

think

MAGAZINE 2022





*“Think Together is a place
where a kid can explore and
learn about things they have
not learned.”*

—Think Together elementary student





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MAGAZINE 2022

Think Together partners with schools to change the odds for kids.

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PARTNERING TO CHANGE THE ODDS FOR KIDS

The 2021-22 school year has been filled with exciting activities and surprises for Think Together students thanks to our corporate and foundation partners. Their generosity allows students to not only thrive in Think Together afterschool and expanded learning programs but also make unforgettable memories.



LA READS IS A HIT WITH RIALTO STUDENTS

Right before winter break, the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation and Think Together surprised 50 Think Together students at Werner Elementary School in Rialto with a visit from Los Angeles Dodgers Third Base Coach Dino Ebel. Students received books and swag and listened to Ebel read *It's the Most Wonderful Time of Year* by former professional baseball scout Larry Harper as part of the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation LA Reads program.

KAISER PERMANENTE SPREADS HOLIDAY CHEER

Kaiser Permanente Riverside County employees and physicians collected and donated gifts to students in Moreno Valley Unified School District and Val Verde Unified School District. These students were incredibly grateful for the gifts. For some this may be one of the few gifts they received this year.





AGUA CALIENTE CLIPPERS DELIVER IN ONTARIO

The Agua Caliente Clippers basketball team passed out toys not only to Think Together students but also to the entire school of 397 students in Ontario. The toys ranged from STEM kits to art activities, and all students also received fun Clippers swag.



SEBASTIAN LLETGET KICKS IT WITH KIDS IN COMPTON

U.S. Soccer Foundation, Adidas, and New England Revolution Midfielder Sebastian Lletget gave Compton students the experience of a lifetime. Lletget kicked activities off with soccer drills, dribbling and passing the ball to students up and down the field. The former LA Galaxy player still calls Los Angeles home and felt proud to give back to Think Together students.

“I know how important sports can be for building relationships and having fun. I want to share that with these kids and give them the proper gear to hopefully spark something in them to continue being active,” Lletget said.



SPORTS ARE BACK WITH LA84 FOUNDATION

Recently, Think Together was awarded a \$317,128 grant from the LA84 Foundation to be used at 88 schools across Southern California.

This money will bring free team sports, including soccer and basketball, to more students. Previous grants from LA84 allowed us to provide programming to 3,240 students at 81 public schools in Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles counties. This year, the opportunities will be extended to 7,040 students at schools in those three counties.

“I’m grateful to have the opportunity to do this and want to give a huge thanks to the team at Adidas and Think Together for bringing it all together. I want these kids to know that with hard work, they can be in my shoes one day or go even further than I have.”

—Sebastian Lletget, New England Revolution Midfielder

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CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF CHANGING THE ODDS

FOUNDER AND CEO RANDY BARTH REFLECTS ON THE EARLY DAYS OF **THINK TOGETHER** WHILE SHARING HIS VISION FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS AS A PARTNER TO EDUCATION LEADERS THROUGHOUT THE STATE AND BEYOND.

What inspired you to start Think Together, and what were those early days like?

My inspiration for launching Think Together was the mothers at Shalimar Learning Center who organized to take the neighborhood back from a gang. They said they needed a safe, quiet place for their kids to go after school. I felt I could help with that.

What really made the effort a success was the quality of the volunteers and early staff. My wife, Mary, who served as a volunteer herself, helped organize the volunteers. Many of them had been teachers when they were young and had skills around this type of work. This included people like Karen French, Betsy Tarbell, Bobbi Dauderman, Jean Wenke, and countless others. It also included retired businessmen like Sam Anderson, who tutored and mentored many of our young teens. Later it included people like Luan Mendel and Joyce Howard, also former teachers, who helped to begin to professionalize the support we were offering.



Randy Barth, Think Together CEO & Founder

What was the moment you knew you had something special, a model that could really support students in need of resources in their communities?

Over time, we had seen that a sizable number of our students were going to college and graduating—hundreds from the Shalimar neighborhood alone. While this was heartening and great for those students and families, it was a drop in the bucket in a state where more than 2 million students were failing.

