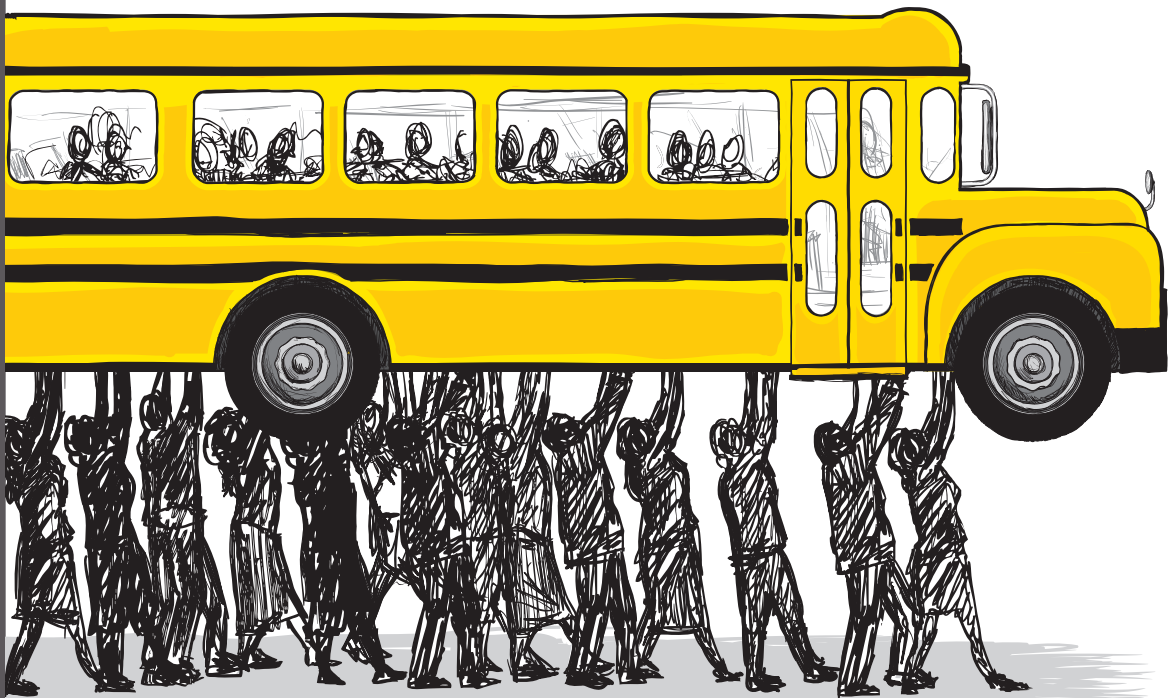


# Discussion Guide

## for Community Screenings



# GO PUBLIC

A Day in the Life of an American School District

BLUE FIELD  
PRODUCTIONS

# Contents

Message from the Filmmakers .....	1
About the GO PUBLIC Project .....	2
Purpose of This Discussion Guide .....	3
Reflections on Education .....	4
Public Education Fact Sheet .....	5
Hosting a Community Screening .....	6
Topics to Discuss .....	9
The Public School Experience: Perceptions and Realities .....	9
Student-Teacher Engagement .....	10
Serving Diverse Needs .....	11
Innovative Learning .....	13
The Arts .....	15
Libraries & Literacy .....	16
Outside the Classroom .....	17
Volunteers and Community Support .....	18
Budget .....	19
Action Items .....	20
Additional Resources .....	21
The 50 Subjects .....	22

Community Discussion Guide prepared by Susanna Sabin  
GO PUBLIC: A Day in the Life of an American School District  
produced by Dawn and Jim O’Keeffe

# Message from the Filmmakers

**WE ARE FIRST AND FOREMOST PARENTS** of four children who intentionally chose public school and became intimately involved with our district. It has made us very aware of the challenges facing public education and the criticism it has been enduring for many years. There was a disconnect between this “crisis of confidence” and the reality of the experience we were having.

In the fall of 2010, a parcel tax of \$120 per year (that’s \$10 per month or 33 cents per day) was initiated to offset years of budget cuts to education from the state of California. We joined 800 volunteers who walked the streets and worked the phone bank to alert our city of the financial crisis that was eliminating administrators, teachers, librarians, music specialists, and support staff and of how much this measure would help. We were shocked and dismayed when it did not pass. We discovered many in our community had a perception of our schools that was shaped by negative press, slanted documentaries, word of mouth, fear, and prejudice. Most importantly, these perceptions were formed in a vacuum of personal experience with our public schools. An alarming percentage had not stepped foot onto a local campus in years, if at all.

It occurred to us that maybe it was just a matter of exposing members of our community to our school district and taking them inside the doors for just one typical day. The idea was as simple as that. We believed they would see what we saw: the richness of a diverse student body, the dedication and quality of the teachers and staff, the focus and commitment to academic achievement, the challenges of limited funding, and overall, the value of public education.

We chose to follow 50 subjects spread throughout the 28 campuses and the district headquarters in order to capture a district at work. We brought in 50 different directors (ten being middle and high school students) and crews to present 50 different perspectives. We felt confident that with these 50 stories, we would reveal an authentic picture of a typical day in the life of our school district.

Early on we realized our film would have relevance to communities across our nation who were also dealing with a “crisis of confidence” in their local public schools. We hope this film stimulates meaningful discussions that help shift the conversation to one of understanding, engagement and advocacy.

# About the GO PUBLIC Project

**THE GO PUBLIC** film portrays a day in the life of one American school district. The GO PUBLIC Project is so much more. Built as a response to the continuous negative dialogue surrounding public education, the GO PUBLIC Project seeks to show the nation



and the world that despite the fearful rumors and damning rhetoric, great things are happening in America's public schools. While there are holes to be patched, there are accomplishments to be celebrated. While there are challenging realities to "the system," "the system" as a whole is still effectively educating millions of American students.

