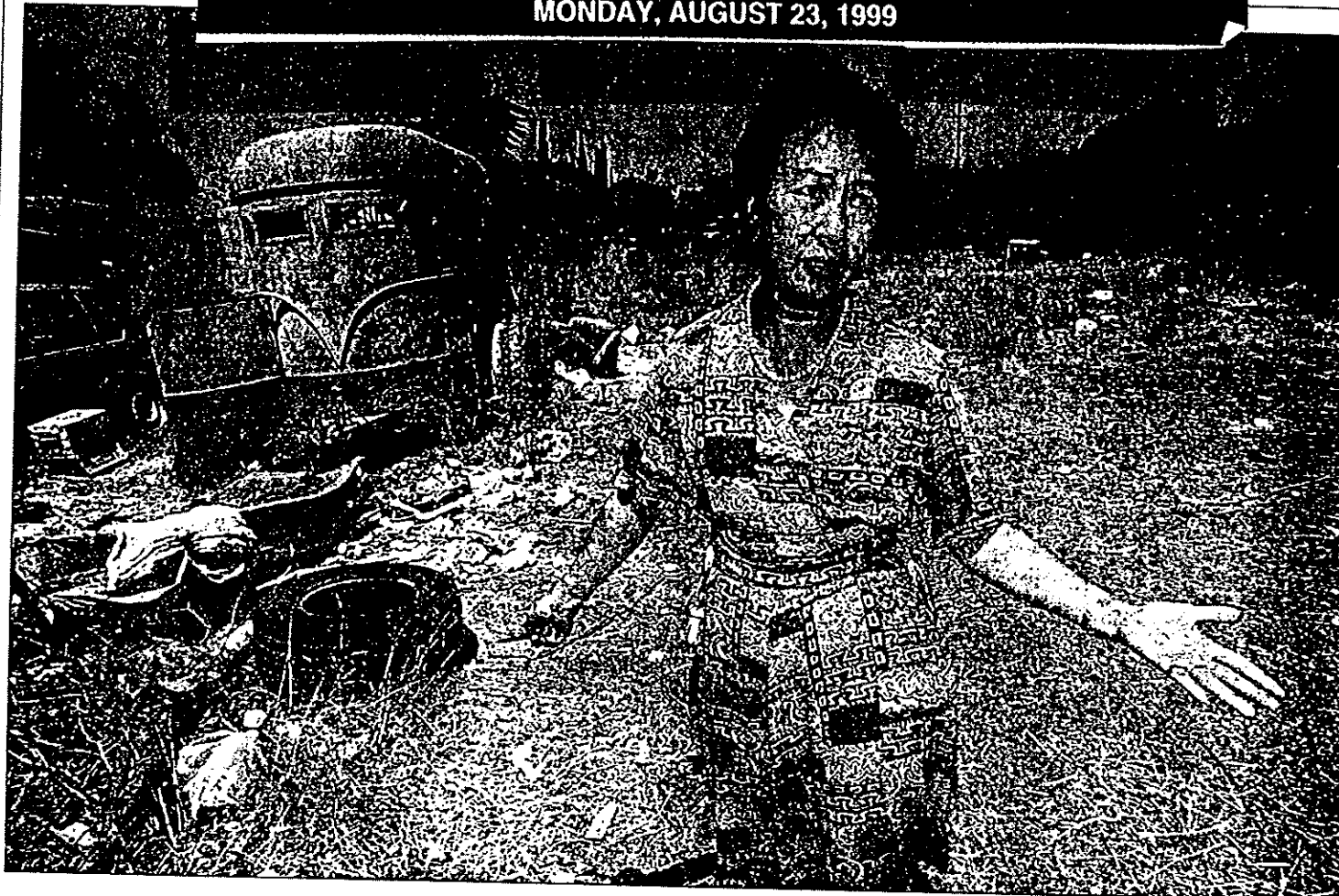


NORTHRIDGE ALUMNI

California State University, Northridge • Alun

Daily News

MONDAY, AUGUST 23, 1999



Evan Yee/Staff Photograph

Yvonne Chan, principal at the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, shows a trash-strewn lot she hopes to buy to expand the school.

VAUGHN SEEKS GROWTH

By Sherry Joe Crosby
Staff Writer

PACOIMA — The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center has taken its first concrete step toward expanding the campus to include a full-scale primary center and middle school by buying more than two acres of residential property.

The school has opened escrow on the property, valued at \$800,000, said Principal Yvonne Chan. The land would give the award-winning charter elementary school space to build a primary center that could help alleviate overcrowding at other public schools in the region and room to expand to sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

"This is a win-win situation for all three — the school, the district and the community," said

Learning center to buy property

Gonzales, principal of Pacoima Elementary School.

The school is 70 students shy of capacity primarily because of the statewide class-size reduction program, which limits classes to 20 students per teacher in kindergarten through third grade.

"Right now I'm holding my own, and I have a little space to grow but not much," Gonzales said.

Moving the primary center across the street from Vaughn would free up space on campus to build a two-story classroom building for 350

overcrowding makes good economic sense Chan said.

"We're faster, cheaper and we can cut through red tape," she said, noting the great flexibility that charter schools enjoy.

Charter schools are independently run public campuses that are allowed to experiment with different administrative and educational approaches. The school develops its own charter, with district approval, which frees it from most educational regulations and policies.

Maria Ortega said she is anxious for Vaughn to purchase the lots.

"It will be cleaner and more beautiful," Ortega said as she glanced across the street at one targeted site — a dilapidated home with a yard strewn with litter, a worn-out tire and other debris.

www.businessweek.com

BusinessWeek

MARCH 19, 2001

A PUBLICATION OF THE MCGRAW-HILL COMPANIES

Earnings

Did the tech giants mislead investors?