Around 2010, I made a visit to Jersey Avenue Elementary School and met with the principal there, Monica Johnson. Jersey was in the Little Lake School District in southeast Los Angeles County, and we had noticed in our data that our students were performing

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF CHANGING THE ODDS

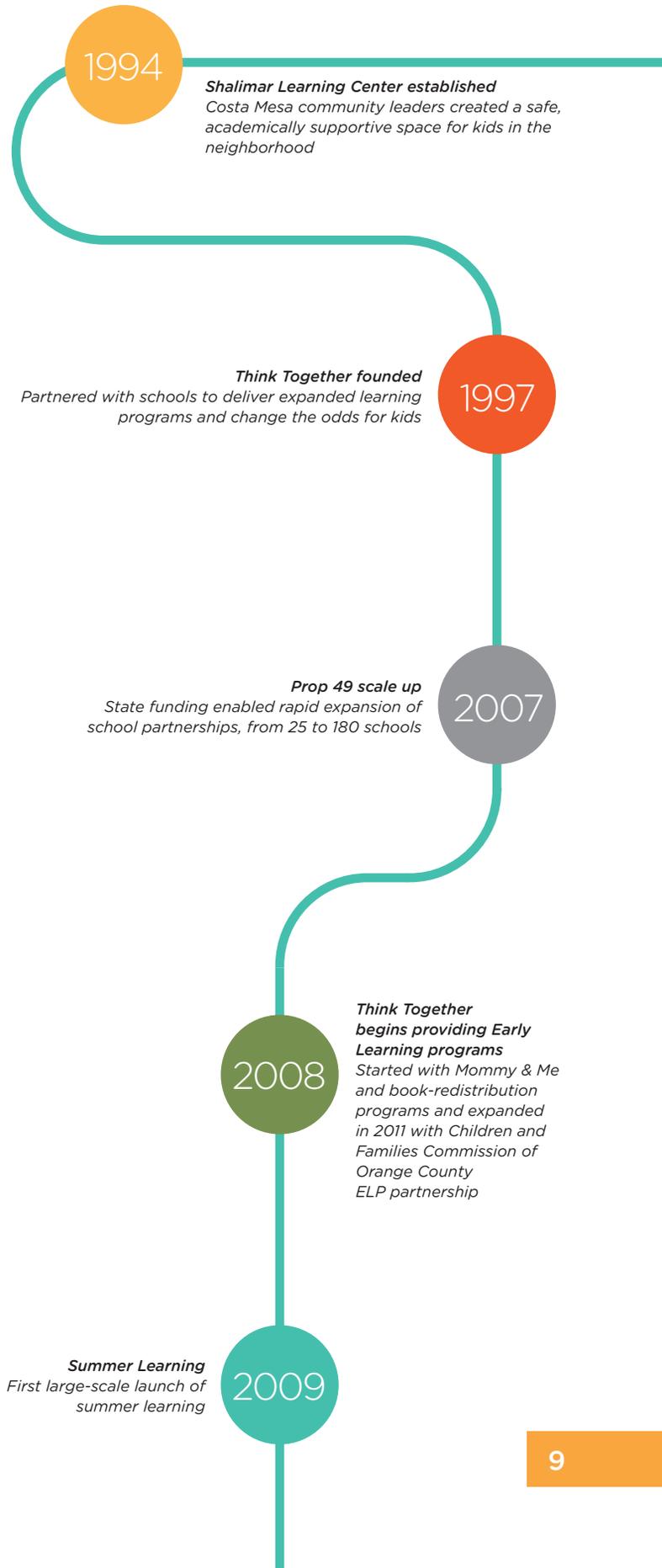
far better in Little Lake than in any of our other school districts. We wanted to learn what they were doing differently.

What I discovered through Monica was a system that set weekly and monthly goals for each student. There were regular check-ins called data reflections during which the principal met with grade-level teachers, our expanded learning coordinator, and anybody else who was involved with that specific set of students. They measured each student's progress, shared best practices and challenges, and set new targets for the period ahead. Then, everybody else in the system set out to use their time and financial resources to support the achievement of these student goals. It was like synchronized swimming.

