

School Achievement in Park Mesa Heights

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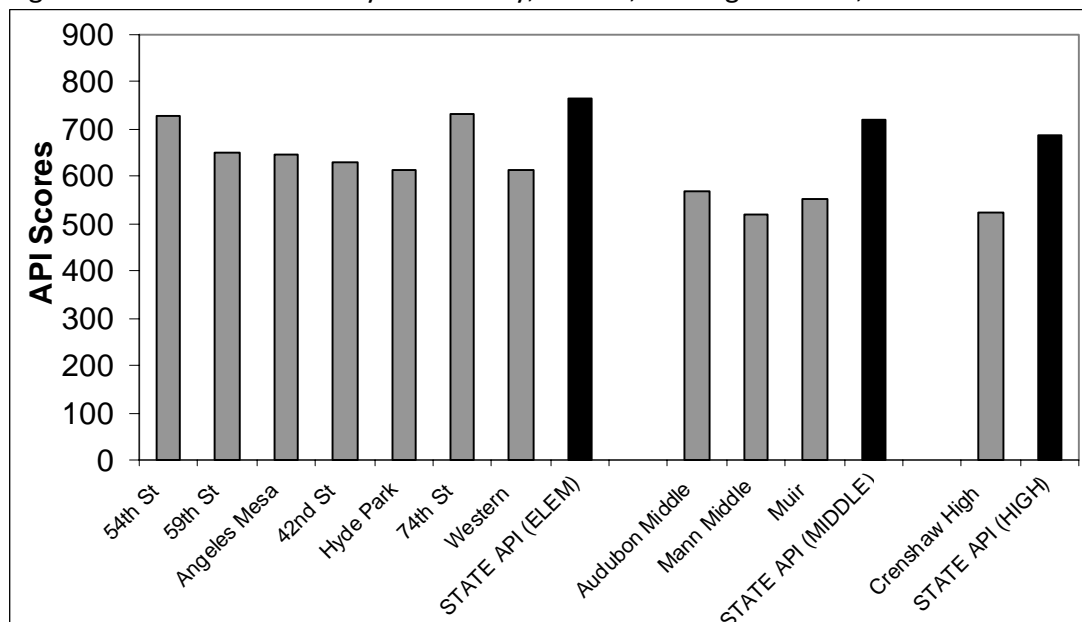
This analytical brief is part of a series on the status of Park Mesa Heights, a neighborhood located in South Los Angeles, a 70 square block area anchored by Crenshaw Senior High School. The Los Angeles Urban League (LAUL) has established a 5-year strategic plan to improve the quality of life in this area through advocacy, leadership and neighborhood change. UCLA Department of Urban Planning, with support from UCLA's Center for Community Partnerships, provided technical support for this effort by assembling, analyzing and publishing information related to the state of housing, employment, education and public safety in the immediate neighborhood and surrounding areas. By using the most current and geographic detailed available data, UCLA assembled information that can help inform the 5-year plan by providing insights into the magnitude and nature of the challenges and issues facing Park Mesa Heights stakeholders. Moreover, UCLA's efforts includes preparing technical memos to provide guidance on how to access and analyze the data, so LAUL staff will have greater capacity to monitor changes and empirically evaluate progress.

BACKGROUND

This analysis examines school performance within the Crenshaw High School feeder system with the purpose of highlighting critical stages in the education pipeline. There is a general consensus that performance is most vulnerable during middle school, but findings in this analysis indicate that it is at the elementary level where Park Mesa Heights students decline the most in performance according to several standardized measures. This section will present findings in school performance for Park Mesa Heights elementary and middle schools and Crenshaw High School, as well as the other schools that partially feed into the Crenshaw boundary (including charter schools). Performance is measured using 2007 Academic Performance Index (API) scores and Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) results. API scores range from 200 to 1000 with a state goal of 800. Crenshaw High School's performance is also assessed based on A-G course completion and UC/CSU and community college attendance among graduates. Data was assembled from School Accountability Report Cards, California Standard Test results and Academic Performance Index numbers provided by the California Department of Education.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Figure 1. School API Scores by Elementary, Middle, and High Schools, 2007



Source: California Department of Education 2007

The authors are solely responsible for the content and interpretations in the brief. Organizational affiliations are listed only for informational purposes.