eBay



A frank talk with

Meg Whitman

Coca-Cola

Doug Daft's new formula



Investing

The case for commodity funds



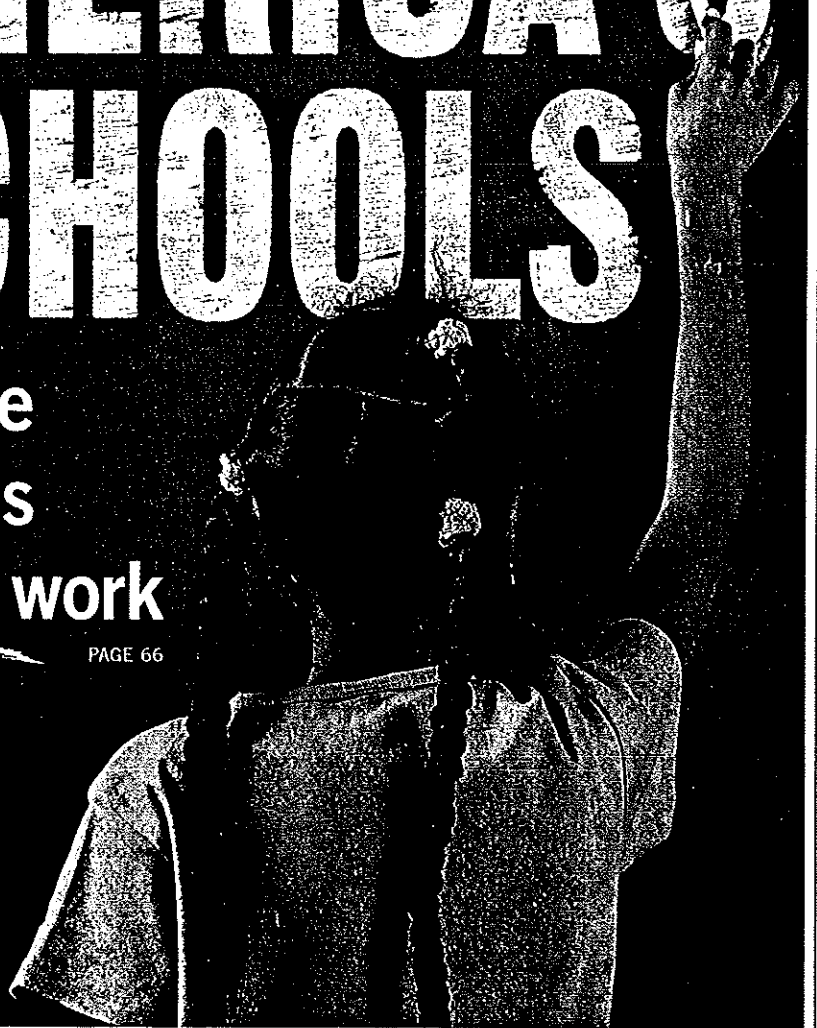
\$3.95US \$4.95CAN

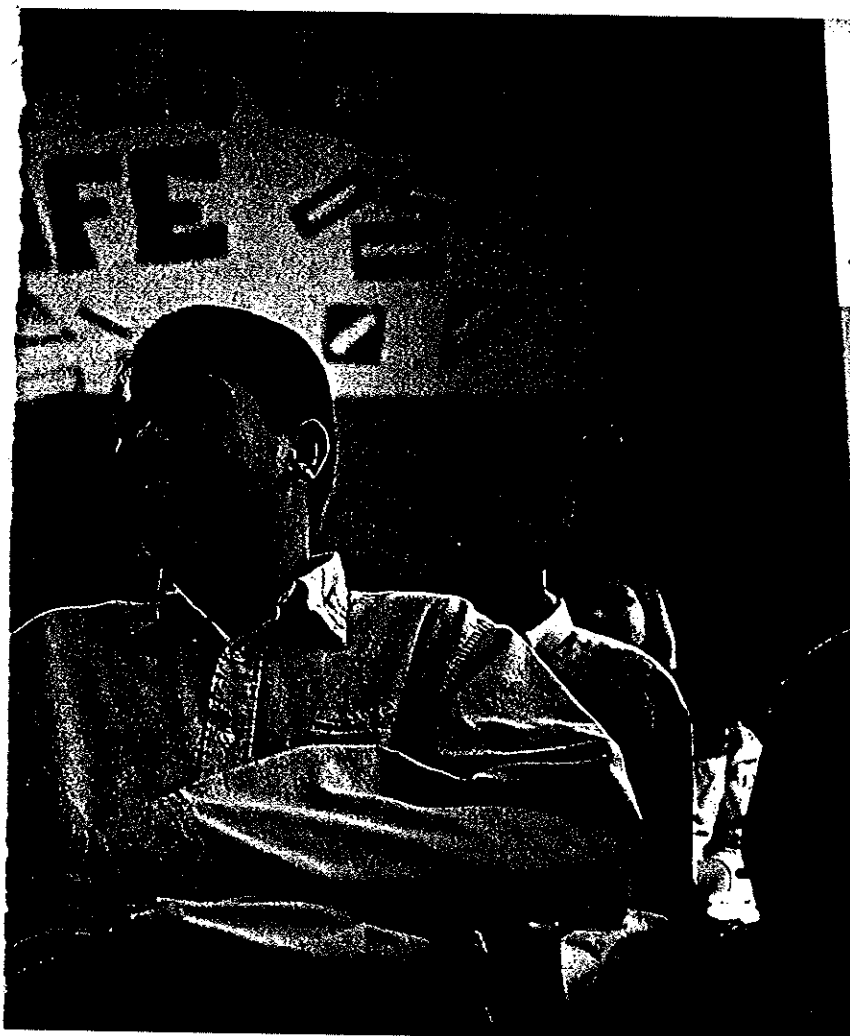


HOW TO FIX AMERICA'S SCHOOLS

Here are
7 ideas
that work

PAGE 66





BEATING THE ODDS

An explosion of local reform, like Chicago's Perspective, is making a difference

Even more impressive are the states that have made large-scale improvements. In the 1980s, Kentucky ranked dead last in the country in its share of adults with a high school or college degree. But 11 years after the courts forced the state to redesign its entire system, 78% of adults now have a high school diploma, up from 53% in 1980. The share holding college degrees has doubled. And the Bluegrass State has leapfrogged other states into the middle ranks of academic performance. Similarly, sweeping reforms have helped North Carolina and Texas make strides, outpacing the gains of all other states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the primary test used to measure students nationally.

One clear lesson of all the reform efforts is that no single idea can solve the many ills of America's schools. "Schools are complicated institutions, which means you need a comprehensive approach that deals with everything at once," says

middle schools in Houston and New York's South Bronx, more than 90% of students are Latino or African American, and virtually all are poor. Last year, 98% of KIPP's students in Houston passed the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test, ranking it among the state's best.

former Yale University President Benno C. Schmidt Jr., now chairman of Edison Schools, the nation's largest operator of for-profit schools. That's why President Bush's program is just a downpayment on all that's needed.