This was a eureka moment! There is a quotation by American engineer W. Edwards Deming that we very much believe in: "Every system is perfectly designed to get the result it gets." Little Lake had a system that was achieving better results by 50% compared with demographic peer schools across California. We thought that system was replicable and scalable. We later discovered that system was designed by Dr. Robin Avelar La Salle who founded Principal's Exchange, which later became Orenda Education. Think Together invested in Orenda and partnered with them to help spread their work. This year, we are fully merging Orenda into Think Together.



Think Together's first site, Shalimar Learning Center, still changes the odds today



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Think Together has grown tremendously in the last 25 years. Where do you see Think Together in the next 5, 10, and 25 years?

We have an initiative called Project 2 Million. Our vision is to partner with schools and others to close the achievement gap for 2 million students across California. We have two high-level strategies to accomplish this. The first is to improve the systems in schools so that all students receive the premium education that only some students receive today.

The second strategy involves working directly with students and school leaders to wrap our services around the academic school day and year. This starts with early learning programs to help kids enter kindergarten healthy, safe, and ready to learn. Expanded learning turns the traditional school calendar from 6 hours per day/180 days per year to 9 hours per day/210 days per year, with academic support and enrichment programs during the school year, summer, and seasonal breaks.

We have grown into the top half of one percent of all nonprofits in the U.S., serving 200,000 students per year, with more than 3,000 employees and more than \$100 million in annual revenue in our first 25 years. However, we feel we are just getting started. We have learned a lot about what works and what doesn't. And now we are beginning to receive the level of public investment to enable this work to scale so that we can achieve the goals of Project 2 Million.

Specifically, Governor Newsom and the state legislature have created a vision of Afterschool for All and are funding it to the tune of \$5 billion per year beginning in July 2022. They are also creating

Universal Preschool through a phased-in expansion of Transitional Kindergarten that will be available to all 4- and 5-year-old children. This is a huge investment that no other state in the nation has made.

When it comes to school-system improvement, we were recently awarded a \$4 million Education Innovation and Research grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This will help us to transform Orenda's intellectual property that powered school-systems improvements in places like Little Lake into software tools to create greater access to school system leaders, principals, and teachers. This effort will need to be funded by a combination of public and private investments in order to build it out and scale it.

So, scaling what we know works—early learning, expanded learning, school improvement—in order to close the achievement gap for 2 million kids across California. This is our work for the next 25 years. If we have the kind of success we think we can, it will spread across the U.S. and, potentially, around the world.

What inspires you most when challenges arise?

There's a saying I keep on the whiteboard in my office: "There is nothing so powerful than a humble person with a warrior spirit driven by a greater purpose." At Think Together, I'm surrounded by people who meet this definition—the staff who work alongside me, the schools we partner with, and the generosity of our donor community who are essential to how we impact students' lives. When things get tough, I think about the challenges that our students and families overcome to achieve their version of the American Dream. I think about them and I am inspired to keep going.

Business professional Sam Anderson tutoring Shalimar Teen Center students



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF CHANGING THE ODDS



Randy with wife, Mary Barth, celebrating 25 years of Think Together

Bay Area Expansion
Think Together acquires
afterschool provider
Bay Area After-School
All-Stars to launch first
Think Together programs
in Northern California

2013

**Think Together becomes
affiliated with
Orenda Education.**
Partnered with public
schools to fundamentally
change outcomes for
children through systems and
talent development

2015

**Think Together acquires
Youth Policy Institute
afterschool programs.**
Expansion results
in 19,000 students
served that would have
otherwise lost access to
afterschool and expanded
learning programs

2019



Think Together opened Early Learning programs in 2008.

TODAY

Expanding learning programs
for students and scaling school
improvement to impact 2 million
students across California

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CHAMPION OF CHANGE

HOW THE CITY OF MORENO VALLEY AND MORENO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNER WITH **THINK TOGETHER** TO SPARK TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE FOR STUDENTS IN THE INLAND EMPIRE





Ten years ago, the City of Moreno Valley approached Think Together to be the city's expanded learning provider for students enrolled in the region's two school districts: Moreno Valley Unified School District and Val Verde Unified School District.

This unique partnership allowed the City of Moreno Valley to receive the After School Education and Safety (ASES) grant awarded by the California Department of Education. The city would use those grant funds to ensure every student within its borders had access to expanded learning programs.

