

AT ALTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# The Future is THEIRS

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## INSIDE:

The leaders of tomorrow's workforce need to be globally connected and highly adaptive. See how Alta Public Schools, a free public school with the quality of a private school, makes that happen!

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POSTAL CUSTOMER

# Giving Students the World

Alta Public Schools empowers Los Angeles youth with an education fit for the leaders of tomorrow

BY HOWARD HARDEE



Griselda Reyes grew up in West Los Angeles, and Xavier Reyes, her husband, in South Los Angeles. Having seen how socioeconomic disparities play a very real role amongst high-poverty and immigrant communities, they see education as a social justice issue — education can be a great equalizer for future students and leaders.

“We knew that education is what got us ahead in life,” said Griselda Reyes, Alta Public Schools co-founder and librarian. “Our parents instilled that in us from the very beginning.”

Empowering other young minds with that same opportunity is what led Griselda and Xavier Reyes to open Alta Public Schools, which is made up of Academia Moderna, Prepa Tec Middle School and Prepa Tec High School. Alta Public Schools is one of the only school systems in Los Angeles that follows the whole International Baccalaureate (IB) school model.

“IB takes the best learning approaches from around the world and puts them into one,” said Xavier Reyes, co-founder and chief executive officer. “It’s not just about the students, but the entire global community.”

A unique concept even for charters, IB schools are known around the world for encouraging student curiosity more than traditional instruction. Alta creates project-based curricula in order to help students TK-12 “learn how to learn” while still upholding common core standards. This model aims to give students a leg-up when entering the future workforce.

In today’s fast-paced and evolving world, the Reyeses said it’s also never been more important to prepare students become globally-minded citizens — which is why Alta’s classes are taught through an international lens.

“For example, we don’t want our students to become workers in an office importing goods from China. We want them to be the forward-thinking people who actually make those things happen, right?” Xavier Reyes said. “So, we started offering Mandarin classes because our students will be in a very progressive, globally-oriented environment. We want to connect the world to our students.”

Another major component of Alta’s approach to education is “developing the whole child” to empower students far beyond academics. Each student’s progress is monitored using ten character traits laid out in IB’s “learner profile.” Holding students

to the learner profile standards develops empathetic, open-minded and principled adults who aren’t afraid to take risks and know how to work as team players. Students are also required to wear uniforms, a practice in discipline.

As Xavier Reyes put it, students not only get an international education at Alta, but learn how to be good people with goals for the future.

“The future is here and we have to prepare our students today for a future world of uncertainty, interconnectedness and possibilities,” Xavier Reyes said.



COVER AND HEADSHOT BY ZACH SUTTON

**“We want to connect the world to our students.”**

**Xavier Reyes**  
Chief executive officer, Alta Public Schools

## GETTING TO KNOW IB

International Baccalaureate (IB) is a set of school curricula specifically designed to empower students with learning skills to last a lifetime while also teaching them to be inquisitive, caring and familiar with world cultures. Each stage of an IB education challenges Alta Public Schools students to continue building upon what they’ve already learned as an IB student.

**PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME (PYP):**  
Designed for schools students age 3 to 12, the PYP introduces students to inquiry-based learning in the classroom and the real world, and begins IB’s development of the whole child.

**MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME (MYP):**  
The MYP encourages learners age 11 to 16 to make connections between their subjects and the world around them. Participation in a secondary language program is required by this stage.

**DIPLOMA PROGRAMME (DP):**  
Focused on preparing students age 16 to 19 for college, the DP learners are taught preparedness, self-confidence, research skills and time-management skills. Students also develop a sense of worldly responsibility.





# A New Way to Teach

Alta Public School teachers embrace more effective methods of education

BY HOWARD HARDEE

Teachers at Alta Public Schools, like Prepa Tec High School teacher Uriel Quinones, are empowering students with tangible ways of learning, not just giving them more to memorize.  
PHOTO BY ZACH SUTTON



Uriel Quinones finds more value in project-based assignments than multiple-choice quizzes. As a teacher at Prepa Tec High School — a member of Alta Public Schools — Quinones sees firsthand how this method empowers students both as learners and growing people.