True, he wants to tackle several areas at once, including technology, school choice, and mandatory testing. But because Washington plays a relatively minor role in education, Bush's proposal doesn't come close to providing the radical action required. Most reforms, from tougher accountability to pay-for-performance for teachers, face stiff opposition that can only be overcome by the states, the highest level of government with leverage over the country's 90,000 schools.

HEFTY OUTLAYS. At the same time, however, the U.S. must also pony up more money for serious reform. Bush wants a \$2 billion, or 10%, boost in federal K-12 spending. But that's pennies out of the \$360 billion total the U.S. shells out annually on public education. No one has tried to figure out what it would take to provide every child with an adequate education. Wyoming took a shot at it and came up with \$7,400 per student a year, or 18% more than what it had been spending. The cost would certainly be higher in many states with big cities and many poor families.

Still, as a starting point, a national increase like Wyoming's would run an extra \$60 billion a year. Even half that, if used wisely, could make a dent. But real change will require everyone—Washington, the states, and school districts—to dig deep into their pockets. For that, the political environment has never been more conducive. "Almost every governor has an agenda to improve the schools," notes Ted Sanders, president of the Education Commission of the States. The question now is whether it's enough to give every American child a real education.

1 PAY TEACHERS FOR PERFORMANCE

FEW FACTORS AFFECT STUDENTS' PERFORMANCES more than the quality of their teachers. A Tennessee study in 1996—to cite just one of many making the same point—found that fifth-graders who had three years of effective teaching improved their math scores by 83%, vs. a 29% gain for students with ineffective teachers. Yet many teachers are unqualified. One-third of secondary school math teachers and roughly half of physical science teachers didn't major or minor in the subjects they teach. Often, "the most senior teachers opt for the nicest schools, while we put our weakest teachers in the hardest locations," says Robert T. Jones, president of the National Alliance of Business (NAB), which backs training and education initiatives.

The appalling shortage of quality teachers stems in part from chronically low pay. Any college grad who wants to teach must be willing to endure a lifetime of subpar wages (chart, page 70). Now schools face the near-impossible mission of filling the 2.2 million teaching vacancies expected over the next decade.

Aggravating the problem is an outdated salary structure unrelated to what teachers do in the classroom. Most teach-

PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD BUCHANAN

ers are still paid under the so-called single-salary system developed in Des Moines 80 years ago. Everyone with the same seniority and degree is paid the same. That approach marked a step forward in 1921, when it corrected the practice of paying male teachers more than female ones. But the system has become a straitjacket that's stifling schools, which can't reward the best teachers or pay more to lure math and science graduates. "It doesn't offer teachers any real opportunity for professional advancement," argues Lowell Milken, chairman of the Milken Family Foundation.

The solution: Pay teachers more, and scrap single salaries for a system that rewards teachers for what they contribute to student learning. On Jan. 30, four leading business groups—the NAB, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, and the National Association of Manufacturers—endorsed a plan along these lines. These groups would, in return for higher teachers' pay, raise the bar for new teachers. Educators would be paid according to how well they perform in class and mentor other teachers, with the chance to reach a max of \$100,000. Meanwhile, professional development would be expanded.

Connecticut has shown that such reforms can work. Starting in 1986, it raised teacher salaries by nearly one-third. Today, they're still among the nation's highest, averaging around \$53,000 and peaking at more than \$80,000. Simultaneously, the state hiked requirements for new teachers, including passing an exam in their subject area. New teachers work with a mentor to improve their technique. Then they are evaluated. The review covers lesson plans and teaching techniques and "evaluates their ability to foster learning," says Raymond Pecheone, who oversees teacher evaluation for the state. Those who don't cut it by their third year are out.

UP THE LADDER. The payoff has been great. It has avoided the teacher shortages of other states. "We turn away three [applicants] for every one we let into our teaching program, and the grade-point average of those accepted is 3.4," brags Richard L. Schwab, dean of the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. Teacher attrition is down, and Connecticut has made huge gains in student achievement, especially in reading, where it ranks first in the nation.

Now reformers elsewhere are adding more rungs to a career ladder teachers can climb. Last fall, Cincinnati negotiated a new system with the local union in which teachers may ascend five rungs in their career—from apprentice to accomplished. Advances are based on a sophisticated measure of performance. Educators will undergo periodic evaluations, "and if you don't measure up, you can drop a rung and actually lose pay," says Kathleen Ware, the city's associate superintendent. Iowa is close to adopting a similar statewide career ladder.

Teachers themselves are one of the most difficult obstacles to such schemes. The country's two teachers unions, the National Education Assn. (NEA) and the American Federation of

PEAK PERFORMERS

Some Los Angeles teachers left the union after the principal based pay on results

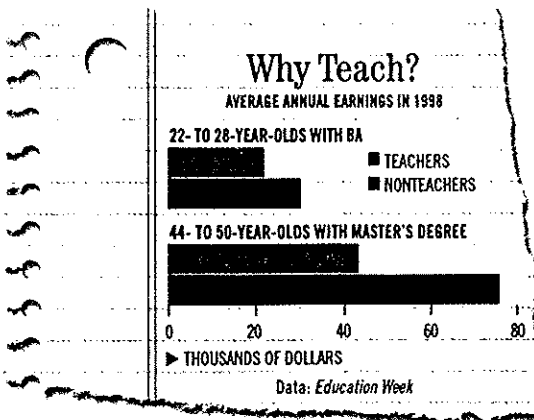


Teachers (AFT), support higher pay to attract more qualified talent to teaching. And "we support different ways of providing compensation to teachers," says AFT President Sandy Feldman, who notes that her union backed the Cincinnati plan. But the unions are skeptical about some aspects of reform. NEA President Robert F. Chase, for example, opposes paying more to attract math and science teachers. "Is their work really more important than teaching kindergarten or first grade?" he asks. Such thinking ignores the marketplace reality that those trained in math and science have many other opportunities.

Teachers at the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles even had to withdraw from the union to keep working there after the school adopted a pay-for-performance ladder. In 1990, 70% of Vaughn teachers had less than three years experience. The school serves 1,300 Hispanic elementary kids in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. Turnover was high, and Vaughn ranked among L.A.'s worst schools.

Three years later, Principal Yvonne Chan converted Vaughn into a charter school (which means it receives public funds but is otherwise largely autonomous). In 1998, she set up a system that bases pay on a teacher's ability to help kids meet California's standards

and gives bonuses to high achievers. Top performers can earn \$68,000 a year, 20% more than in other L.A. schools. But the local union insisted that Vaughn teachers return to a regular public school. Some did, but after an ugly debate, most left the union and endorsed the plan.