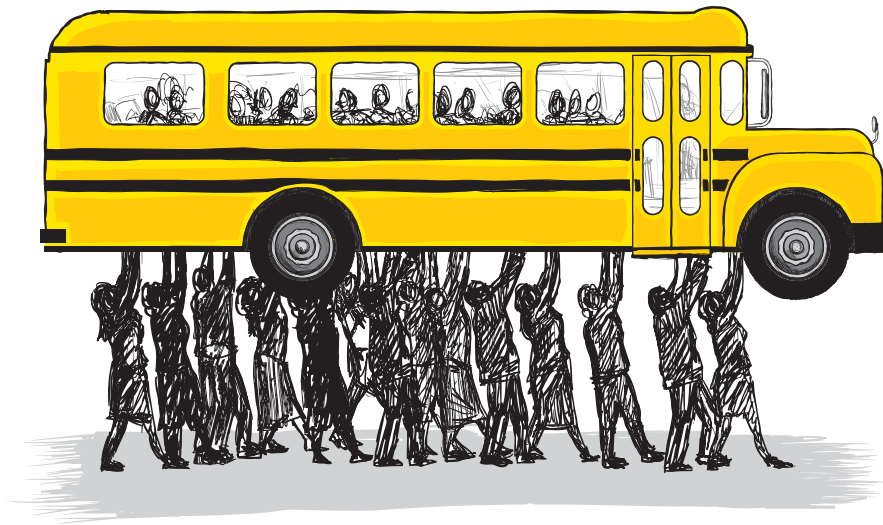
Dismayed by the negative perception of public schools perpetuated by the media and rumor, GO PUBLIC producers and public school parents Jim and Dawn O'Keeffe set out to bring a day in the Pasadena Unified School District to the broader community. On May 8, 2012, fifty directors and film crews followed fifty subjects from sun up to sundown. Edited from over 350 hours of footage, the film knits these stories together. What we see is not a crumbling educational system but a complex and layered portrait that culminates in nothing more or less than a real day inside public schools.

In addition to the feature film, the GO PUBLIC Project produced 50 short films and a series of interview clips. The short films were directed and shot by people ranging from PUSD students to professional directors and camera-persons. These short films and interviews provide a more in-depth look into each subject and their thoughts on education. When considering the immense amount of information, wisdom and experience represented in the lives of the individuals shown in the GO PUBLIC feature film, these extra resources provide invaluable insight. Our hope is that they are utilized along with the feature.

This film is not about the Pasadena Unified School District alone. We hope viewers reconsider their relationships with their local public schools and public education in general. We hope people ask themselves, "What is happening in my district?" And when there are shortcomings, instead of condemning public education, we hope people ask, "What can we do to support our public schools?" Engagement in public education is engagement in your community and its future. As teacher Gareth Siegel suggests in the film, "We can't expect our future to be a whole lot better than the effort we put into our present."

Thank you for engaging in the conversation.

# Purpose of This Discussion Guide



**THIS GUIDE** is not meant to instill a particular idea into your head. It is meant to make you think – think about your relationship with your public schools and the valuable role they play in your life, your community, and our future. This is meant to help you consider what public education means to us as a society. GO PUBLIC is a portrait of a day in the life of an American school district – the people who teach, work, learn, play, and live the public school experience. This is a guide to make you think about the public school community, how far it reaches, and where you fit in.

More specifically, this discussion guide is intended to create and foster conversation within the setting of a community gathering. The GO PUBLIC film was made to raise awareness and increase understanding about the reality of public education and to give voice to those actually living the public school experience. It captures an authentic look at the time, energy, expertise, care and complexity that is involved in molding and transforming students' lives. It was made to inspire communities like yours to support and advocate for your local public schools.

Our hope is that the film will create discussion on many levels about the crucial role of public education within our communities and the myriad ways in which the system is challenged and under attack. Hopefully, these discussions will not only allow communities to see public education in a new way but create an environment for solution-based thinking and informed advocacy.

# Reflections on Education

“An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic. Self-government is not possible unless the citizens are educated sufficiently to enable them to exercise oversight. It is therefore imperative that the nation see to it that a suitable education be provided for all its citizens.” – **THOMAS JEFFERSON**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – **NELSON MANDELA**

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”  
– **WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

“He who opens a school door, closes a prison.” – **VICTOR HUGO**

“Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.”  
– **GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER**

“There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny... It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape.” – **TOM BROKAW**

“What the best and wisest parent wants for his child, that must we want for all the children of the community. Anything less is unlovely, and left unchecked, destroys our democracy.” – **JOHN DEWEY**

“The whole people must take upon themselves the education of the whole people and be willing to bear the expenses of it. There should not be a district of one mile square without a school in it, not founded by a charitable individual, but maintained at the public expense of the people themselves.” – **JOHN ADAMS**



# Public Education Fact Sheet

## United States

For a comprehensive look at educational spending by state, please visit:

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/index.aspx>

## State of California

In 2010-11, 6.1 million students attended public schools in California, more than any other state. In contrast, 4.5 million students attended Texas' public schools in the same year.

43.6% of California children come from families with incomes at or below twice the federal poverty line (\$35,136 for a single parent with two children in 2010).

38% of California children have parents who do not speak English fluently.

California schools have endured \$18 billion of funding reductions, lost purchasing power, and deferrals over the past three years (2009-2011).

In 2012, K-12 education (which makes up 40% of the state budget) took 55% of the budget cuts.

California is 47th out of 50 states in per pupil spending – 32% less per student than the national average..

Polls show that most Californians believe that schools should be a top priority, but the state's political gridlock hinders progress.

In 2009, before the latest funding drop, 4.4% of Californians' personal income was spent on public schools. By comparison, it was 5.6% in 1972 when Ronald Reagan was governor. That 1.2% difference is the equivalent of \$22 billion less for public schools.

During the period 2010-2012, more than 30,000 teachers and 10,000 other educators have been laid off.

## Pasadena Unified School District

Pasadena public schools closely mirror the state in terms of demographics, poverty and funding challenges.

Over the last three years (2009-2011), Pasadena Unified School District increased class size in Kindergarten to 3rd grade by 50%, cut central office administration by 33%, eliminated summer school, drastically reduced support staff and increased class size across all grade levels.

PUSD instituted furlough days and benefit caps to share the pain across employee groups.

*See page 21 for sources of above information.*

# Hosting a Community Screening



GO PUBLIC Screening for Conscientious Projector, July 26, 2013, at All Saints Church in Pasadena, CA

First of all, congratulations! You have taken your first steps toward hosting a productive and enlightening screening of GO PUBLIC by receiving the DVD and this discussion guide. In this section, we will give you some brief pointers on how to organize the screening and discussion event itself.

