

Redeemer Community Partnership



Statistics Corner

Lea's internal battle is not an uncommon one for children. In education circles, her process is described as moving from a "fixed mindset" to a "growth mindset" and it is a change that teachers strive to help students make. It is also an outcome our district monitors each year through student surveys. Data from the 2017/2018 survey shows how much easier it is for well-resourced kids to adopt a growth mindset, compared to kids in high-poverty environments. At our closest elementary school, John Mack, 93% of students are low-income and 45% are English language learners. At another school, 9 miles away, just 14% of students are low-income and 3% are English language learners. Observe the difference in how students responded to growth mindset survey questions:

	John Mack Elementary Students responding "mostly or completely true."	Higher Income School Students responding "mostly or completely true."
Challenging myself won't make me any smarter.	45%	12%
There are some things I am not capable of learning.	31%	15%
If I am not naturally smart in a subject, I will never do well in it.	23%	8%

Equipping Parents

One of the best ways to empathize with families in our neighborhood is to imagine yourself relocating a family to another country. Not Australia or Great Britain, but maybe Mexico or China or Morocco. Imagine yourself needing to rely on a public school system with unfamiliar policies and practices, and instruction in a language you do not know. Hopefully your imagination can evoke the intimidation and anxiety this scenario might cause you. This is everyday life for many of our neighbors.

We believe one of RCP's most important tasks is to expand parents' knowledge and confidence so they can take leadership in their children's education. This fall, using grant money from the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination, we designed and printed 1000 color guidebooks explaining the choices families have for school enrollment. The booklets included maps, test score data and application information for over 50 nearby schools at each level (elementary, middle, high school.) Detailed information that it might take parents months to collect was laid out in accessible graphics in both Spanish and English. Working with our partners at Church of the Redeemer we hosted house parties, public workshops, info tables, school workshops and one-on-one counseling sessions over a three-week period. Parents discovered options they hadn't known about, got help logging on to the district's online system, learned how to maximize their child's chance of acceptance at the most popular schools and became educators within their own social circles. It was deeply fulfilling work for the church members who participated, and we look forward to seeing many kids thrive as they find schools that match their specific needs.

*Every valley raised up
every mountain
made low
the rough ground shall become
level, the rugged places a plain.
and the glory of
the Lord will
be revealed
and all the people will see it
together.*

— Isaiah 40:4–5

Rough ground level

Every day hundreds of children and their families walk over broken and raised sidewalks to and from school along Jefferson Boulevard. Fear of speeding traffic forces most bicycles onto the broken sidewalks, creating an extra hazard for pedestrians. The street has earned the unfortunate distinction of being on Los Angeles' High Injury Network -- streets with a high concentration of severe injuries and deaths, with an emphasis on those involving people walking and biking.

Our Make Jefferson Beautiful campaign reached several milestones this year. Having secured \$6.3 million for sidewalk repairs, pedestrian lighting, street trees and bike lanes, our council office committed additional funding for flashing red light traffic signals at four key crosswalks. Some of the roughest ground for local pedestrians will literally soon be level! And one of our most dangerous walking and biking routes will become safer. Ground-breaking is scheduled for 2019.

In addition to adding much-needed safety and beauty, the Jefferson Beautiful Complete Street Plan will bridge a stark, historic divide between the USC campus and the adjacent residential community. These improvements will connect children and their families in a much stronger way to the economic, cultural and recreational resources of Exposition Park.

The people will see it together!

Our long struggle to close a toxic oil and gas drilling site in the neighborhood has reached an exciting climax! Around this time last year, our community won major new protections for local residents. These included enclosure of the site, a modern fire suppression system, air quality monitoring and more. Rather than comply with these expensive new requirements, Sentinel Peak Resources announced that they will close and clean-up the site! About 40 residents of our neighborhood returned to City Hall on



November 29th to make sure the city keeps strong protective restrictions in place during well-abandonment and the subsequent clean-up.

The oil company submitted a proposal they called a “win-win-win”, allegedly meeting the goals of the community, the city, and their own stakeholders. In reality, it was an attempt to have their cake and eat it too. They want no enclosure, no modern fire suppression system, and no air quality monitoring. Yet, they want to continue to bring toxic chemicals on-site to keep production

profitable as long as possible. They brought members of two Chamber of Commerce groups to offer statements of support.

In response, we made it clear that we considered this a big LOSE for our community. A long parade of community members approached the mic to share their experience with noise, odors, disturbed sleep, sore throats, miscarriages, cancers, the oily film that covers every surface in their home, anxiety, neurological symptoms and more. Some of our neighbors were telling their stories publicly for the fourth or fifth time. Some read letters from neighbors who could not get the morning off work. We each closed our remarks with the same clear demand: That the city ban the company from using any chemicals for extraction purposes, and set a two-year deadline for completely shutting down the operation. The zoning administrator who conducted the hearing said we can expect a decision from the city in February.

When we began this struggle, it was hard to imagine that the drill site would close for good. But Jesus has promised, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move.” The truth of this promise has been revealed to us every step of the way. And as the prophet Isaiah predicted, we have seen it together! We hope that this effort will inspire and inform many more communities with a clear path for ending neighborhood drilling.

The rugged places a plain

Our Adventures Ahead students have been working hard, putting in three extra hours of focused learning every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoon. We are blessed this fall with four returning teachers who already know our students and our program well. The relationships they have built, and the trust they have earned, sometimes enable them to offer just the right challenge and motivation.

One of our teachers recently shared a powerful breakthrough she had with a fourth grade student. Lea began this fall reading at a kindergarten level. A few weeks ago, she was really struggling with a page in Great Leaps, our daily timed reading fluency practice. Lea finally gave up and said “I can’t do this, I don’t know how to read.” Her teacher paused the timer and told Lea to repeat these three affirmations... “I can do it. I can read. I believe in myself.” As they were saying these words over and over, the teacher could still hear doubt in Lea’s voice. She stopped her again, made her look her in the eyes and said, “Lea, you got this.” She gave Lea a high five, then started the timer again.

Lea aced the page. And since that afternoon Lea has been excited to read rather than intimidated by it. In fact, we helped her download a reading app and she now reads books on her phone every day, even on days we don’t have tutoring. She gets excited each time she advances to the next level of books. Just a couple months ago, she couldn’t put two sounds together to make a word, and now she is flying through her phonics readers. Lea still has a long journey to catch up to grade-level standards. But instead of feeling defeated by that challenge she is now facing it with hope and pride.



Many years ago, we wrote down a vision statement for Redeemer Community Partnership to guide our work over time. One line from that statement is:

“We envision a community where men and women pass on a legacy of hope to the next generation. Where hard work brings rich rewards. Where parents find the physical, educational, spiritual and social resources their children need. Where residents young and old see a future for themselves that is worth sacrificing for.”

Lea now sees a future for herself as a reader, a future she did not believe in when she came to us. She has decided that future is worth working toward, and she is putting in the daily effort to bring it about. Lea’s teacher has experienced something profound about the art of passing on hope. Through her, the rest of our staff, our many volunteers and YOU, we believe God is making the rugged places a little smoother for kids like Lea.