Daily News

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2001

JOURNEY to CHINA



Principal Yvonne Chan goes over a Chinese fortune-telling book with first-grade teacher April Farley in preparation for their trip to China, which begins today and includes both learning and teaching.

Joe Binoya/Special to the Daily News

Teachers seek out cultural exchange

By Joseph Giordano
Staff Writer

PACOIMA — Yvonne Chan, the nationally acclaimed founder and principal of the Vaughn Street charter school, believes in the American dream.

The only thing is, in her version, the payoff is taking 84 teachers, spouses and former staff members on a 10-day spring-break educational exchange mission to her native China beginning today — and paying \$20,000 of the \$80,000 cost out of her own pocket.

Though the current diplomatic crisis over a



"Especially with this incident, we are not going there to talk about politics."

— Yvonne Chan

the teachers worried, Chan said she will try to keep the focus on sharing educational philosophies and practices.

"Especially with this incident, we are not going



INSIDE

► Secretary of State Colin Powell sends letter to a top Chinese official outlining proposal to end standoff

Page 1 of 2

on kids. While the politicians and the military have to deal with these other situations, we have to keep focused."

It is just the latest endeavor for Chan, a Canton native who immigrated to the United States at age 16 with \$100 in her pocket, and eventually built the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center into a national Blue Ribbon school serving 1,100 children from mostly low-income families.

"It has taken me 39 years to finally meet my dream," Chan said as she went over last-minute English lesson plans with some of her teachers Wednesday afternoon.

"I've been trying to meet the dreams of this community by helping kids with academics and training teachers. I need to meet my dream, and my dream is take all of this back (to China)."

The school saved five years for the trip, with all expenses paid for with donations from private foundations and individuals. The biggest donation came from Chan, who has used money from educational awards in the past to reinvest in the Pacoima campus.

The Vaughn Street teachers are looking forward to learning more about the Chinese education system, which produces some of the world's best math and science scholars.

"One of the reasons I am going is to meet the teachers and the students and relate to them as an educator," said Karen Schwarz-Muehlberger, who has taught at the school for seven years.

"I know that in the end it will be seen as a political act, but I want to try and transcend that as much as possible."

While today's trip is not Chan's first back to China, it is her most significant.

"This is the first time that I will actually land in a school similar to the one I attended 40 years ago and be able to offer help," Chan said.

Chan and her teachers will visit primary schools in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, observe Chinese teachers in their classrooms, then teach their own lessons in English for an hour.

While the long-term goal is to have Chinese teachers eventually work at the Vaughn Street school, the immediate purpose is to share common educational problems and solutions.

One lesson the Vaughn Street teachers hope to impart is how to deal with overcrowded and

According to Chinese experts, members of the Vaughn Street delegation could run into another issue they already see at home: the lack of access to education for children of illegal immigrants.

"One of the big problems in the Chinese educational system is what happens with illegal migrants," said Wing Thyee Woo, a University of California, Davis, professor.

"In China, you have a system that essentially says you are legally supposed to stay where you are. But the problem is with people flocking to booming cities like Shanghai, just as you have migrant workers in California."

Though Woo said it would be unlikely that Chinese educational officials would broach such an "impolite" subject, the Chinese system as a whole has become more sophisticated and open.

"To be sure, it is a system in great flux. In the areas which they will be traveling, I think they will be seeing the most advanced and diversified parts of the Chinese educational system," Woo said.

Since becoming

a charter school in 1993, Vaughn Street has received California Distinguished School and National Blue Ribbon awards. Visitors have included former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and state schools Superintendent Delaine Eastin.

Parents must sign a contract that calls for, among other responsibilities, volunteering 30 hours each year, reviewing their children's homework and visiting the school's family center.

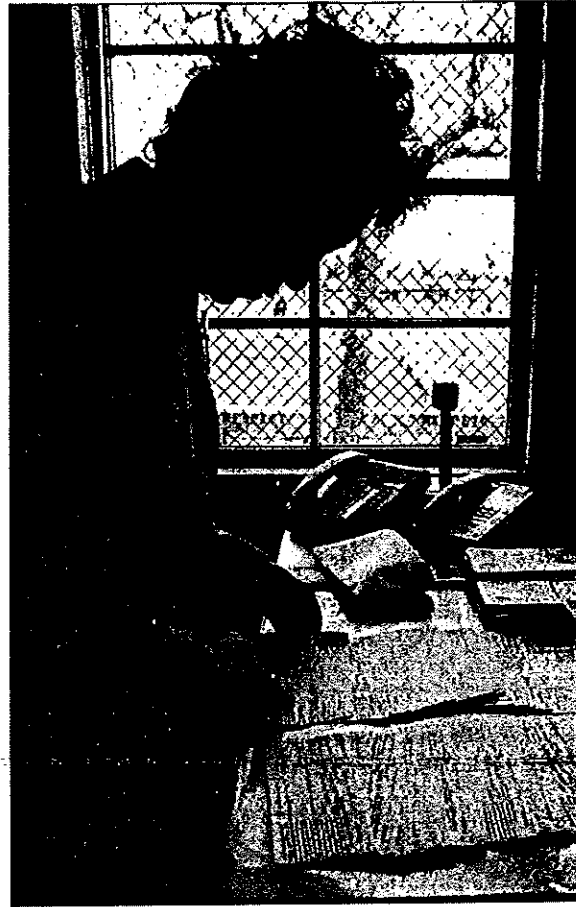
Teachers acknowledge that the China trip would not be possible at any other school.

"This is cutting edge. I would not get this opportunity anywhere else," said Susie Oblad, an eight-year veteran of the school who will teach a lesson on electrical circuits to the Chinese equivalent of a sixth-grade class.

Chan said she looks forward to the trip with nervous excitement. "I try not to think of it, on the one hand, but I am a bit nervous. But I look at it more like we are a family instead of educational diplomats," she said.

"It is the belief of the delegation that a common interest in educating children will transcend the cultural, political and ethnic barriers.

"I am Chinese and I am American," Chan said. "But, ultimately, I am a teacher."



Joe Binoya/Special to the Daily News

Yvonne Chan makes sure all the airline tickets for her teachers are ready for the trip to China, which begins today.

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EDITORIAL

DAILY NEWS

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Vaughn to China

YVONNE Chan has done it again — blazed a trail of innovation within the Los Angeles Unified School District, not an easy task.