## CHOOSING A VENUE

Consider what you want your GO PUBLIC event to look like. Would you prefer a large community event or a more intimate neighborhood screening? Consider how many people you would like to attend. Form a projected head-count, then do some research on local venues capable of housing the kind of screening you would like to host. Make sure the location has projection capabilities if you are screening to a group of more than about 15 people. Also, check if there are any independent or documentary film series going on in your neighborhood. Many organizations hold monthly or weekly screenings of interesting films—ask if they would be willing to host a GO PUBLIC screening. Here are some suggestions of venues to consider:

- Your living room
- An auditorium in a local public school or district building
- A local place of worship
- A local movie theater (see the Tugg option on [gopublicproject.org](http://gopublicproject.org))

## INVITING YOUR AUDIENCE

When you begin the invitation process, consider your projected head count so you have enough space for everyone who decides to come. Think of any connections you may have to the education world first—think of friends you have who may be teachers, administrators, or parents involved with their PTA. Then branch out from there. Consider influential community members outside of the educational community like your elected officials or local religious leaders. Ask yourself: Who will benefit from



seeing GO PUBLIC? Who will the film impact most? When it comes to the actual invitation process, email and social networking are invaluable. Create a one-size-fits-all invitation that your friends and connections can easily send along to their friends. Be sure to include a link to our website, [gopublicproject.org](http://gopublicproject.org), and if you can, embed our trailer. Kindly ask for attendees to RSVP so you can have an estimate of how much seating you need, and ask the guests to arrive 10-15 minutes early so everyone has a nice time-cushion to be seated and comfortable before you start the film. And remember: a promise of refreshments is always a nice idea.

## **TECHNICALITIES AND SETUP**

We all know that technology tends to abandon us in the least convenient moments, and that's why it is best to prepare for technical difficulties as well as possible. At least a few hours before your audience is set to arrive, test your screening equipment (projectors, computers, DVD players, remotes, microphones, etc.). Go through a rehearsal of your presentation to make sure everything is working correctly and that you know what you're doing. Make sure you invite a tech-savvy friend who knows the equipment better than you do. If you're lucky, someone who works at your venue may be able to help in the event of technical difficulties as well.

## **PREPARING FOR THE DISCUSSION**

It is suggested that this guide be used to facilitate a discussion after the film. The discussion could be organized in a variety of ways, depending on the scope of your screening. Early in your planning process, decide whether you or someone else will be facilitating the discussion. If you choose to bring in someone else, make sure they are familiar with the film, familiar with the guide, and comfortable speaking in public. It is suggested that the facilitator go over the "Topics to Discuss" in this guide thoroughly and formulate his/her own ideas about the questions. This will ensure that the facilitators can pick up the conversation in case of tepid audience participation. In some sections, there are boxes with blue text that suggest phrases or topics to encourage the discussion. One idea is that the topics for discussion either be projected onto the screen or printed and passed out so the audience may be able to go back to specific questions, anecdotes, or quotations that interested them. If your gathering is particularly large, consider inviting local experts in public education (a student, teacher, principal, board member, etc.) for a Q&A specific to your district.

## **AS THE GUESTS ARRIVE**

Make sure the space is available for seating before the guests arrive. Remember those refreshments you promised? Have them ready for when the first cluster of guests arrive. The early birds will need something to mingle over and food is the thing! Make sure everything is already set up so you can mingle as well.

## **THE SCREENING**

When everyone is seated, introduce the film. Make sure you can be heard. Feel free to use the “About the GO PUBLIC Project” section of this guide to help in making your introduction if you wish, but be sure to be brief. We want the film to speak for itself. Include your own feelings about the film and briefly explain why you set up the event. Right before you begin the film, remind the audience that there will be a guided discussion afterwards and if you invited a special guest from the educational community, mention that there will also be a Q&A. Finally, be sure to thank your audience for coming!

## **THE DISCUSSION**

The most important thing is to be flexible while facilitating the discussion. If you would like, use some material from the “Reflections on Education” and “Public Education Fact Sheet” sections to set a tone. We recommend that you facilitate the discussion in the way that feels most organic to your gathering, beginning with “The Public School Experience” and ending with the “Action” section. Keep in mind that a discussion of the film could go on for several hours, so be aware of how much time you have allotted. If you feel that too much time is being taken up by one particular question, resolve it as best you can and nudge the audience to the next topic. Also, be sure to hold in your mind what your goal for the discussion is. What points do you want to drive home? Is your district facing a crisis or difficulty in a particular area? Is there a lack of funding for arts education or athletics? Are class sizes too large? Are innovative programs in your district being eliminated because of funding issues? Are charter schools and vouchers an issue for your district? Tailor the discussion to relate the film to your district and focus on encouraging community support for your local public schools.

## **WRAPPING IT UP**

What message do you want to leave with your audience? Why did you show the film in the first place? What action do you want your audience to take? Keep these in mind as you make your closing remarks. In wrapping up, compose your final message so that it applies what was discussed during the event to your local school district. Remind your audience that they can learn more about each subject from the film by exploring the 50 short films on the GO PUBLIC website as well as the additional interview clips found in the GO PUBLIC Voices section. Most importantly, remind your guests of the many ways they can support their local public schools (see “Action Items”).

# Topics to Discuss

## The Public School Experience: Perceptions and Realities

Schools are schools. They are way-stations to adulthood, and most of them get the job done. But there is something different about public schools. This is something acknowledged by almost everyone, but more often than not, public schools are framed in a negative light. Often, these perceptions come from a place of fear on a vehicle of rumor.

**Before you saw GO PUBLIC, what were your views on public schools? Where did your views come from?**

**Consider how negative perceptions of public school might affect the school site – particularly the educational experience of a child attending public school?**

The goal of GO PUBLIC and this discussion guide is to get you to consider or reconsider your views on public schools now that we have brought you on the inside and allowed you to see a day in the life of a public school district.

“I really believe that unless you have been in the schools, unless you have walked through those doors, unless you’ve had an opportunity to see all the wonderful things that are happening. I mean, it’s really hard to make a call on how our schools are, but ... when we do the tours and parents walk through our school, I know that one of the biggest comments that I hear is that, ‘Wow, I can’t believe what’s happening at your school and I want my child to be part of that.’”

– FRANCES WEISSENBERGER, PRINCIPAL, HAMILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Did you see anything you didn’t expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**

This film presented a snapshot of public education in action: a day in the life of one school district. Let’s explore this day on multiple levels and see how various facets of the public school system impact the educational experience of its students.



## Student-Teacher Engagement

Throughout the film you saw many different examples of classroom life, classroom management, and teaching styles. You witnessed many interactions between students and teachers inside and outside the classroom—greetings, farewells, questions, discussions, discipline, etc.

