

# Student Equity Need Index (SENI)



## The Struggles for Equity

The historic and entrenched disinvestment in schools has led to under-resourced and constrained schools perpetuating inequity for Black and Latinx students. The pandemic has widened the achievement gap. We must prepare all our students for the realities of today and the future economy.

## Why SENI Matters

When communities throughout California organized to pass the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013-14, we anticipated a good amount of money would go to LAUSD and therefore into our concentration of high needs schools. We expected the district to move equity dollars to those who need it the most, low-income students of color. But there was no mandate at the local level.

Advancement Project California, Community Coalition, and Inner City Struggle saw an opportunity to codify LCFF at the local level.

Because, regardless of race, income or ability, every student deserves an education that sees their full potential, invests in their needs and reminds them of the infinite possibilities they have in front of them.

## About SENI

The Student Equity Need Index or "SENI" is a student-based equity need index used to inform the allocation of funds so that LAUSD can efficiently address the achievement gap. The Index includes indicators that measure percentages of targeted student populations, academic and community indicators that determine Highest, High, Moderate, Low, and Lowest need schools throughout all school levels in LAUSD.

Today, we see an unconscionable concentration of high and highest-need schools in parts of the district.

Therefore, a concentration of resources is needed to address those specific needs of "high" and "highest-need" schools in particular regions of the district.

When we target resources to our most vulnerable students, we uplift and support all.



**“**  
We need to build a culture of equity and racial justice in order to address the historic disinvestment in schools. Investing in our highest needs youth is critical to advancing a vision for justice that lifts up young people and their families.  
**”**

Xochil Ramirez  
InnerCity youth leader and senior at Roosevelt High School



Student Equity Needs Index 2018 - Refresh					
Highest	Student Equity Needs Index 2018				
	Index 2.0 Indicators of Need	Data Range	Index Weight		
High	Percentage of Foster Youth	Annual	5%	5%	5%
	Percentage of Homeless Youth	Annual	5%	5%	5%
Moderate	Percentage of English Learners	Annual	5%	5%	5%
	Percentage of Standard English Learners	Annual	5%	5%	5%
Low	Percentage of Low-Income S.W.D.	Annual	5%	5%	5%
	Percentage of Unduplicated Students	Annual	20%	20%	20%
Lowest	Suspension Rates	Annual	5%	5%	5%
	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade DIBELS	Annual			30%
	Incoming 6 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math SBAC	Annual	10%	15%	
	Incoming 6 <sup>th</sup> /9 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA SBAC	Annual	10%	15%	
	Chronic Absenteeism	Annual	5%	5%	5%
	I-Star Reports	3-Year Avg.	5%	5%	5%
	Asthma Severity Rate	3-Year Avg.	5%	5%	5%
	Non-Fatal Gun Shot Injuries	3-Year Avg.	5%	5%	5%
	A-G Completion Rate (High School Only)	Annual	10%		

# Timeline of the Student Equity Need Index (SENI) Campaign 1970-Present



## 1970s

The population of people of color doubles in California. Proposition 13 passes, leading to devastating disinvestment in public education that moves CA from #1 in per-pupil spending to #47 in 2018.

## 2008

The Great Recession hits the country, leading to heavy budget cuts at LAUSD.

## 2012

Communities throughout CA organize to pass Prop 30 to prevent \$6 billion in cuts to education.

## 2013

After a decade of organizing at the state level, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was enacted to restore funding to pre-recession levels by 2020-2021 in an equitable way.

## 2014

CoCo, ICS, and Advancement Project California lead the organizing efforts that pass the "Equity Is Justice" resolution in LAUSD. This historic resolution took LCFF further in defining need.



## 2015

LAUSD implements a watered-down SENI resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars being taken from high need schools. Community Coalition sues LAUSD for misappropriating \$450 million meant for high need students and diverting those funds to special education.

## 2016

Advancement Project CA provided data analysis and formulated a new index and indicators. The Equity Alliance for LA's kids engaged the district in new talks for SENI 2.0.

