

A young woman with dark braided hair, wearing a maroon t-shirt, is standing in a classroom. She is looking up and to the right, pointing her right index finger towards a whiteboard. She is holding a white marker in her left hand. The whiteboard has some faint writing on it. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students and classroom furniture.

**Because Every
Child Can Succeed:**
ANNUAL REPORT 2010

Partnership in Action:

MILAGRO CHARTER SCHOOL UNITES PARENTS, EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS IN SUCCESS

Sascha Robinett has bigger goals for her students than just great scores on achievement tests. But as a measure of her students' achievement, test scores offer hard evidence of good news. In the 2009-2010 school year, Milagro Charter School students attained an academic performance index (API) of 893. The state target for all schools is 800. For as many years as the school has been in operation, its API has beaten "the statistics for the population in the neighborhood we serve," she says.

Established in 2004 by Dr. Ref Rodriguez and Dr. Jacqueline Elliott, the Milagro Charter School is part of the Partnerships to Uplift Communities charter school system in Los Angeles. This network of schools was created to provide high-quality charter schools in densely populated urban communities with overcrowded and low achieving schools. In the 2009-2010 year, the school had 227 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and all but 17 of them received free or reduced lunch. Only 9 percent of the parents have bachelor's degrees.

Using a collaborative relationship between teachers and students, the school emphasizes meeting individual student needs through small group instruction, individual conferences and collaborative learning tasks.

"Each child receives individual attention and that makes a huge difference," Robinett notes. "The question we ask about each child is 'what does the child need to achieve and how do we make that happen?'" Staff create curricula and lesson plans, tailoring them to student and class needs and the school's philosophy and goals.

Clearly, it's working. "Our inspiration comes from a quote by Paulo Freire about teaching kids not to just read the word but read the world. Our concept of success is in our vision—we want them to be able to critically analyze and think through issues. We are trying to build people who are lifelong learners. We want them to always be curious, to always try to improve themselves."



It's a noble goal and far from easy to achieve, as Robinett and her staff are aware. Martha Moran taught first grade at the school for five years before becoming assistant principal in 2009. "It's challenging in a good way to create a curriculum and to get to know each student well enough to be able to establish academic goals for each one."

Nora Aparicio, who works in the school office, sent her son, Andrew Cortez, now 12, to the school from kindergarten through fifth grade. She loved the school's approach. "They find ways for your child to learn. For example, Andrew struggled with writing. He didn't like it, so his teachers found ways to make it fun for him. He liked drawing so they would have him draw pictures and then write about what he drew."

The school also emphasizes whole family involvement, encouraging parents to take active roles in their children's educations. "We are very open with parents and are in communication with them all of the time," Moran points out. "The relationships I built with parents when I was teaching continue now that I am assistant principal."

Aparicio appreciates the respect she received as a parent and the school's willingness to include her as an active participant in Andrew's education. "Everyone at the school made sure I was well informed about what was going on with Andrew. They answered my questions. The teachers know all of the parents and children. I knew when I dropped Andrew off that he would be safe and in a good academic environment."

Today, Milagro students conquer test scores. Tomorrow, the world. All thanks to the dedication and creativity of a charter school staff that can see that world spread out for each and every child.