All of Alta Public Schools' campuses focus on the same thing: encouraging students to become good citizens with ethical values and morals, while still meeting common core standards.

"It's not just about showing up at the school and checking a box," he said. "We're answering that question that kids are always asking in school: 'Why are we doing this?' We're telling them why what they're learning matters, and you can almost see that light bulb moment when they're putting two and two together."

**"We're telling them why what they're learning matters."**

**Uriel Quinones**  
Teacher, Prepa Tec High School

Alta and its three schools adhere to the International Baccalaureate (IB) model. As such, teachers try to avoid the stringent practice of drilling students on facts, figures and important dates in history — methods that don't seem to stick with students much longer than whatever quiz they're taking.

"What's more important is that we're teaching them how to think, problem solve and be reflective — so they can make better decisions," said Kaylene Rudd, Alta's district IB coordinator. "It's not just about learning when the Declaration of Independence was signed."

Using education to turn learning into real-world application also gives students an appreciation of culture and people — teaching them to broaden their understandings of the world.

"If you're in a music class, you're not just learning about the typical Western European composers," Rudd said. "You're

looking at musical compositions from all over the world and throughout history, and [analyzing] them. [Then] you're looking at the music you like today, and which components of that music are influenced by those different cultures."

Alta teachers don't necessarily see themselves as instructors, but rather as facilitators. Students are encouraged to make their own connections on why or how something makes sense, strengthened by a crossover of topics or themes between classes. For example, a literature class may be reading a novel from a specific time period because students are also studying that particular era in history class.

Quinones said his role also often involves playing devil's advocate and challenging any preconceived notions students may have in order to teach them to think more independently.

"There's the old conception that students go to school to get answers," he said. "I tell the students, 'I'm not here to give you answers, I'm here to give you more questions.'"

## SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Most schools only focus on English and math, but developing the whole child doesn't stop at academics. Alta Public Schools makes sure students are best prepared to learn by removing any external worries from the equation. Learn how its support systems help students focus on tomorrow.

### NUTRITION

Bright young minds need healthy meals. At Alta, students' breakfasts and lunches are not only nutritious but fun to eat and affordable. Breakfast, lunch and a snack are available for only \$5.65 a day. Free and reduced fee meals are available for those who qualify.

### TRANSPORTATION

Rather than leaving students or parents to figure out transportation on their own, Alta makes sure all students have a safe and reliable ride to school — keeping students off the street.

### TECHNOLOGY

Alta students are familiar with technology long before they'll need it in the workplace. Every student has a laptop computer, classrooms are equipped with industry-leading technology, and classwork exposes students to the basics of robotics, programming and digital design.



# Finding The Right Path

Parents find support for students and themselves at Alta Public Schools

BY MARK LORE



At Alta Public Schools, Monica Renteria found an environment for her daughters to thrive in.  
PHOTO BY ZACH SUTTON

Ten years ago, Monica Renteria stopped into Alta Public Schools on a whim. It only took her five minutes to realize that this was where her daughters needed to be.

“I walked in and they gave me good information on how they were different from other area schools,” she recalled. “I signed them up that day.”

Renteria’s daughters, Blanca and Valerie, first came to Alta in the first grade. Now, they are both sophomores at Prepa Tec High School and motivated to pursue college after graduation.

Renteria is enthusiastic at how well her daughters are doing in school, and how much they enjoy learning. The smaller class sizes and individual attention they’ve received have been critical to their learning, she said. Especially for Valerie.

Valerie experienced learning challenges when she was younger and was held back a grade so she could catch up. At Alta, Valerie’s lessons catered more to her preferred style of visual learning, and teachers gave her more assistance than she would have received at a traditional school — sometimes even during teachers’ off times.

The results speak for themselves: Valerie’s grades have improved, she turns in assignments on time and wants to continue her education.

“The teachers motivate them to want to go to college,” said Renteria. “And every time I have a question or concern, Alta answers my questions.”

According to Renteria, encouragement from teachers and parents is key to helping students succeed.

“I want to support them the best I can,” Renteria said. As someone who started college but never graduated, she knows how important motivation can be. “I tell them don’t take that year break — stick with it while you’re excited.”