The principal of the nationally acclaimed Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima took her 84 teachers and some former staff members to China last week on a 10-day mission to study Chinese schools.

The \$80,000 trip was paid for with their own money and gifts from foundations and individuals, including \$20,000 that Chan paid out of her own pocket in money she received for national awards.

It's the kind of thing we've come

to expect from Chan, a Cantonese native who immigrated to the United States at 16 with \$100 in her pocket.

Since becoming a charter school in 1993, Vaughn, with 1,100 students, has received California Distinguished School and National Blue Ribbon awards. Visitors have included former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and state school Superintendent Delaine Eastin.

Teachers acknowledge that the groundbreaking trip would not be possible at any other school. But Chan and her staff have excelled by doing the unexpected.

We applaud Chan and her teachers for raising the bar in education.

Daily News

IEWPOINT

Ideas ♦ Commentary

Sunday, April 29, 2001



In early April, Yvonne Chan, principal of Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima, took 84 teachers, former staffers and several of their spouses on a 10-day trip to China. The group visited schools in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong to exchange information on common educational problems and solutions. Below are observations from five members of the group:

Teachers learn, too

Yvonne Chan, principal

With the U.S. spy plane incident, we have a lot of guts in asking the Chinese to turn over three schools to us, and they have a lot of trust in handing over 4,000 students to us to teach without censoring our lessons in advance.

We visited and taught in three government schools — a demonstration school attached to the Beijing Teacher Training University; a magnet school for foreign languages in Shanghai; and an autonomous, neighborhood, charterlike school in Shanghai.

If you want a quality education in China, parents have to pay some fees even for public schools. At least in the United States, parents do have some choices without digging into their pockets.

The Chinese said that they don't have special education students in regular schools. We saw the hyperactive ones and the not-so-agile ones who couldn't keep pace with the others in whole-group physical education activities. The difference is the Chinese would tolerate the differences.

If the Chinese students can learn high standards in a class size of 50-60 with only one teacher, just imagine what can happen if these kids are in classrooms of 20!

Though there are national standards and a totally centralized curriculum, every school has adequate local control on how to deliver the instruction. Why is it so difficult for LAUSD to recentralize its reading and math curriculum without taking away the creativity and autonomy among teachers?



During a 10-day trip to China, Yvonne Chan, principal of Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, meets students at Beijing Primary School.

See CHINA / Page 4

China a learning experience for Valley educators





Yvonne Chan, principal
of the highly successful
Vaughn Next Century Learning Center,
says California's charter law gave her a

License to Dream



Yvonne Chan knows about turnarounds. At 12, she fled Communist China with her mother, eventually winding up in Hong Kong, where she attended private school on a full scholarship. At 17, she immigrated alone to America, sold the basketful of Chinese herbs she'd brought with her for \$300, then used the money to make her way to Fresno, California, where she entered a community college. Eventually, she earned a Ph.D. in education from UCLA and spent 16 years in the classroom, mostly teaching special ed. Today, the 50-year-old Chan is among the most well-respected—and well-tested—educators in the country.

But she is perhaps less proud of her personal achievements than the turnaround she spearheaded at the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, a 1,140-student elementary school in Pacoima, California.

When she came on board in 1990,

Vaughn was a "throwaway" school

marked by overcrowding, single-digit test scores, poor attendance, gang violence, and vandalism.

Now it is arguably the most successful charter school in the nation:

Test scores have skyrocketed, attendance has dramatically improved, class size has decreased, and students, teachers, and parents work hard to maintain their school's first-quality image.

Chan is not without her critics, though. Some say that she is as much a marketer as she is a dedicated educator. A perfect example: When she managed to buy a neighboring crack house for the expansion of the school, she made sure the TV cameras were rolling as she sat atop the bulldozer that razed the place. But others contend that it is precisely this combination of media savvy and teacher's zeal that makes Chan such a formidable educational champion. Recently, Chan spoke with the editors of *America's Agenda* and shared the story—and secrets—of her success.

America's Agenda How did your relationship with Vaughn begin?

Yvonne Chan I was with the Los Angeles Unified School District first as a teacher and then as an administrator. When I was sent to Vaughn in 1990—this school is located in Pacoima, about two miles from the Rodney King incident—it was my third time as an administrator. We have kids in preschool through 5th grade from a very poor neighborhood in Los Angeles. The annual income per family, mostly first-generation immigrants, is \$15,000, with many children living in garages and trailers and in poor health, confronting physical as well as drug and alcohol abuse, along with the lure of gang affiliation—all of which hinder learning.

When I arrived, Vaughn was among the worst schools in the district. Single-digit test scores were a pattern; attendance was

poor. We had no identified gifted/talented students; handicapped students qualified for special ed classes were sent to other schools due to lack of services on site. Overcrowding forced as many as 261 students to ride buses to other schools. Seventy percent of the teachers had less than three years of teaching experience; 18 did not have any teaching credentials. Twenty grievances had been filed by staff members against the administration and two lawsuits were pending. Parents and teachers were involved in mediation; Hispanic and African-American staff and parents were divided. Gang violence, homicides, graffiti, and vandalism were common. One time we had to notify the police because a dead body was left on our front lawn; drug buys took place right in front of the school.

AA You seem to have encountered every possible difficulty. What you have described are not exactly ideal teaching conditions.

Chan Right. Furthermore, what I had to do to survive was very different from what I was trained to do. As an educator, my focus was supposed to be on the three R's. But really it was on the three B's: buses, for transporting kids out of their own neighborhood; budgets, and trying to find a spare dime for supplies; and butts, as in "That's a good idea, teacher, but..." or "Yes, parents, we should do that, but..."

I was trained to do all those wonderful things that can help kids achieve—provide staff development, engage parents, give the children access to technology. But in reality, I wound up having to memorize 6,000 pages of education codes. And the board rules. And all the employee contract obligations.

AA Was this bureaucratic hamstringing the major reason that converting to charter-school status seemed so compelling to you?

Chan Yes. We tried to get waiver after waiver, but it would take as long as six or seven months for one to be granted.

Then in January of 1993, California passed its charter-school law that allowed 100 schools in

the state to be autonomous public schools free of education

codes and district regulations. Wow—the waiver of all waivers! It took the handcuffs off so that

those of us who knew the kids best could do whatever we needed to teach them.

It was our license to dream.

AA How did you actually go about transforming Vaughn into a charter school?