Since partnering with the City of Moreno Valley and the Moreno Valley Unified School District, Think Together has served thousands of students with academic enrichment, physical activity, and social-emotional learning.

In 2022 alone, this partnership has served an estimated 6,000 students and has evolved to serve youth and their families with expanded learning programs, helping to provide a safe place for kids during typical working hours for caregivers.



A Day in the Life of a Think Together Student

Once the bell signals the end of the school day, students enrolled in Think Together’s afterschool program check in with their program leader and receive a healthy snack in a friendly and supportive environment. They socialize with their friends while engaging in art and science activities and participating in competitive sports. Students also work with program leaders to complete their homework.



Learning to Pivot Throughout the Pandemic

Moreno Valley’s youth were particularly impacted when the pandemic hit two years ago. Schools closed campuses and rolled out distance-learning curricula to keep our communities safe from COVID-19, but kids lost out on the social and emotional benefits of learning with their peers.

Think Together worked with the City of Moreno Valley and the Moreno Valley Unified School District to offer expanded learning programs that allowed students to stay virtually connected with their friends while participating in an academically enriched environment.

Evolving as Educators Meet Students Where They Are

The Moreno Valley Unified School District knew students fell behind academically, socially, and emotionally throughout the pandemic. When the state announced it would be making investments into expanded learning, the district was one of the first Think Together partners to tap into Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) funds to offer programs throughout the school year.



This year, Think Together will honor the City of Moreno Valley and the Moreno Valley Unified School District with their annual Champion of Change award, for their extraordinary efforts in changing the odds for kids.

Over the last decade, this unique partnership has grown in both size and scope, altering the trajectory of thousands of students' lives and trailblazing new programs that support student learning.

Thank you to the City of Moreno Valley and the Moreno Valley Unified School District for your exemplary work in expanded learning and educational equity.

MEET THE THINKERS

WHO HAVE LED THE WAY IN CHANGING THE ODDS FOR KIDS

As Think Together enters its 25th anniversary year, we are proud to celebrate those who truly are the backbone of this organization, the Think Together staff. Their longtime commitment to our mission has helped students graduate high school, go on to college, and begin their careers. These are a few of the more than 3,000 dedicated staff who are changing the odds every day for students.



MEET **EMILIO PENA**, *High School College and Career Resource Specialist, Los Angeles Metro Region*

Emilio is currently celebrating five years of working at Think Together. In that time, Emilio has worked as an Older Youth Leader and Interim College and Career Resource Specialist in our Southeast Los Angeles County Region. When Emilio started working at Think Together, his first site assignment was his high school alma mater.

My Why: *“What has been driving me this whole time has been giving resources and guidance to students who need it the most—the ones that fly under the radar—and wanting to provide what I lacked in resources to those students there now.”*

MEET **PETE REYES**, *Senior Quality Assurance Coach, Bay Area Region*

Pete has been with Think Together for nine years and has about two decades of experience working in the afterschool and expanded learning field. Pete has been highly involved in supporting his community and positioning positive role models in students’ lives.

“The little things we do each day have long-lasting, potentially life-changing, effects on others. Helping a student with a difficult day, being there for them when they are hurt or upset, organizing something fun, or just asking someone how they are and telling them you care about them can make a huge difference. We truly have the opportunity to change lives, and it can happen at any moment.”

—Pete Reyes





MEET ANDREW PEREZ, Director of Program and Operations, Santa Fe Springs Region

Andrew has worked with Think Together since 2016 and started as a Site Supervisor in Azusa at Murray Elementary. He’s grown with Think Together to serve as a Quality Assurance Coach in the Santa Fe Springs region and was promoted to Director of Program and Operations in late 2021.

My Why: *“I have always enjoyed working with and supporting students. One of my first jobs after college was at a group home in Redlands. There I had the opportunity to meet some incredible students. One of the students would repeatedly say, ‘There are no adults at my school who care about me.’ From that moment on, I told myself I would do all I can to ensure no student I come across feels that way again. Think Together’s mission to help change the odds for kids does exactly that; our program ensures students know they are cared for and matter.”*

MEET RAYLENE VASQUEZ, Site Coordinator, San Gabriel Valley Region

Raylene has spent more than five years working at Think Together. She started working as a Program Leader and then became the Site Coordinator at Sierra Vista Junior High in Baldwin Park. She has always worked in childcare since she was 18 but found her passion for working with middle school students when she started working at Think Together.