Renteria also participates in Alta’s Learning Community, a program that helps parents become more engaged in the learning process with their children. She entered the program when her daughters first enrolled, and was able to make it work around her work schedule. This program made the learning experience much easier as it fostered good communication between faculty and parents, and gave her additional support when needed.

Renteria is confident her girls are on the right path and is grateful to Alta Public Schools for helping them get there. However, she still

jokes that she still takes every precaution necessary.

“They say, ‘I can’t wait to go to college!’” Renteria said with a laugh. “And I want to record them saying it so I can play it back to them in two years when they’re there and working hard.”

“Every time I have a question or concern, Alta answers my questions.”

Monica Renteria  
Parent

## EMPOWERING PARENTS

Students learn better when parents are engaged and knowledgeable themselves. Alta Public Schools’ Learning Community brings parents into the learning process easily — no matter their schedule or education level — by offering classes such as:

### CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH

Teaches basic English skills so parents can connect better with people in their everyday life. Also helps parents confront any fears by allowing them to speak and express themselves in class.

### COMPUTER CLASS

Covers how to use word processing and other software. Allows parents to communicate with teachers electronically, assist students at home, and monitor important online issues like cyberbullying.

### COMMUNITY/LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

Parents are great advocates! Shows parents they have a voice and teaches them how to build relationships, work in team environments, ask questions and represent themselves.





# A Brighter Future

Student inspired to connect to her culture and set career goals

BY MARK LORE



Thanks to her Alta Public Schools education, Alexiss Sanchez is looking pursue a career in medicine where she will be the first in her family to attend college.

PHOTO BY ZACH SUTTON

Alexiss Sanchez has attended Alta Public Schools since kindergarten. Before she started high school, she was given the opportunity to move to a traditional public school, if she wanted to. Alexiss decided to stay at Alta.

"I've been doing so well," said Alexiss. "It's been so good so far, so why not stay?"

As Alexiss prepares for college and a career at Prepa Tec High School, she said Alta's International Baccalaureate (IB) programs and strategies are giving her a leg up.

Alexiss feels empowered by all three IB programs she's been educated through. Unlike schools who only offer IB at the high school level, Alta builds upon each of its IB programs to better prepare students for their place in a growing global economy. Students develop adaptive skills necessary for the evolving workforce and are also encouraged to participate in creative activities.

Alexiss has also taken traditional Mexican dance classes — baile folklórico — for the past four years at Alta, which gave

**"We have to learn to do our part and to work with others."**

**Alexiss Sanchez**  
Student, Prepa Tec High School

her the chance to explore her own culture a little deeper. Alexiss attends dance class a couple days a week on top of her regular coursework.

"It's something I really like doing," she said. "I've been doing it since fifth grade, and I've loved it ever since. It's also made me more curious about my culture."

Alexiss' parents are originally from the Jalisco region of Mexico. Exploring her roots has also given her an extra push to

get straight A's in school so she can pursue a career in medicine after graduation — maybe as an OBGYN. Alexiss will be the first in her family to attend college.

While her family has given her support at home to pursue her dreams and stay focused — no matter where that takes her — Alexiss has been guided by Alta on how best to prepare.

Smaller class sizes give students more individual attention, which allows students to better engage in areas of studies that would otherwise be a struggle. For Alexiss, whose classes don't have more than 28 students each, that class is geography.

"I like the way my teacher teaches — it surprises me how much I like learning about geography," Alexiss said.

Alexiss' classes also have students participate in group-projects, which specifically focus on improving their interpersonal skills and community — and in some cases, the school itself.

"We have to learn to do our part and to work with others," said Alexiss.

## PLACES TO GO

Alta Public Schools offer many travel programs which allow students to interact with their local communities, as well as those across the globe. Here are some exciting opportunities available:

### ABC7 NEWS TOUR

An extension of Alta's Media Lab, this trip gives students an exclusive behind the scenes tour of broadcasting.

### COLLEGE TOURS EXPERIENCE

Overnight Spring college tours and local college trips.

