

A School Founders History Malk...as Academy Charter Schools144p

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SPEAKERS

Malka Borrego



Malka Borrego 00:01

I grew up in Pico Union, which is just west of downtown Los Angeles. I'm a third generation resident. My grandfather bought a house there, and I was raised in that on the home that my mom was raised in. I was very privileged in Pico Union to go to great schools. Unfortunately, they weren't public schools. I attended the parochial school that my parents attended, and was really able to understand what a great education was, and was able to send me off to a really fantastic College. Unfortunately, that's not the story of many of my cousins and neighbors that I grew up in Pico Union were able to obtain when I was growing up, there was a lot of bussing going on. So if you wanted a great education, you had to leave Pico Union. You had to be bused out for very long hours citizen Pico Union at that time. So when I came back from college, I was able to come back to my neighborhood to Pico Union and become a second grade teacher through the public school system. And really understood what public education looked like and felt like for people that I grew up with and what it felt like in Pico Union, and I realized that our families just needed more choice and needed access to great schools, and there just weren't enough in Pico Union at that time. I went into nonprofit for quite some time, and then charter schools became a thing, and so I decided to look into them, and I thought that coming back to my neighborhood, bringing my teaching experience and my nonprofit experience, marrying them both. I great educational, an educational opportunity for the community that I love. I was able to design my my charter school by gleaming best practices from charter schools across the country. I was very fortunate to get a fellowship through building excellence schools, and I spent a year traveling the country, doing a residency at another high performing charter school, and really looking to see what would work for for my community, taking a piece from here and a piece from there, and then bringing together the model to bring back to Pico Union, I was able To visit many of the schools in on the East Coast, many of the Uncommon Schools. I did a residency in Bed Stuy with uncommon leadership prep, and I took a lot of the primary practices that they did there. And we were very thoughtful about structures. We we took the idea of a longer school day. We took the idea of a smaller group size for literacy, knowing that at the elementary grades, literacy is really what's going to make the difference for our students. We also took the joy and celebration that you could bring, even starting at

kindergarten. While you had a longer school day, you could celebrate learning in a way that I hadn't seen before. It's a cheer for every celebration and every moment of learning that we had really active learning in that way with the structured components were the pieces that I took back to aquitas. Well, much like the amazing models that I had the opportunity to visit, we saw that they were really making a difference and taking those same practices and bringing them to aquitas, we did see that we were agents or students of color, and even early on, when we were looking at academic outcomes, we could see that our students were performing on par with what the state was performing, or or white students were performing, our Latino students, our students of color were really were outperforming the students around them and Latino students in the state. And so we really saw that we were that our practices were working and that we could build upon them. I really think focusing on the needs of the community, we have very strong parent partnerships. We invite parents in. We invite them to participate 40 hours of year, and what that really looks like is four different touches once a month. So if there's a parent conference, we consider that parent participation, because anytime we can strengthen the relationship between the parent and the child, we really feel like the school wins, or we all win. We're all working together. We have family nights. We have fun Saturday. Look to individualize what participation looks like. Some of our moms want to take home things that our kindergarten teachers need to cut and have ready for the next day. And that's a way that our our moms have asked to participate, because they can do it at home while they're watching siblings, another one of. I think our signature practices is our idea of structure. We think through how to maximize every minute of the time that we have with kids so we are.