## 2017

SENI 2.0 negotiations begin. LAUSD settles with CoCo. Over \$150 million is allocated to the 50 highest-need schools in the district.

## April 2018

SENI 2.0 is unanimously approved by all seven LAUSD board members, making this a historical win for educational equity.

## August 2018

LAUSD begins their first workgroup meeting for the implementation of SENI 2.0.

## December 2018

LAUSD School Board discusses a new Funding Formula for the allocation of SENI dollars.

## March 2019

SENI was used to allocate \$282 million for the fiscal year 2020-2021 to high and highest needs schools.

# Keeping Our Promise



**In March 2019**, the district internally approved the final funding formula for SENI and secured \$282 million for High Needs schools in the district. Post-election and with the approaching pandemic, the political landscape started shifting.

**In January 2020**, the Equity Alliance responded to a resolution authored by BD5 school board member, Jackie Goldberg. It threatened to strip the hard-won funding from SENI 2.0. Community Coalition and InnerCity Struggle executed a community mobilization at the School Board's "Committee of the Whole" meeting. Over 150 youth, parents, and partners showed up and provided public comment on the importance of SENI 2.0.

**In February 2020**, the Equity Alliance for LA's Kids convened partners and LAUSD leaders to follow up on the status of SENI. Participation consisted of over 20 ally organizations and stakeholders.

**In April 2020**, LAUSD used SENI to identify which schools need the most support to differentiate investments and supports based on each school's level of need, due to unprecedented crisis causing the death or illness of thousands and also causing disproportionate educational, income, housing, and other economic impacts as a result of Covid-19 and the digital divide.

**In May 2020**, InnerCity Struggle, along with the Equity Alliance, successfully hosted the first virtual partner convening with 24 partners to discuss landscape shifts due to Covid-19. A plan was developed to identify students who had not logged into virtual classrooms since March 16, 2020.

**In February 2021**, LAUSD has committed an additional \$70 million (i.e., \$352 million total) to the SENI equity-based funding formula for the 2021-22 school year.

**In April 2021, the Equity Alliance for LA's Kids releases "The Equity Recovery Plan."**

**The fight for our highest-need schools continues:** In addition to the \$282 million, the Equity Alliance has been working with the district to ensure local schools have the support they need. LAUSD has agreed to provide local school leadership with strategic guidance and support as well as an evidence-based "menu of options" for guidance on school site investments that have demonstrated to be effective for strong student outcomes. This allows flexibility for school principals to spend SENI dollars to meet the needs of their school and students as opposed to fixed programming investments led by the district.



# Student Experience & Quotes

## **PANDEMIC SIZED IMPACT**

COVID-19 exacerbated historic racial and economic inequities in the education system and continues to threaten educational opportunities for far too many students, disproportionately impacting youth living in the highest-need communities.