Chan It was a teacher-led movement. Then the parents joined in and I decided to stay without a second thought about my tenure and perceived loyalty to the school district. After months of drafting, discussions, revisions, and negotiations with our

district, our charter was approved by the Los Angeles Unified School Board. All seven employee unions, including the United Teachers of California, the School Employee Association, and the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, agreed to subordinate their contract terms to our charter, as long as we remained dues-paying members; that is to say, collective bargaining wouldn't apply as long as our employees were also employers. So on July 1, 1993, we declared our independence.

AA You mention the unions. Initially at least, the teachers unions have not been strong supporters of the charter movement. Can you explain how you worked with them for your mutual benefit?

Chan Because our faculty has full decision-making authority, we no longer needed our unions to bargain for salaries, benefits, and working conditions. But we did and still do need them for technical assistance on legal and financial matters, staff development, and legislative lobbying. As union members—our school pays about \$30,000 in dues—we talked to our union and asked if they could help us, their members, to be self-sufficient and responsible. We said, "That's your new role." And you know what? They agreed. The union has benefited because we hired more teachers to reduce class size and to add such resources as a librarian and a phys. ed. coach, so they have 16 more dues-paying members. Plus no teacher lost a job. Also, we were able to recruit experienced teachers and gave them better compensation.

AA After so much preparation, achieving charter-school status must have been a pretty heady experience.

Chan Yes. Our euphoria was short-lived, though. We had no idea of the big battles we would still have to fight. We had no legal status to set up bank accounts; we had no start-up dollars; we didn't know where to go for liability insurance. We had no business training on payroll, budgeting, and accounting, and for these services we were totally cut off from the district.

In addition, we were immersed in a long,
hot dispute with our sponsoring district
on funding, special education issues,
transportation, facilities, and personnel matters.
Yet we decided to move forward
because our children could no longer wait.

So staff members agreed to delay payroll for a month and I put my house up for a second mortgage until a cash-flow loan was made possible. We paid high premiums for health insurance until we established our own rating. We got assistance from the business world until we learned how to be self-sufficient. For example, Marriott helped us set up a child nutrition program; members of the local chamber of commerce and Rotary Club who were also CPAs and lawyers provided technical assistance pro bono. Vendors like McGraw Hill and GTE gave us up-front credit. Legislators

and the media came to our rescue also by advocating equal funding for our children.

AA It sounds like you did all this as part of a carefully orchestrated decision-making process. How is the school actually managed?

Chan We set up eight decision-making teams of 12 parents, staff, and community members. They rotate from committee to committee every two years so that everyone has a chance to



The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center provides several programs for students who need extra help, including buddy reading, after-school tutoring, and the assistance of special education teachers.

handle budgets, hire teachers, etc. These teams have eliminated restrictive policies, hired personnel, distributed dollars based on student needs, and provided necessary tools for teachers to do their job, like planning time, tuition-free university classes, workshop fees, and one-to-one mentors. In our first year, we realized \$1.2 million in savings through increased student attendance, decreased staff absences, lower insurance premiums for liabilities and workers compensation, collaboration with service providers, reduced deficits in special education, and increased volunteerism.

We were surprised by the savings, but the district was even more surprised. They immediately audited our attendance, enrollment, accounting, cash flow, food services—anything that could bring in money—and found that savings were only \$1 million. The report stated that the discrepancy was because the district was giving Vaughn more funds than other schools. But our own findings show that Vaughn actually receives 92 percent of every eligible dollar, whereas other schools receive a significantly smaller portion. The reason: our initial negotiations allow us not to purchase central services we don't need and personnel we never see.

AA What was the attitude of your district toward Vaughn becoming a charter school?

Chan The district's attitude was negative, but the charter-school option is one of the best that public schools have. For

many years, Vaughn was seen as the black hole of resources. The district had to pump a great deal of funds into us due to lawsuits, thefts, and employee grievances, so they didn't want to give us any money. But now nobody calls them to complain about Vaughn anymore. And we give 8 percent of our \$5 million total per-pupil expenditure to pay for the administrative and maintenance services the district does provide. Unfortunately, though, there are still some hurt feelings; I am still treated as a renegade who sold my district out.

AA The bottom line of any school is making sure that children learn. Have you attained positive, demonstrable results in this area?

Chan You judge. We now have 1,140 students, nearly 95 percent of whom are Hispanic; most of the others are African-American. Fully 83 percent have only limited English proficiency, but our student achievement based on test scores and independent evaluations has gone up 330 percent in the last five years. We're close to the national medium in math and language. Our student attendance is at 99.4 percent. The number of students who are now proficient enough in language to be taught in English has tripled. We serve 103 gifted/high-achieving students and we have brought all 89 of our handicapped students back. We don't bus our students anymore because we have the resources and space to educate them. We built 14 brand-new classrooms on the site of a former crack house located next door to our original building. The construction was done by a neighborhood contractor, parent volunteers, and high school student apprentices as part of their school-to-work program. Class size went from 30 to 23, with grades 1, 2, and 3 at 20 students.

For students needing extra help, we provide after-school tutoring, pull in assistance like having special ed. teachers come into the classroom to co-teach, buddy reading, and computer-assisted instruction. There is a computer for every four students and all computers are connected to the Internet. Soon we will serve all 17 neighboring schools as the wide-area network hub. To further support student learning, we have a seven-member counseling and support-service team, a science teacher, a media/library teacher, four computer technicians, and two artists-in-residence teamed with classroom teachers. We also abandoned the multitrack calendar after 22 years and have extended our school year from 163 to 200 days.

To help families and reduce out-of-school barriers, we provide immunization, physical checkups, dental and vision screening, free medical insurance for 200 of our neediest families, prenatal care, family counseling, training on how to access health and social services, job referrals, child care, and Saturday family activities. We also have a home/school contract which says that each family must contribute 30 hours to the children's education, doing such things as tutoring, cleaning

off graffiti, and providing child care for another family. At least 50 parents are on site daily—helping teachers, receiving parent education, and working through various career-ladder opportunities.

AA Many of these programs are quite costly. Where has the money come from?

Chan In 1991, I won \$25,000 as the Educator of the Year from the Michael Milken Foundation. I donated the money to Vaughn and leveraged it into \$1.4 million in grant dollars over a five-year period. Mostly this consisted of a \$321,000 grant from RJR Nabisco and an even larger grant from the state. These moneys didn't go for basic education programs but for such things as social services and training for parents and staff. Although the grants are just about over, we have been able to institutionalize and maintain these programs ourselves.