My Why: *“I realized that middle schoolers often get overlooked at times because of their age, and I fell in love with it. I fell in love with the accomplishment of helping them and seeing them come back to visit me during high school and thanking me for helping them get to where they are now.”*



MEET KNISHA NASH, Learning & Development Manager, Home Office

Knisha has been with Think Together for fifteen years, has held many roles across Think Together’s regions, and has been a dedicated and passionate force in the expanded learning field. She has experienced firsthand how challenging it can be for students to focus on their success when negative influences in the community are present.

My Why: *“I care for kids, and I want to see them do well. I do believe that the students are our future, and if no one is there to support them and put them on the path toward a positive future, then who else will do it? Parents can’t do it alone, we can’t do it alone; it really does take a village to change the odds for kids, and I’m glad to be a part of that village.”*



MEET HARLYN SANTOS, *General Manager, Riverside Region*

Harlyn has risen through the ranks of Think Together over the last 15 years. During that time, she has served in a wide range of roles including Site Coordinator, Quality Assurance Coach, and Director of Program and Operations. Harlyn has been integral to Think Together's growth and has been critical in supporting the new ELO-P resources for schools in California.

"I fell in love with it, and I became so passionate about the impact of expanded learning programs because I understand that we need high-quality programs for our students to be able to be

successful. We have a lot of inequity in the education field, and students are not exposed to the different opportunities that they could be able to receive, and they rely on passionate people like those in Think Together to give them those resources and opportunities."

—Harlyn Santos



MEET PHYLLIS HOFF, *Site Assistant, San Bernardino Region*

Phyllis has worked at the same site in our San Bernardino region for more than fifteen years. She is a steady rock whose unwavering care for her students truly shined while her school site was in distance learning during the height of the pandemic. She supported them through the ups and downs and is a positive role model for her students.

My Why: *"I joined Think Together because my children were all grown up and I wanted to give back to the community. I wanted to make a difference in a child's life, and I wanted them to grow and to become good citizens and to give each one of them some hope and inspiration to go to college, to have good careers, and to find their passion in life."*



MEET **WILLIAM FOSTER**, *Quality Assurance Coach, Palm Springs Region*

William has been a Think Together team member for five years. He has held many roles in the organization in that time supporting program, but currently serves as a Quality Assurance Coach in Palm Springs. Think Together has helped him find a career with purpose where he feels like he is making a difference in people's lives.

My Why: *"My 'why' for working at Think Together is seeing the kids happy and seeing the kids enjoy the program. I think a lot of the times we're in it so much that we don't really see how it is impacting the kids we serve, so I suggest everyone to just take a step back and just look at these programs and see all the fun events and things that are going on at schools and the smiles that they put on the students' faces."*

MEET **GLORIA MARTINEZ**, *Early Learning Manager, Orange County Region*

Gloria is celebrating more than 10 years at Think Together, managing our Early Learning programs. In that time, she has helped cultivate community engagement through our annual Read for the Record campaign in partnership with JumpStart and has provided critical support to our early learning curriculum for our students ages 0 to 5.

My Why: *"The unique thing about Think Together is that we provide programs from cradle to college. The impact that we make is enormous, and when we talk to our parents, they share with us the difference we are making in their child's life. It continually reaffirms my 'why'."*



MEET **CHRISTOPHER PEREZ**, *Quality Assurance Coach, Southeast Los Angeles County Region*

Christopher is celebrating more than five years working at Think Together. In that time, he has served a variety of roles, including Physical Education Program Leader and Site Coordinator, and he now oversees elementary school sites in Compton as the Quality Assurance Coach.

