

CHOOSE CHILDREN LA 2020

The LA Partnership put young children at the center of Los Angeles County's 2020 elections

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING LOS ANGELES COUNTY CANDIDATES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENTS

The fastest way to make systems change is to develop and advance the thinking of those who control public systems and dollars: elected officials. For decades, few elected officials have made early childhood investments a top priority. In 2020, the LA Partnership set out to encourage local election candidates to articulate why they are early childhood champions worthy of voter support.*

There is no better moment to educate and engage candidates than when they are campaigning for votes. Early childhood is rarely a top priority, but with child care becoming a distinctly visible issue as a result of COVID, the LA Partnership took the opportunity to press candidates to articulate their positions on early childhood care and education.

ELEVATING EARLY CHILDHOOD ISSUES WITH ELECTEDS IS A CHALLENGE

As a result of the pandemic, California faced a budget shortfall of \$50 billion – larger than during the Great Recession – which put pressure on funding critical public programs. Under normal circumstances, it is easy for candidates to lose sight of how important it is to invest in young children. More visible issues like cost of living, homelessness and the economy often bump young children down the list.

THE LA PARTNERSHIP APPLIED A PROVEN MODEL TO CREATE EARLY CHILDHOOD CHAMPIONS

The LA Partnership identified the 2020 LA County elections as an all-important opportunity to build support among candidates for early childhood by showing them why early childhood should be a top priority and proving to them how important it was to voters. If candidates saw proof of voter interest in the issue, they would pay attention. Using the playbook of the successful Choose Children 2018 campaign led by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation in that year's gubernatorial election, the LA Partnership focused on two open seats that would directly impact early childhood systems: the LA County Board of Supervisors and Los Angeles Unified School District. The LA Partnership quickly mobilized philanthropic partners to raise \$100,000. Funds were put toward several innovative activities, including a countywide poll of more than 800 likely voters to show candidates how much voters cared about birth to five issues; policy proposals for partners to use in their advocacy efforts; and a candidate forum on early childhood issues where voters could hear directly from candidates. (Each of the top candidates running for the Supervisorial and Board District seats participated in the forum.)

 **CHOOSE
CHILDREN LA**

*The Choose Children LA Campaign is a non-partisan, public education initiative.

WHEN EARLY CHILDHOOD IS FRONT AND CENTER IN ELECTEDS' MINDS

The Choose Children LA 2020 campaign's success is indisputable. Every candidate the LA Partnership reached via the campaign, including those who knew little about early childhood development, made it a priority as a result of the LA Partnership's education and leadership. The campaign gave candidates more conviction around the issues important to voters, with the poll results showing that 82% of voters were more likely to support candidates who made early childhood issues a priority. Over 100 people participated in the candidate forum and hundreds of others attended candidate rallies and campaign events.

Acting quickly, the LA Partnership identified and seized the opportunity to educate candidates during a critical election cycle. The LA Partnership was swift to educate funders, raise funds and deploy those funds toward making long-term systems change. Among the direct, positive outcomes, the newly elected member of the Los Angeles Unified School Board hired an early childhood expert to a key staff position and was a strong voice advocating for knowledge of early childhood as a criteria in hiring a new superintendent to lead the nation's second largest school district. The new member on the Board of Supervisors has supported initiatives to expand home visiting services and increase compensation and training of the early childhood workforce.

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When Silicon Valley Community Foundation invited the LA Partnership to join the 2018 Choose Children campaign, the Partnership saw the power in getting in front of a campaign to raise 0-5 issues in electeds' minds. The team used the learnings to launch a similar effort in Los Angeles in partnership with UNITE-LA, with immediate and long-term results.

– DAVID RATTRAY, UNITE-LA

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FUNDERS

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If you would like to learn more about the LA Partnership and investing in children 0-5 in LA County, visit www.investinkidsla.org or contact us at Partnership@investinkidsla.org.