- 👁️ We see elementary school teachers Whitney Reese and Esther Chun greet each student individually before they started class.
- 👁️ In Benjamin Lambert’s chemistry class, we see students working together and conducting one-on-one academic discussions with their teacher.
- 👁️ We visit Donnetha Wallace as she taught her Culinary Arts class, giving focused attention to each budding chef.
- 👁️ We sit in with teacher Gareth Seigel as he discusses test scores with a student.

“On the math you blew me away when I looked at this this morning. I saw 80% here on algebra and functions. If you could go up 68 points on a CAHSEE English test... you know, what more can you achieve?”

– GARETH SEIGEL, HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH AND MATH TEACHER,  
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

**What did this day of teaching look like to you?**

**What kind of student-teacher relationships did you see?**

**How important do you think this relationship is for a child’s education and emotional development?**

**Did you see anything you didn’t expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**



## Serving Diverse Needs

“The public schools are the places where we don’t turn down people because of class, because of religion, because of you know, learning disabilities, because of physical handicaps. We don’t.”

– RAMON MIRAMONTES, PASADENA BOARD OF EDUCATION

👁 In the film we see teachers, students, and support staff from all different kinds of backgrounds. We meet people with a diverse range of needs and abilities.

**What are some examples of diversity that stood out to you in the film?**

**How do you think diversity influences students’ educational, social, and/or developmental experiences?**

Diversity in background and ability means that some students and families could benefit from more than the “traditional” educational experience. For instance, we visited a Healthy Start Family Center and heard from Laura Diaz.

“The goal of the Family Center is to bridge the community to school and provide avenues for parents to explore educational systems here in the United States. For these parents just to do the things that middle-class parents struggle to do, for these parents it’s even harder. But it’s more important. They have more to gain by picking up these sort of middle-class skills that research shows are predictors of academic achievement.”

– LAURA DIAZ, HEALTHY START FAMILY CENTER, MADISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**How do you think having targeted resources ready and available for all families affects a child’s educational experience?**



- 👁️ We visit many learning environments that cater to the special needs of students. We meet Ian Short, a child with autism enrolled in Special Day Classes at Sierra Madre Middle School; Rosie Rutt, a child with Down's Syndrome learning in an integrated classroom taught by a team of three; and Angel Balcazar, a child with physical handicaps who goes to school at Roosevelt Elementary.

### **How do we see their needs being served?**

- 👁️ In the morning, we ride to work with Amy Taylor, an early childhood psychologist at Hodges Early Intervention Center, to attend a transition meeting for a student. This program prepares pre-school children with developmental delays for normal kindergarten. Ms. Taylor explains the basic structure of that early intervention program.

"We let the child get comfortable with the room and the environment, and we take turns going back and forth interviewing the parents and working with the child, and the majority of what we do is play-based."

– AMY TAYLOR

### **Were you aware that early intervention programs such as this are available at public schools?**

### **Do you think services like these are necessary? Do you think they should be freely available to any family whose child could benefit from them?**

It is the job of public schools to meet the educational needs of every student.

- 👁️ During the day, we follow Gareth Seigel.

"Alternative Ed. sometimes people are quick to write off. It's easy to stereotype: that's where you send the pregnant girls, that's where you send the kids who are flunking their classes. But kids don't always fit the traditional mold. They're getting just lost in the shuffle."

– GARETH SEIGEL, HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH AND MATH TEACHER,  
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

- 👁️ Later, we meet one of his students, Julio Velasquez.

"Stuff happens, I end up in jail again, I come out, I still come and have another chance to get back in school. I have a plan in my head now that I want to go to college. Back then, I didn't have that in my head that I wanted to go to college. My head was thinking when I get older, I'm gonna' end up in prison."

– JULIO VELASQUEZ

At the end of the film, we learned that Julio enrolled at Pasadena City College and returns to mentor other CIS Academy students.

### **What role do you think public education provides in achieving that goal?**

### **How important is it for students like Julio to always have an avenue for education?**



**Are we, as a society, willing to bear the financial costs of providing all these important services?**

**What is the cost to society of not providing these services?**

**Did you see anything you didn't expect? What and why?**

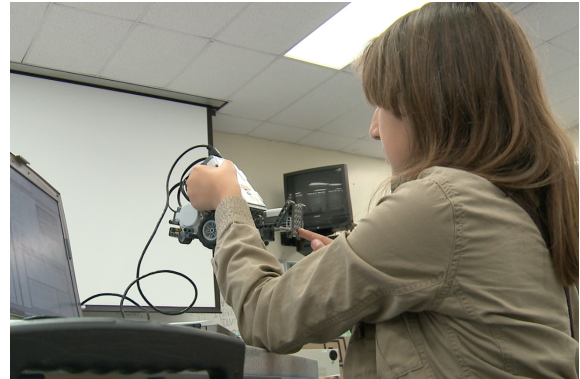
**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**

## **Innovative Learning**

There is a commonly held misconception that public schools are too prosaic and bureaucratic to provide innovative education.

**What are some examples you saw in the film that refute this belief?**

Science education is an essential part of modern curriculum. Early exposure to science and technology could have a profound impact on a child's life.



👁️ We follow Jodie West as she teaches STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) courses to students ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade.

“We already did our first design. We had some spectacular failures, they were awesome.”

– JODIE WEST, WASHINGTON ACCELERATED ELEMENTARY

👁️ We watch 6th grader Merrissa Shnorhokian write a program for the robot she built.

“Mr. Heinz teaches us how to build, work, and write programs for the robot.”

– MERRISSA SHNORHOKIAN, STUDENT, WILSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

**How do these scenes differ from the grade-school science education you may have received?**

**How do they differ from what you think of as a grade-school science education?**

In these scenes—among others—we saw students working together on scientific investigations. Ms. West looks at all of her students as budding engineers.

**What possibilities do you see for these students' futures?**

Languages have become an important facet of experience in the increasingly globalized world. More and more organizations are beginning to prefer employees with fluency in two or more languages, and the applications of bilingualism are becoming more relevant every day. One way Pasadena's public schools are addressing this reality is through dual language immersion programs.

- 👁️ During the film, we meet student Joanna Ting in her Mandarin Chinese dual immersion classroom. We also hear from Priscilla Leon, a 2nd grade Spanish immersion teacher.

“In the past, I taught in a transitional bilingual program. This program is completely different. It’s a two-way immersion, so they’re learning both languages, they’re not stopping one language for the sake of the other. They are thinking about language, they are negotiating meaning. Biliteracy is the goal.”