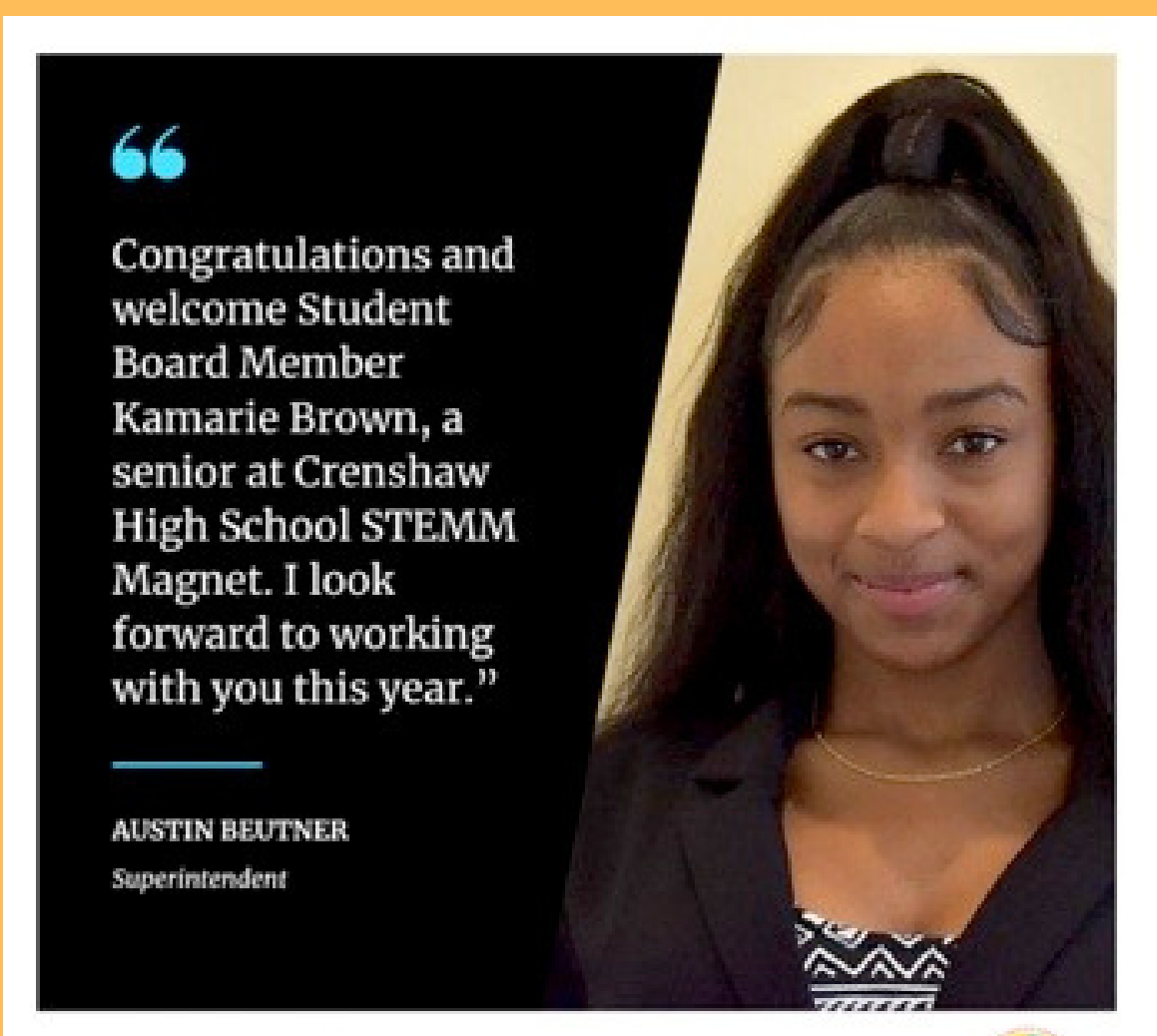


Schools in the highest need areas face the tremendous challenge of educating and supporting students and families under the new challenges of the pandemic while also overcoming pre-existing constraints of being under-resourced and underfunded.

***"We need additional staff support in low-income, Black and Brown schools, where students have been at a disproportional disadvantaged during the pandemic," said Kamarie Brown, Crenshaw High School Student***

Kamarie is Crenshaw High School's Student Body President and the Student Representative on the Los Angeles Unified School District Board 17. Equity is very important to her. She considered going to North Hollywood High, 15 miles away from her home in South Los Angeles. She became angry at the nagging question, "why do I have to travel far to go to a good school?"

## **Kamarie Brown**



***"Long before I became the Student Board Member for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) ... I have experienced the need for this [equity] work firsthand. Long before there was ever a campaign to do so, I have been speaking to this Board for years about the need to equitably fund our highest-need schools,"***  
said Brown at a recent board meeting.

*The honors student is at the top of her class with a 4.4 grade-point average but says she too is struggling. "It's not easy. I go over to my friend's house some days, or to the rose garden near me where I can use my phone as a hotspot for the internet."*

The high school senior shares an apartment with eight people, including four other school-aged children struggling to manage the virtual learning environment.