AA Looking back, do you think you could have achieved so much without becoming a charter school?

Chan California's strong charter-school law releases us from burdensome regulations and allows us to deploy personnel and fiscal resources in priority areas. It permits us to put children first and to hold all adults responsible for reaching the high standards set by the state or district for teaching all essential skills, integrating content areas, accelerating second-language learning and implementing home-school activities. We have an elaborate staff evaluation process whereby teams of teachers, parents, and university coaches visit each class three times a year. We also have ongoing peer review, and a three-step evaluation program that includes intervention, followed by consequences which could include dismissal.

Five years ago, we had a dream.

We backed it up with actions and made our dream come true.

And we're still dreaming. We want a
community literacy library and a professional
development academy on site. We know we have a long
way to go, but life is not a matter
of holding good cards;
it's learning how to play a bad hand well.

AA So you're close to reaching your goal?

Chan Yes, but my real goal is to have an impact not just on Vaughn, but on the rest of the schools. It's nice to talk about charter schools, but we're still going to have kids in schools that could benefit from the lessons of the charters and make some fundamental changes. Already some non-charter schools could replicate some of our efforts in site-based budgeting, school organization, and the deployment of personnel. I believe that charters can be the schools that most help today's and tomorrow's children.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 26, 1995

Bursting with school pride

Vaughn opens multimedia learning center

By Jeanne Mariani-Belding
Daily News Staff Writer

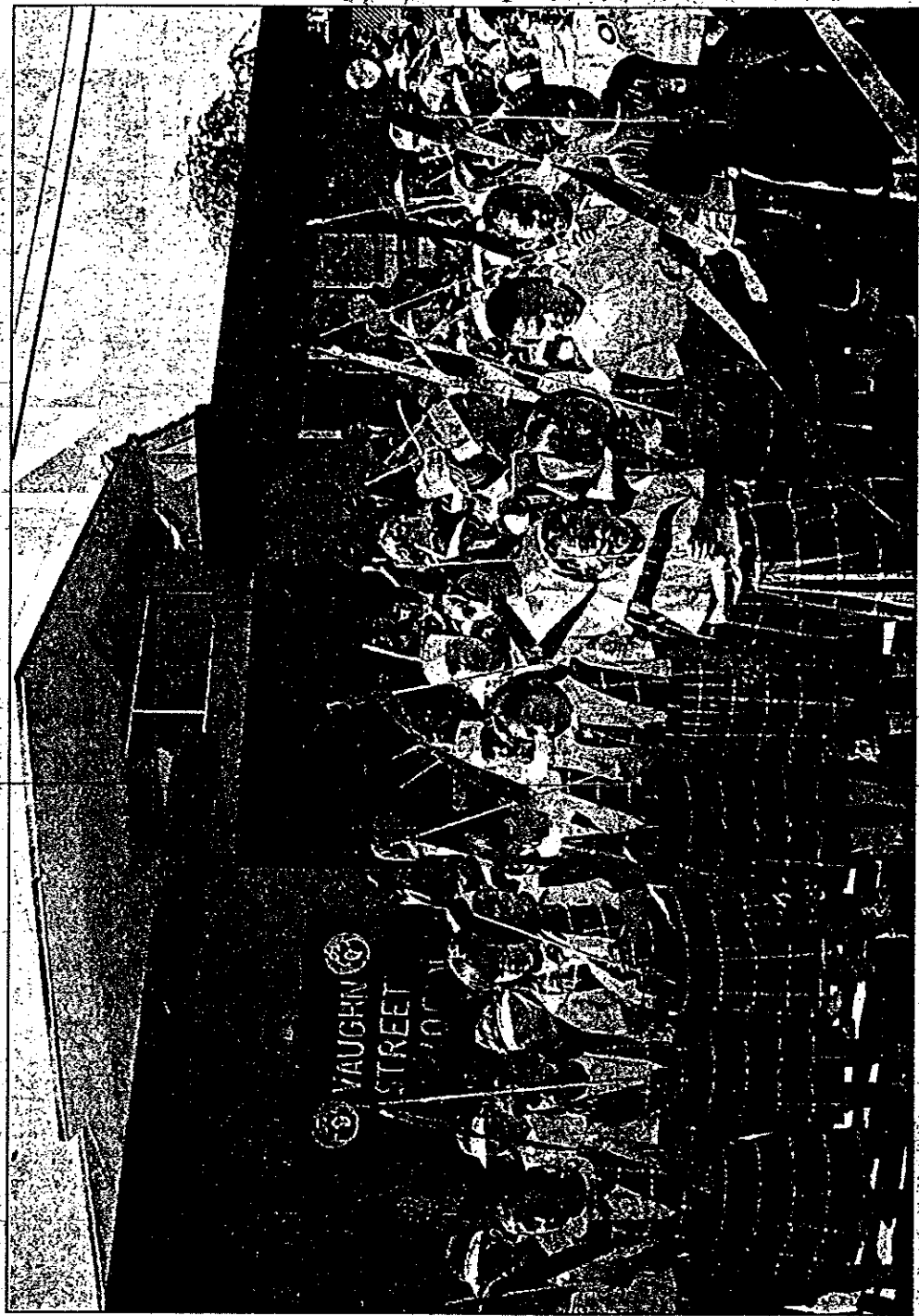
PACOIMA — Dressed in his school uniform — slacks, white shirt and a tie — fourth-grader Jesus Buenos politely hands a spectator a program and escorts her across the blacktop at Vaughn Next Century Learning Center.

He shares the inside scoop on what it's like to go to school here. "This school is good. I like it. It's pretty. We clean it and we take care of it, you know," the boy said proudly as he approached rows of chairs set up where parents, community leaders and officials Friday shared in the school's latest success — the opening of the school's new multimedia building.

Built on the site of a former crack house and soon to be stocked with new computers, the facility will serve as an on-ramp to the information superhighway for many of the school's students.

It's the latest milestone achieved by the San Fernando Valley's first charter school.

"This truly is a celebration of



Vaughn Next Century Learning Center students sing the school song during festivities to open the new multimedia facility. Bob Halvorsen/Daily News

'Vaughn, the Little School That Could'

Yvonne Chan thought they could, thought they could, thought they could. And on Friday morning, the principal of the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima and 1,100 students celebrated the opening of 14 new classrooms—a project Chan compared to the story of "The Little Engine That Could."