– PRISCILLA LEON, SAN RAFAEL ELEMENTARY

**Did you expect to see this kind of program offered in public schools?**

**What impact do you think early biliteracy will have on students’ lives?**

**How do you think these programs empower students learning English as a second language alongside their original language?**



“Linked Learning” Career Pathways offered in school give students first-hand experience in specific fields. The PUSD offers nine such pathways, but in the film we visited classes in the “Creative Arts, Media, and Design,” “Culinary Arts and Hospitality,” “Health Careers,” and “Business and Technology” Academies.

“You’ve got the television shows, food network, those kinds of things that really promoted the food and culinary arts industries, to the point where more males are jumping on board. They want to be pastry chefs; they want to be sous chefs and executive chefs. They want to learn the techniques and skills it takes to be a chef.”

– DONNETHA WALLACE, CULINARY ARTS TEACHER,  
CULINARY AND HOSPITALITY PATHWAY CHAIR, BLAIR HIGH SCHOOL

- 👁️ We see Superintendent Jon Gundry visit a Business and Technology Academy class being operated in conjunction with NASA and JPL. The program allows students to predict altitude, velocities, and acceleration and ultimately, to build their own model rockets.
- 👁️ We visit Michelle Moreno as she works on a protein purification lab in her Health Careers Academy class.
- 👁️ We watch as Alex Schultz teaches painting and mural development as part of the Creative Arts, Media, and Design Academy.

In these career pathways, students have the opportunity to get a head start on building marketable skills and experience.

**What role do you think career-focused programs play in a student's ability to establish a career later in life?**

**How important is it to have these innovative, non-traditional programs available for everyone?**

**Did you see anything you didn't expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**



## The Arts

Throughout the film, we encountered many scenes of students participating in the arts. There was music being made, scenes being performed, and fortunes being painted. Arts programs are another common casualty of budget shortfalls, despite their value to students.

- 👁️ We visit Ana Rodriguez as she instructs her elementary school ceramics class, fostering creativity among her students.
- 👁️ We visit three schools while following music specialist Roxanne DuBoucheron as she teaches budding musicians. We also follow high school band director Joel Lopez as he encourages proper posture among his students.
- 👁️ We stay after school with security guard Marvin Hatchett as he volunteers as the after-school music director, leading students in choir and drum line.
- 👁️ We peer into an elementary school rehearsal of *Annie Jr.* and also sit in on rehearsals for McKinley's production of *Cinderella*, led by Alison Garfinkel, who teaches English and History during the school day.

**What did you see in these scenes of arts instruction? Did anything stand out to you? What and why?**

**What role do you think an arts education plays in a child's overall educational and developmental experience?**

**Do you think arts education should be prioritized as an essential part of a public school education?**

**Did you see anything you didn't expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**

## Libraries & Literacy

During the film, we stepped into two PUSD libraries and saw a little bit of what they had to offer. As budget woes continue, librarians are one of the main staff groups on the chopping block. As a result, campus libraries are being closed, and a plethora of books and other learning resources are being taken away from the student.

- 👁️ We watch as veteran elementary library coordinator Eileen Roth helps her young students with literacy projects.
- 👁️ We meet middle school librarian Maura Large as she teaches students how to use library resources. Along the way, we watch students and teachers participate in a “Save Our Library” campaign.

“The resources that Mrs. Large brings to the classroom, to the teacher are—I can’t even put it into words—bringing library information and being able to explain it to children is not always easy, but she manages to do that. This is just an added enrichment experience for them.”

– TEACHER, ELIOT MIDDLE SCHOOL

“It’s the only place where I can have an educated conversation with my friends. Everywhere else is like blahblahblah!”

– STUDENT, ELIOT MIDDLE SCHOOL

- 👁️ At the school board meeting, we hear from a concerned member of the community on the importance of school librarians.

“I think our kids today have so many other things pulling their attention away from good books, and I think we need the librarians, so please keep our librarians. Our students need them very much.”

– COMMUNITY MEMBER, SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

**How important do you think it is for students to have a library on campus?**

- 👁️ At the end of the film, we learn that Mrs. Large, along with all other middle school librarians in the district, were laid off at the end of the year.

**How do you think reductions like this have impacted student learning and the overall student environment?**

**How do you think an early education in library science affects a student’s future ability to conduct research in high school and college?**

**Did you see anything you didn’t expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**

## Outside the Classroom

During the film, we meet a host of people employed by the district who support student success from outside the classroom. These people are responsible for keeping the schools functional, whether by maintaining the school site, counseling students, or managing the campus.

- 👁️ We follow guidance counselor Frances Collins-Moore as she finishes programming next year's seniors for their last year in high school.

**How important do you think committed and engaged counselors are to students who are getting ready to apply to college?**

**How effective can they be in their role with such large caseloads (e.g. 480 to 1)?**

- 👁️ We meet custodian Felix Lopez as he juggles his janitorial duties while having positive interactions with students. We hear Washington's vice-principal Eric Gothold speak about how valued Mr. Lopez is on campus.

"He represents what I think Washington really is—a core group of people who all have the kids' best interest at heart. He's counseled kids, he'll help them get to class on time, and he's the hardest working guy on campus."

– ERIC GOTHOLD

- 👁️ We also follow principal Gilbert Barraza as he greets his students in the morning, helps fix the office copy-machine in the afternoon, and watches his students compete in baseball in the evening.

- 👁️ We meet Connie De La Torre, a community assistant at Jeffereson Elementary School. Her responsibilities and the services she provides are nearly limitless. During the film, we see her help students through their day.

"You have uniforms, I saw you with uniforms before. If you don't have uniforms just let me know, okay? But I know that you have uniforms."

– CONNIE DE LA TORRE, COMMUNITY ASSISTANT

In the film, we saw countless examples of the ways support staff impact the school site and student experience.

**Did any specific scene stand out to you?**

**What unmeasurable but critically important value does the support staff bring to a school?**

**Did you see anything you didn't expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**





## Volunteers and Community Support

During the film, we met several PUSD volunteers. These volunteers are profoundly important to each school site. No matter how small the gesture, a little extra help from supportive members of the community always enhances students' educational experience.

- 👁️ For instance, we meet Debbie Lopez during lunchtime. Debbie is a community member who is passionate about physical fitness. She uses her spare time to get kids moving through dance.
- 👁️ We also meet Esmeralda Cerezo, a parent and volunteer at her children's school. There, she has found a supportive group of fellow parents and volunteers and does her best to give back to the school in any way she can. During the film, we catch her as she was participating in a potluck for teacher appreciation day.