### GIRLS BUILD L.A.

Yearly competition that gives young women the tools they need to lead change in their communities.

### EXPLORER'S CLUB

Provides opportunities for students grades 9 and 10 that inspire personal growth, introduce new ideas and encourage students to become independent and responsible adults.

### MANUFACTURING DAY

Yearly opportunity for students to explore the world of manufacturing, including the University of Southern California Viterbi School of Engineering.

### ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL STUDENT INTERNSHIP

Gives volunteer experience to Prepa Tec High School students interested in medical careers.

### UNITED NATIONS

One of the only schools in the region selected to participate, the Prepa Tec Model United Nations club travels to New York to meet with students and world diplomats to foster international relations.

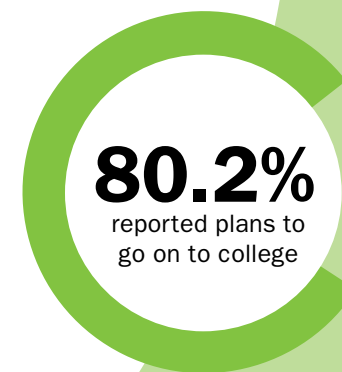
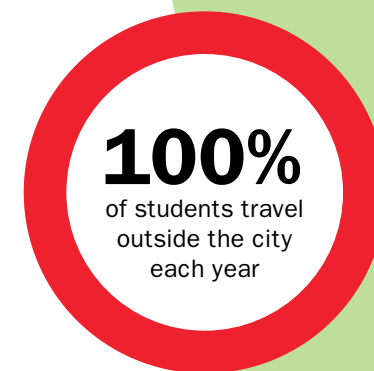
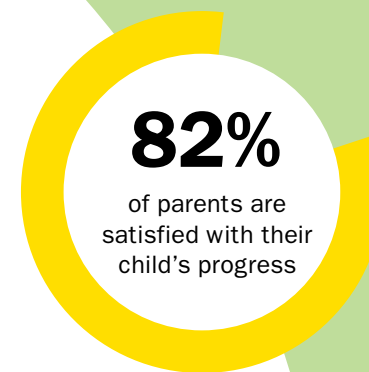


# The Choice is Clear

Alta Public Schools gives **today's students** the best education to create **tomorrow's opportunities**

WHY ALTA	HOW TO ENROLL:
<p>Alta Public Schools is unlike any other charter model in Los Angeles. Thanks to its International Baccalaureate (IB) curricula, students not only meet common core standards but learn how to actually learn. This skill empowers students to take their education beyond the classroom and understand it in a unique way that can be applied to the real world. Students in any of Alta Public Schools' three IB programs will be better suited for the future workforce by becoming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquisitive risk-takers</li> <li>• Team players</li> <li>• Globally aware</li> <li>• Highly adaptive</li> <li>• Technology savvy</li> <li>• Responsible citizens</li> </ul>	<p>Applying parents should attend an orientation meeting for more information on how to apply and documents needed. If more students apply than there is space for in the academic year, priority is given to siblings of existing students and those who live in the Los Angeles Unified School District. A public random lottery is held to fill a predetermined number of openings. Enrollment applications should be turned in at any one of Alta Public Schools' campuses (check for hours of availability).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open enrollment runs from November through March</li> <li>• Turn enrollment applications into an Alta Public Schools campus or call for more information at <b>323-707-4696</b>.</li> </ul>

Visit [www.altapublicschools.org/enroll](http://www.altapublicschools.org/enroll) for more information



Source: Alta Public Schools data and surveys



## MAIN OFFICE & ACADEMIA MODERNA

**Grades Pre-K through 5**  
2410 Broadway Ave.  
Walnut Park, CA 90255  
323-923-0383



## PREPA TEC MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Grades 6 & 7**  
2665 Clarendon Ave.  
Huntington Park, CA 90255  
323-800-2739



**8th Grade Academy**  
6005 Stafford Ave.  
Huntington Park, CA 90255  
323-800-2738

## PREPA TEC HIGH SCHOOL

**Grades 9 through 12**  
4210 E. Gage Ave.  
Bell, California 90201  
323-800-2743



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