My Why: *"I've been a part of programs like this my entire life. I attended afterschool programs, summer programs, and more, so I've always been around expanded learning programs and always been a part of them. My entire career has been in expanded learning, and I want to give students today the same experiences and support that I received growing up."*



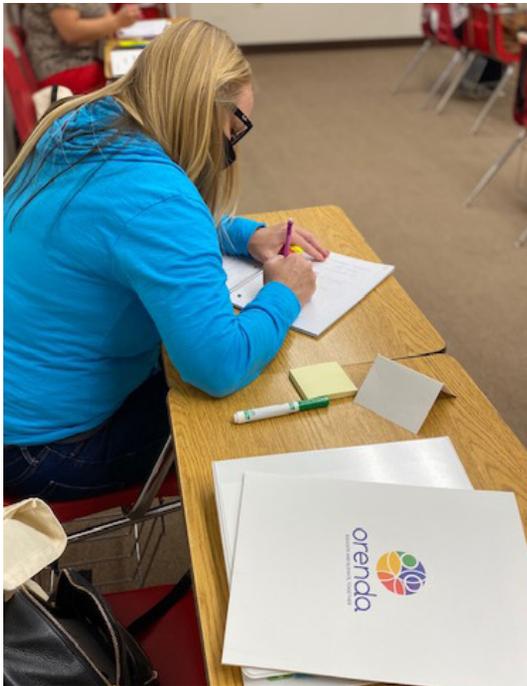




Setting the educational
groundwork at an early age
is essential for supporting a
lifelong journey of learning.
Think Together Early Learning
programs ensure that our
youngest students are ready with
the curiosity and confidence to
thrive in kindergarten.

School Improvement *Travels Far and Wide*

Over the summer of 2021, Orenda Education sent its highly trained team to Mojave Unified School District for Summer Institute, an immersive week to prepare district teachers and leaders for the upcoming school year.



Summer Institute is one element of Orenda Education’s proven multi-layered approach for school improvement. Orenda provides professional development and technical assistance to guide teachers and administrators to make systemic changes that will achieve sustainable improvements in academic outcomes for students; outcomes like grade-level curriculum mastery and improved graduation rates and college readiness. Orenda Education is the school improvement division of Think Together, led by Founder and CEO Robin Avelar La Salle, Ph.D.

Mojave Unified School District is located about 100 miles north of Los Angeles, serving approximately 2,800 students from a lower-resourced, ethnically diverse community. Like all Orenda partners, Mojave Unified wants to improve their below-average performance in English Language Arts and math and low A-G and graduation rates. Only 42% of the district’s students graduate prepared for college. Orenda’s proven equity approach has succeeded in improving these outcomes with districts like Mojave over the past 25 years.

Unfortunately, districts like these are not unusual. The need for school improvement across the state is great, and the urgency is greater. California Department of Education data show that approximately 2 million students are not on track to graduate college ready. These kids deserve the chance to attend college and have all of life’s opportunities available to them. Demographics should not determine destiny.

With the goal of reaching more schools with this need, Orenda applied for and was awarded a much-coveted Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant through the U.S. Department of Education in November 2021. The EIR grant awards Orenda \$4 million over the next five years to build an online platform to enable them to scale their approach to reach more schools. Schools that would require Orenda’s normally in-person, hands-on approach will be able to easily access the equity-focused strategies and tools. A customized learning-management system will provide effective professional development, and Zoom meetings will allow for Orenda team members to connect with school leaders remotely.

While high-need districts like Mojave Unified may still require Orenda’s in-person, hands-on approach (and Orenda never turns down a district partner based on geography), it’s clear to see how districts far from city centers would benefit greatly from a highly accessible, effective set of tools and strategies to improve student achievement.



Orenda's online platform is poised to be the rocket fuel for Project 2 Million, Think Together and Orenda's moon shot vision of closing the achievement gap for the two million students currently not on track to graduate college ready. So, while the Orenda team continues to partner with districts with their hands-on approach, covering nine counties and impacting almost 100,000 students, they are also building the next generation of equity tools to impact two million or more students.

“School systems want to provide a true, right, and just education for all kids. This EIR grant will allow us to accelerate our work to ensure every student, regardless of circumstance, experiences the premium education that only some have historically received.”

—Dr. Robin Avelar La Salle, Orenda CEO & Founder

think

INTRODUCING THE NEXT GENERATION OF odds changers

Diego

PARENTS, GUARDIANS, EDUCATORS, AND MENTORS ALL HOPE TO SEE THAT MOMENT WHEN THE CHILD THEY HELPED SHAPE BECOMES AN ADULT WITH HIS OR HER OWN AMBITIONS AND DESTINY.