"It's just our way of telling the teachers thank you for everything they're doing for our children. Cooking comes from the heart—it shows more appreciation and more love that way so it's just that way they can feel part of a family. Because that's what Madison is—it's a family."

– ESMERALDA CEREDO, PARENT/VOLUNTEER, MADISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Gloria Reynolds used to be a teacher, and since her retirement, her passion for education has not waned. During the film, we watched as she tutored and made Mother's Day cards with students from Altadena Elementary.

In the film, Gloria gives us a glimpse of why she volunteers at her local public school.

"I just think that education is absolutely the most crucial thing in life. It equalizes opportunity for everyone."

– GLORIA REYNOLDS, VOLUNTEER, ALTADENA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Why do you think public schools draw in such passionate volunteers?**

**How do you think a passionate corps of volunteers affects the educational experience of students?**



**How do we engage more of our community to volunteer at our public schools?**

**Did you see anything you didn't expect? What and why?**

**What moments in the film challenged your preconceptions?**

## **Budget**

GO PUBLIC visits the PUSD during one of the most financially strained times for public education. The budget cuts continue to challenge the ability of educators to serve students with as much educational opportunity as possible. A lack in resources is putting increasing strain on the public education system.


“There're only four electricians for the whole school district. We have thirty-nine buildings to maintain, and there are only four of us. So we're constantly busy trying to keep up with the demand.”

– PUSD ELECTRICIAN

“In principal I am against lay-offs of faculty and teachers; I'm just against it. But the cuts are so severe that that is not a reality.”

– RAMON MIRAMONTES, PASADENA BOARD OF EDUCATION

Featured music specialist Roxanne DuBoucheron cycled between three schools each week when GO PUBLIC was filmed.

 **At the end of the film, we learn another school has been added to Roxanne Du Boucheron's schedule.**

**How can teachers be effective when they have multiple schools to service? What is lost when teachers must stretch their focus across so many students?**

Budget woes were strongly depicted during the school board meeting. We heard from three school site groups who were protesting the latest round of impending layoffs.

Each of these groups plays an important role in supporting students. But budget cuts are impacting all categories of staff that serve our students. Two teachers who are featured in the film, Gareth Seigel and Esther Chun, received pink slips at the end of the year (though in both cases, the pink slips were rescinded).

**What effect do you think pink slips have on teacher morale?**

**What are some ways you think budget cuts have affected children's educational experiences?**

**What responsibility do you think we, as a society, have to make sure our public schools have the necessary resources to create successful students and citizens?**

# Action Items

Now that you've seen and discussed the film, here are some steps to take to better support your local public schools.

**Volunteer:** Lend some of your time to support an aspect of education you're passionate about, whether it be literacy, the arts, or a beautiful campus! Put your talents to work to support your community and its future. Authorization to volunteer on a campus may require some patience. Many districts have reduced administrative staff which may have affected the volunteer processing system.

**Donate:** Teachers are often obligated to fund their classrooms out of pocket. Speak to the PTA of a local school to see what supplies are needed. Maybe one class needs higher-quality art supplies or a fresh set of children's books. Perhaps the office needs something as simple as more printing paper. Encourage your congregation, community service group or neighborhood group to adopt their neighborhood school.

**Organize:** Think about bringing together events like this screening where community members can discuss the needs of their local school district and brainstorm solutions for budget shortages.

**Stay Informed:** Get to know your school district. Know what programs your district offers, what needs it serves, and where more help is needed. Get to know your local school board and city and state legislators. See what they've said about education and what action they've taken to support public schools. Stay informed about legislation affecting public schools.

**Communicate:** Let the decision-makers in your community know what you feel should be done to support public schools. Where are the shortfalls? What can be improved? Are there any programs you strongly feel should be available in your district? Share your ideas and let yourself be heard. You can do this in a variety of ways, including attending gatherings like this and town hall meetings and writing letters or making phone calls to your representatives. Most of all, talk about the good things happening at your local public schools.

**Stay engaged! GO PUBLIC!**

# Additional Resources

## WEBSITES

GO PUBLIC: A Documentary Film Project [gopublicproject.org](http://gopublicproject.org)

Learning First Alliance [learningfirst.org/](http://learningfirst.org/)

Edutopia [edutopia.org](http://edutopia.org)

Network for Public Education [networkforpubliceducation.org](http://networkforpubliceducation.org)

## BOOKS

Boyle, Phil, and Del Burns. *Preserving the Public in Public Schools: Visions, Values, Conflicts, and Choices*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2012.

Brick, Michael. *Saving the School: The True Story of a Principal, a Teacher, a Coach, a Bunch of Kids, and a Year in the Crosshairs of Education Reform*. New York: Penguin, 2012.

Fabricant, Michael, and Michelle Fine. *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education: What's at Stake?* New York: Teachers College, 2012.

Kozol, Jonathan. *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. New York: Crown, 2005.

Miner, Barbara. *Lessons from the Heartland: A Turbulent Half-century of Public Education in an Iconic American City*. New York: New, 2013.

Ravitch, Diane. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. New York: Basic, 2010.

Ravitch, Diane. *Edspeak: A Glossary of Education Terms, Phrases, Buzzwords, and Jargon*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007.

Ravitch, Diane. *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Rose, Mike. *Why School?: Reclaiming Education for All of Us*. New York: New, 2009.

Schniedewind, Nancy, and Mara Sapon-Shevin. *Educational Courage: Resisting the Ambush of Public Education*. Boston: Beacon, 2012.

Swail, Watson Scott. *Finding Superman: Debating the Future of Public Education in America*. New York: Teachers College, 2012.

Vollmer, Jamie Robert. *Schools Cannot Do It Alone: Building Public Support for America's Public Schools*. Fairfield, IA: Enlightenment, 2010.

## FACT SHEET (page 5) SOURCES

<http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us>

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5199-per-pupil-educational-expenditures-adjusted-for-regional-cost-differences?loc=1&loct=2#ranking/2/any/true/133/any/11678>

[http://www.cbpb.org/pdfs/2011/111012\\_Decade\\_of\\_Disinvestment\\_%20SFF.pdf](http://www.cbpb.org/pdfs/2011/111012_Decade_of_Disinvestment_%20SFF.pdf)

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state\\_report\\_cards.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state_report_cards.html)[http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state\\_report\\_cards.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state_report_cards.html)

[http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state\\_report\\_cards.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2013/state_report_cards.html)

<http://www.kidsdata.org/resources/>

<http://www.edsource.org/today/2013/california-drops-to-49th-in-school-spending-in-annual-ed-week-report/25379#.Uh7xjBzQuld>

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/index.aspx>

# The 50 Subjects



## **GUSTAVO ALONSO**

Gustavo Alonso is in the sixth grade at Eliot Middle School. He likes building robots, reads aloud from his writing journal about why money alone won't make you happy, and plays catch with his friends at the park.