"Boys and girls, reaching this day has not been easy," Chan told the student body during a ribbon-cutting ceremony that included school board members, a city councilman, state legislators and dozens of other dignitaries.

"We have put you first and we succeeded," said Chan, accompanied by the recorded strains of the song "The Impossible Dream." "We have shown the world what a new public school looks like."

The school fought an uphill battle to be approved as the first charter school in Los Angeles, juggled funding sources and scraped up grants to get \$1 million for the new buildings. It also juggled schedules so that all students could attend school simultaneously in a school year that is 37 days longer than state requirements.

So Chan arrived at the ceremony driving The Little Engine That Could—actually a golf cart borrowed from Pueblo Contracting Services of San Fernando, the company that built the new classrooms in four months. The cart was decorated in black and red to look like the engine from the children's story. Chan was followed by five children riding red tricycles.

"Now I'm going first class," said Chan, who used to ride a bicycle to get around the campus. Small groups of dignitaries even took a turn following Chan's golf cart during the ceremony, circling seven news television cameras camped in the middle of the school playground.

Near the end of the ceremony, the dignitaries unveiled a sign for the new building: "Vaughn, the Little School that Could."

Chan's dream, she said to the crowd, was to create a safe, clean, well-disciplined school with smaller, high-tech classrooms. The new classrooms, which will be used by third- and fourth-graders as well as for special education, is not the end of her ambitions, she said. She wants to link the entire school together on a network of computers, much like the network of parents who have made Vaughn's programs successful.

"This is not so much a school of children," Los Angeles Councilman Richard Alarcon said to the crowd. "This is a school of families. That is why this school is so special."

—ED BOND



Above, students in uniform watch during the dedication of classrooms. Below, Aja Canyon, 3, is one of several people holding the ribbon at the ribbon-cutting.



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Head of the class



David Crane/Daily News

Hillary Rodham Clinton joins students at Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima for a group photo Thursday

Pacoima school welcomes 1st lady

By Susan Goldsmith
Daily News Staff Writer

PACOIMA — First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton says it takes a village to raise a child, and Thursday she visited such a place — where parents, teachers and community leaders are raising 1,000 of their smallest villagers.

Clinton said she wanted to tour the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima because of the award-winning school's

reputation for community involvement.

"I wanted to come and see with my own eyes what I've heard about," Clinton told a proud and beaming group of youngsters, parents and teachers. "I'm here to listen."

Since becoming a charter school, Vaughn has become a national model and this year was named a California Distinguished School as test scores and attendance rates have risen dramatically.

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School Principal Yvonne Chan introduces Clinton.

VAUGHN: First Lady Visits School

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innovation is penalized, success is not rewarded," Clinton told the handpicked audience. "We, together, have to change the attitude in the public at large about what our schools should be doing."

Clinton's choice of Vaughn over 662 other local campuses was a predictable one—the school combines elements of her community health care initiatives and her husband's charter school platform with a "We Are the World" ethnicity. It forms the nucleus of the very kind of urban village she describes in her book, "It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us."

It is also a school primed for publicity, where the effervescent principal has received such widespread attention and kudos that one fan joked she had virtually installed a helipad on the playground.

Yet the truth is that Vaughn was not the first of six semi-independent charter schools in Los Angeles, nor is it the largest, the most innovative or even the most successful in terms of boosting student performance.

"We're just a normal place. We have our problems," said Principal Yvonne Chan, who has become a national spokeswoman for the charter school movement.

On Thursday the Pacoima school's spit and polish, smiling faces and carefully worded questions didn't reveal those struggles behind the scenes, struggles that have brought mixed results.

Under Chan's leadership, Vaughn has toiled with great success to salve racial tensions among

educators, parents and sometimes students. It has fought to victory for its budgetary due from the Los Angeles Unified School District and used some of that money to build 14 classrooms.

However, the school's work to woo parents to school committee meetings has been less effective. Chan acknowledges that only about half of the 49 parent members show up consistently.

Its attempt to prove its worth in the currency of standardized test scores has also faltered of late, with Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills scores dropping for the first time last year.

After years of boasting about the gradual rise in student test results, Chan was faced with explaining the opposite. She said she believes the decline in the key fourth-grade year resulted from her insistence that all pupils be tested, even special education students.

But the dip in test scores was a reminder that fame can also be a trial, Chan maintains. When word of the results leaked out, some of her detractors could barely conceal their glee. They said that they never wanted her to fail—which would be a black eye for all charters—but that they did welcome the reality check on her rhetoric.

Clinton, who has faced difficult questions from the media lately, seemed to commiserate.

"There is so much talk about what doesn't work in America—so many negative press stories," she said. "You are solving some problems at Vaughn. Let's look at what does work and then

build out from there."

Each of the other five charter schools in Los Angeles also has a unique character. For the others—and for hundreds of additional schools that are making significant changes under the district's reform movement, known as LEARN—it is hard not to be envious of Vaughn's attention.

"Sometimes we feel like, 'Let's not use Vaughn so much. . . . Let's look at other models,'" said Johnathan Williams, co-director of the Accelerated School in South-Central Los Angeles, a two-room schoolhouse that opened in 1994 and has since redesigned everything from report cards to teaching methods.

Chan is also a thorn in the side of the Los Angeles Unified School District, taking her complaints to the press when she cannot get the results she wants. She even adopted a motto for herself and the school: "The Little Engine That Could."

"She gives me gray hairs," said one district official, who asked not to be named.

Yet the fact is that in many ways, Vaughn could be a page-torn directly from Clinton's book, in which she asks:

"Are parents ready to become partners with schools again, for the benefit of their own—and other—children? And how about other members of the village, those whose children have passed school age? Are they—are all of us—ready to join this partnership?"

As if anticipating Clinton's questions, over the past few years Vaughn has reached out beyond its

cyclone fences into the surrounding low-income neighborhood.

The effort started with the 1992 opening of an on-campus family service center, which Clinton mentioned in her remarks, but was unable to visit because of security concerns.

The center now provides more than 400 families a month with everything from clothing to prena-

tal health care. It is financially supported by major agencies—especially the Los Angeles Educational Partnership and United Way—but relies heavily on parent volunteers, and parents make up half of its governing board.

Charter school status came three years ago—after passage of a law allowing 100 schools statewide to operate free from most govern-

ment mandates. It requires parent involvement in all decision-making committees.

What has since emerged is a symbiotic relationship in which service center counselors feel comfortable telling teachers about problems their students are facing at home and teachers freely referring students and their families to the center for help.