***"When friends ask how I'm coping, I tell them it's not easy for me either. I'm really motivated, but I have moments when I want to give up, too."***

But, in such a crucial time, Ms. Brown believes her advocacy and experience are needed to amplify her peers' voices.

## **ISIS AND HER FAMILY**

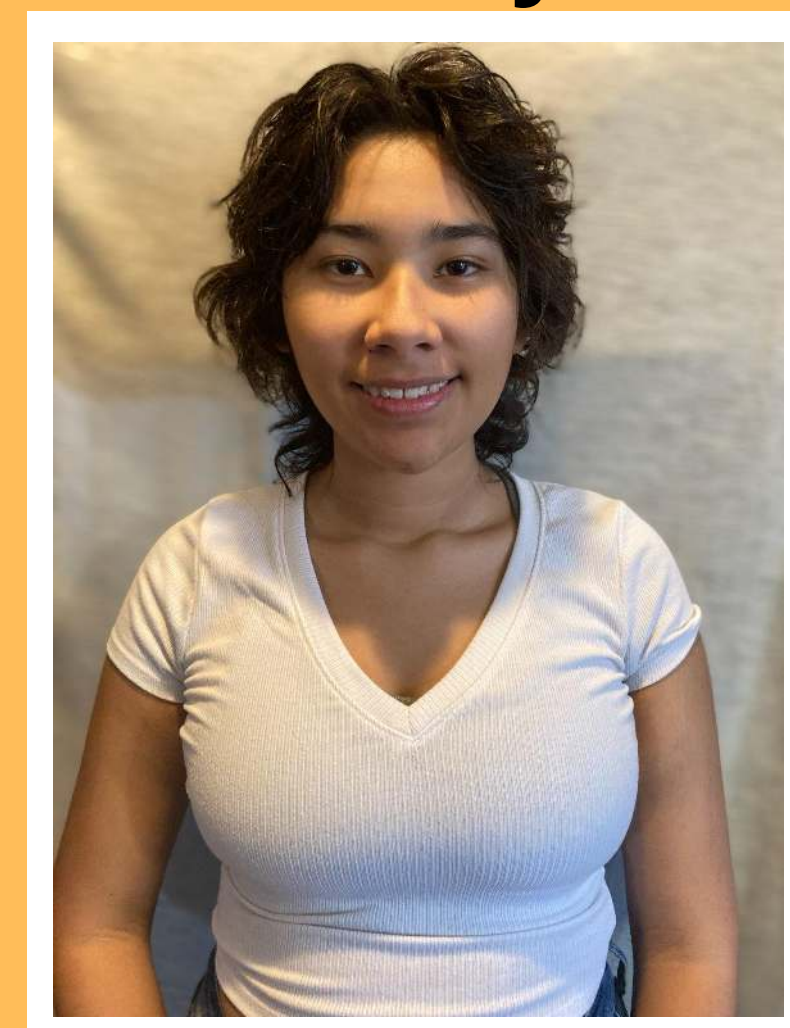
***"When the pandemic started, my mom lost her job as a waitress in a coffee shop. Shortly after that, she started working for Instacart and Amazon delivering groceries. To support her, I look after my younger brother Tiger and go to work with her from time to time. Her job is grueling--picking up all the packages and then delivering them up flights of stairs to people's homes is not an easy job."***

***"I worry about the exposure she gets, but she has no choice because she is undocumented. We have received little support from the government. My family has actually received more financial assistance from InnerCity Struggle than from the government."***

***"The way distance learning is being done now is leaving students behind. If it was challenging to teach and engage 30+ students in a classroom, it's nearly impossible to do that through Zoom. There is a huge disconnect happening between students and teachers."***

***"My younger brother Tiger has been struggling, he misses the classroom and his friends. He is having a hard time finding the motivation to complete his assignments, and he is not the only one. I do my best to help him out--even using Youtube to teach myself his math assignments in order to be able to tutor him."***

## **Isis Mejia**



**Find more information and quotes at [equityallianceforlaskids.org](https://equityallianceforlaskids.org).**