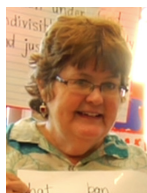
## **ANGEL BALCAZAR**

Angel Balcazar is a 3rd grade student at Roosevelt Elementary. He is in a wheelchair and has a condition that affects his muscle control, but he is a bright and eager child who likes art and playing with his toy cars.



## **GILBERT BARRAZA**

If you want to get on principal Gilbert Barraza's good side, put away your cell phone! Living by Malcom X's mantra of "Everything I do today is urgent," Mr. Barraza is actively involved with his students at Pasadena High School, and strives to lead them towards pursuing a college education.



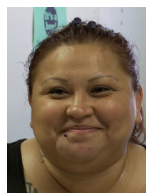
## **KATHLEEN BAUTISTA**

Kathleen Bautista teaches kindergarten through 2nd grade students with special needs at Don Benito elementary school. She is proud of her students as they progress from barely verbal to engaged and capable.



## **ELIZABETH "BESS" BRANDOW**

Bess Brandow is a very busy fifth grader at Webster Elementary School. Along with keeping up with her schoolwork, Bess plays the guitar and is a Girl Scout.



## **ESMERALDA CEREZO**

Esmeralda Cerezo is a single mother of four. She volunteers every day at the Healthy Start center at Madison Elementary, where her youngest two children go to school. Though Esmeralda is tattooed and tough-looking, she is a kind, involved mom who hopes to inspire her children to go further with their education.



## **ESTHER CHUN**

Esther Chun is a third-grade teacher at Franklin Elementary School. Her sweet personality and emphasis on character make her popular with the kids, but as a relatively new teacher, she is in danger of being laid off due to budget cuts.



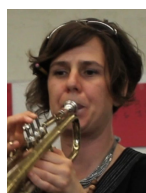
## **FRANCES COLLINS-MOORE**

Frances Collins-Moore is a guidance counselor at Marshall Fundamental High School. She recognizes the importance of educating and guiding young students, but fears that budget cuts and overcrowded classrooms are keeping kids from realizing their full potential.



## **CONNIE DE LA TORRE**

Connie DeLaTorre is a community assistant at Jefferson Elementary School. From making coffee to managing money to speaking at board meetings, "the woman with a thousand jobs" makes everyone's life a little bit less stressful.



## **ROXANNE DUBOUCHERON**

Roxanne DuBoucheron is a music teacher who works with several schools in Pasadena. She teaches kids how to play all sorts of instruments - from violin and cello to brass and woodwinds to the drums. Ms. DuBoucheron knows that music can be an outlet for students who may not be the best at math or reading.

**GABRIEL ESTRADA**

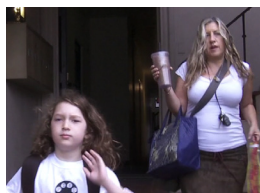
Gabriel Estrada is a student at Muir High School's Business and Entrepreneurship Academy. His class projects range from creating a business portfolio to hammering nails into a running shoe to represent "irony."

**SAMANTHA GALE**

PHS junior Samantha Gale wakes up for school at 5:30 every morning. She works hard in her classes, volunteers as a tutor at Altadena Elementary (where her mother works), and is very involved in the Navy JROTC program. As a Cadet, Samantha learns leadership and life skills and cultivates a network of close friends.

**ALISON GARFINKEL**

English and history teacher Alison Garfinkel loves theatre, and shares her passion with her students by volunteering to direct McKinley School's production of Cinderella. A typical day for Ms. Garfinkel involves teaching Shakespeare to middle-schoolers, practicing improvisation with kindergarteners, and choreographing dance numbers.

**DAVID GIESELMAN and TERESA TOTARO**

Teresa Totaro teaches 2nd grade at McKinley K-8 school. Her son, David Gieselman, also attends McKinley and is in the second grade.

**ERIC GOTHOLD**

Eric Gothold is a musician, theatre guy, and former art teacher. For the last 20 years, "Mr. G" has also been the assistant principal at Washington Middle School, where he works hard to synthesize his administrative responsibilities and artistic inclinations.

**BENJAMIN GRAVES**

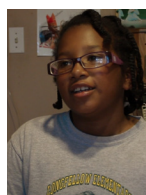
Benjamin Graves is a junior at Rose City High School, Pasadena's alternative high school. At Rose City, Benjamin is involved with the student leadership board. He hopes to return to Blair High School next year.

**ABIGAIL "ABBY" GRIFFITH**

Abby Griffith and her twin are 2nd graders in San Rafael Elementary School's Dual Language Spanish Immersion Program. She is learning how to read and write (and sing) in two languages.

**JON GUNDRY**

Jon Gundry is the Superintendent in Pasadena. Running the district is a challenging job, and Superintendent Gundry's day involves not only supervising the schools, but also dealing with dissent amongst employees and criticism from the community.

**SAMANTHA HARRIS**

Samantha Harris is a fifth grade student at Longfellow Elementary School. Throughout the day she practices karate at school, plays the violin, and explains everything about Archie comics.

**MARVIN HATCHETT**

Marvin Hatchett works as the Security Guard at Wilson Middle School during the day and switches hats after school to become the volunteer choir and instrumental music instructor. He has been working and volunteering in the district for over 20 years.

**BENJAMIN LAMBERT**

Chemistry teacher Benjamin Lambert believes that the key to being an effective teacher is recognizing that all students have potential. He's popular among his students at Pasadena High School and their families because he has the ability to make science fun and interesting.



**MAURA LARGE**

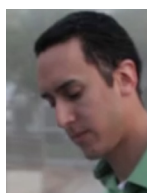
Middle school librarian Maura Large teaches students at Eliot Middle School how to use the computers and library resources. This experience is invaluable to the kids, but she, and all secondary school librarians in Pasadena, were laid off at the end of the year due to budget cuts.

**ADRIENNE D. LETT**

Adrienne Lett is the president of the athletic booster club at Muir High School, where her children attend and her teen-aged daughter plays softball. Ms. Lett realizes the importance of being involved in her childrens' lives, and hopes to convince other parents to support the team as well.