THINK TOGETHER IS NO EXCEPTION. AS WE SUPPORT STUDENTS FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL, WE CAN'T HELP BUT HOPE THAT WE ARE SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF THINKERS, LEADERS, AND ODDS CHANGERS.



Diego Martinez attends Mt. San Jacinto College in Riverside County, where he is studying mechanical engineering. He's hoping to transfer to University of California, Berkeley, or another UC in the fall of 2023. Diego plans to go into the automotive industry as an engineer once he earns his necessary degrees. While attending Think Together, Diego became heavily involved in Hack Club and continues to intern with Think Together to help bring Hack Club to additional program sites.

“One of the biggest challenges Think Together helped me overcome has been my lack of confidence. During my freshman year, I was an introverted student who primarily focused on schoolwork and sports. Through programs such as robotics, tutoring, American Sign Language club, and Hack Club, I became exposed to roles where leadership was required.”

—Diego Martinez

Gaby



Gabriela Sanchez is enrolled at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga where she is studying psychology and sociology. She balances school and work as a Think Together program leader of third- and fourth-grade classes. Transitioning to college had its own challenges due to the pandemic, but Gabriela had a Think Together mentor as part of her Good to Great Scholarship she earned last year. Her mentor made sure she had the support she needed. Once she completes her degree, she wants to become a psychologist who works with and supports adolescents in juvenile hall.

Javier



Javier Martin recently graduated from University of California, Irvine, with a degree in chemistry. Javier attended Think Together’s Shalimar Learning Center from third grade all the way through his senior year of high school. Javier is the first in his family to have a college degree, and he credits where he is now largely to the support of Think Together. Javier is currently a substitute teacher and is in the process of earning his teaching credential to become a chemistry teacher.

LEARNING TOGETHER



Each year, our students inspire us with their passion and determination. One particularly inspiring student, Ethan, wants to be a structural engineer or an architect. He is especially interested in designing houses from the outside in.

Ethan is a fifth grader and has been enrolled in Think Together's afterschool program in the Riverside County region for two years. His favorite subject is math.

"I like math because I just like to add up all the numbers, and sometimes it can be really easy and sometimes really challenging."

—Ethan, fifth-grade student

Fortunately for Ethan, Think Together provides enrichment programs to fuel his love of math, engineering, and architecture, with STEM activities.

Think Together recently refreshed its expanded learning program design to provide students like Ethan the most innovative curriculum in STEM, arts, enrichment, and physical activity. STEM components and our Coding for All initiative provide robust real-world experiences to students who have not traditionally been encouraged to pursue STEM careers.

Seeing is believing for our youth, and with volunteer support from donors like The Boeing Company, Broadcom Inc., Cisco, Southern California Edison, PayPal, and Western Digital, students are able to connect with professionals that often represent the very communities they live in. These STEM programs often instill in kids new skills and career awareness as well as confidence, perseverance, creativity, and grit.

As Ethan moves on to middle school, he will be equipped with a firm foundation for the next stages of his academic journey. And Ethan is ambitious with his future; he's hoping to be part of Stanford's freshman class of 2029.

You've supported thousands of students throughout our first 25 years.



THINK LEGACY

Please consider making an even bigger impact with a legacy gift and help ensure that future generations of students flourish!

Your legacy can change lives. Planned gifts for Think Together can reduce your taxes and create more security for your family while making a difference in the educational achievement of thousands of California students.

For more information about planned giving opportunities, please visit



thinktogether.giftplans.org

or contact the Development Office at 949.683.9067 | giftplanning@thinktogether.org

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RAISE A HAND

THINK TOGETHER'S ANNUAL EVENT RAISES SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENT LEARNING PROGRAMS.

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PRESENTING UNDERWRITER
ERIC AND CONNIE BODEN

VIRTUAL UNDERWRITER

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 CYPHERWORX

 Skillastics
Physical Activity for All

WE ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE THE MANY INDIVIDUAL, CORPORATE, AND FOUNDATION PARTNERS WHO HAVE RAISED THEIR HANDS TO CHANGE THE ODDS FOR KIDS. BECAUSE OF THIS GENEROSITY, THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN WILL HAVE THE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO SUCCEED AT SCHOOL AND ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS OF THE FUTURE. **THANK YOU.**

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