**FELIX LOPEZ**

Custodian Felix Lopez is the hardest working guy at Washington Middle School. As a child, poverty kept Mr. Lopez from finishing school. Now, he's a mentor to the students at Washington, and attempts to give his 10th grade daughter the opportunities he never had.

**JOEL LOPEZ**

Joel Lopez is the high school band director at Marshall Secondary School. He educates his class of aspiring rock stars and jazz musicians by day, then takes care of his baby daughter by night.

**KENIA LOYOLA**

Sixteen-year-old Kenia is an outstanding student who attends Muir High School's Engineering and Environmental Science Academy, where she has the chance to work on a student-run farm and learn about growing crops and running a business. She is also involved in many campus clubs and leadership programs.

**SHANNON MALONE**

New principal Shannon Malone believes she can truly make a difference at Cleveland Elementary, where she connects with the students and community, with a focus on personal growth.

**RAMON MIRAMONTES**

Outspoken Ramon Miramontes is the only Latino on the Pasadena Board of Education. In a district where 60% of the students are Latino, his native Spanish-speaking skills make him popular with parents. But his blunt, confrontational nature has earned Mr. Miramontes enemies as well.

**MICHELLE MORENO**

Michelle Moreno is a feisty, athletic Mexican-American 11th grader. She attends Blair High School's Health Careers Academy, and is committed to joining the US Army upon graduation. Michelle is inspired by the memory of her late father, who taught her to always stand up for herself.

**MIKE PARISI**

Mike Parisi loves his job coaching baseball at Pasadena High School. He leads his boys to a victory at home against Glendale High, and prepares for the game against their rival team, Muir.

**DEVIN PERRY**

Ninth grader Devin Perry attends Muir High School's Arts, Entertainment, and Media Academy. Devin's goal is to be the first in her family to graduate from college, and to set a good example for her younger siblings.

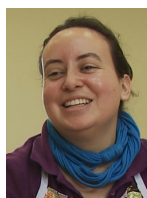
**WHITNEY REESE**

Whitney Reese teaches second grade at Jackson Elementary. She lives across the street and, as a child, attended the school. Not surprisingly, Jackson is like a second home to Ms. Reese. She shares her love of yoga with her students, and teaches them about herbs and gardening.

**GLORIA REYNOLDS**

Gloria Reynolds, a volunteer at Altadena Elementary, proves that there is no age limit for helping to make your community a better place. A retired teacher, she knows that public education is essential to democracy and learning is a lifelong process.



**ANA RODRIGUEZ**

Ana Rodriguez is the ceramics teacher at Norma Coombs Elementary. She is passionate about giving children an opportunity to express themselves creatively. Her students learn to paint ceramic tiles and create coil pots.

**EILEEN ROTH**

Eileen Roth is a veteran librarian who has been at PUSD for over 40 years. Her library is designed to feel like a castle or a magical place, complete with dragon! Ms. Roth allows students and their parents to check out books whenever they like.

**ROSIE RUTT**

Little Rosie is a happy-go-lucky redhead who loves drawing with chalk, playing with her friends, and spending time with her family. She attends Sierra Madre Elementary's K/1st Inclusion Program, where children with special needs are fully integrated into a regular classroom.

**ALEX SCHULTZ**

Alex Schultz is an art teacher at Pasadena High School's Creative Arts Media and Design Academy (CAMAD). His students' assignments include "paint your fears," designing posters, and painting murals.

**GARETH SEIGEL**

High school English and Math teacher Gareth Seigel works with students that most other teachers have given up on. By forging a personal relationship with these at-risk teenagers, Mr. Seigel inspires them to strive for a brighter future.

**MERISSA SHNORHOKIAN**

Merissa Shnorhokian is a 6th grader at Wilson Middle School. She enjoys school, her friends and her robotics class. Merissa believes that public school is helping prepare her for the real world.

**IAN SHORT**

Ian Short is an active 7th grade student who deals with the challenge of having autism. He likes playing catch, video games, and hanging out with his classmates.

**AMY TAYLOR**

Amy Taylor is an early childhood school psychologist at the Hodges Early Intervention Center. She assesses preschool-aged children for autism and other developmental disorders.

**JOANNA TING**

Joanna Ting, a third grader at Field Elementary School, is enrolled in the Dual Language Mandarin Immersion Program. She can read and write in two languages, and talk to her Chinese grandmother in Mandarin on the phone.

**MARY TING**

Mary Ting is a 7th grade student enrolled in Blair Middle School's International Baccalaureate (IB) program.

**CAROLYN, JACKELYN, and MARILYN TRAVIS**

Twelfth grade twins Marilyn and Jackelyn and their eighth grade sister Carolyn attend Marshall Secondary School. The girls, who spent a portion of their childhood in foster care, run the Buddy Club - a program that pairs young Marshall students with older student mentors.

**ANGELICA VARGAS**

Angelica Vargas is a hard-working eleventh grader enrolled in Blair High School's International Baccalaureate program. Angelica is an honors student who plays the piano and swims competitively, but her mother worries about her because she often studies late into the night.



### **DONNETHA WALLACE**

Donnetha Wallace is a culinary arts teacher and the program chair of the Culinary and Hospitality Pathway at Blair High School. She loves to cook, and enjoys sharing her passion with her students.



### **FRANCES WEISSENBERGER**

Frances Weissenberger, a former teacher, is the principal of Hamilton Elementary School. Ms. Weissenberger knows that once she walks through the doors of her school, anything can happen, and the day she planned on having is rarely ever the day she gets.



### **JODIE WEST**

Jodie teaches science to Kindergarten through 5th grade at Washington Accelerated Elementary School. She is a self-proclaimed “bit of a nerd” and considers all her students budding engineers. Jodie is also a mom to twin 5 year old boys who attend Washington and an 18 month old boy.



### **LINDA WITTRY**

Linda Wittry is the International Baccalaureate Primary Years coordinator at Willard Elementary School. She likes to spend most of her time in the classroom, where she teaches everything from science and writing to line dancing and guitar.



### **AMY ZERONIAN**

Amy Zeronian is an 11th grade student at Marshall Fundamental High School who plays softball and volleyball. A gifted scholar and athlete, she has already accepted a scholarship to play softball in college. Amy is also involved in drama, and is running for ASB representative.

## **OTHERS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE GUIDE:**

### **CARMEN SERRANO**

Principal, Madison Elementary School