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With the exception of 54th Street Elementary, all schools within the Crenshaw High School feeder system performed lower than the LAUSD average by API scoring in 2007. See Figure 1 on front page. The Park Mesa Heights elementary schools scored roughly between 3 and 8% below the LAUSD API average. Audubon and Mann Middle Schools' API scores were more than 10% below the district average, with Mann students performing 20% below the district average. Crenshaw High School's API score for 2007 also puts it 20% below the LAUSD average.

Elementary School Level

The public elementary schools that feed into Crenshaw High School include:

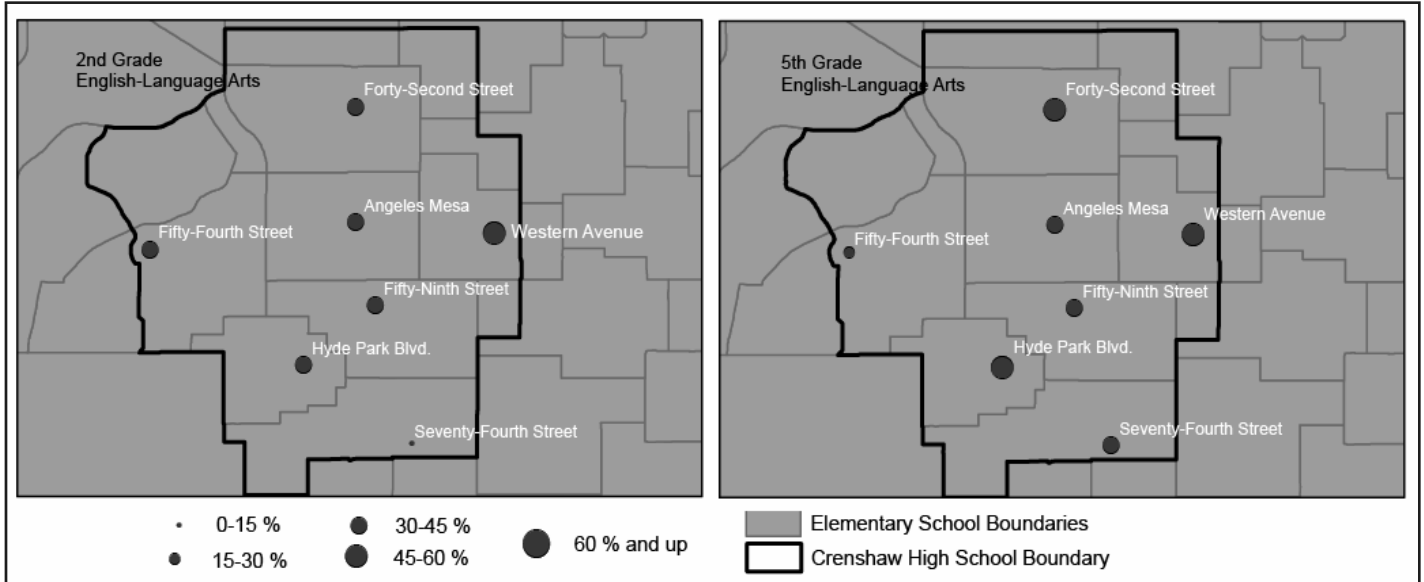
- 42nd Street
- 54th Street
- 59th Street
- 74th Street
- Angeles Mesa
- Hyde Park
- Western Avenue

There are several charter schools within the Crenshaw High School Boundary:

- Crescendo Charter
- GARR Academy of Mathematics and Entrepreneurial Studies
- New Heights Charter
- View Park Preparatory Accelerated charter

Park Mesa Heights elementary schools performed below the state API average (763), as are the rest of Crenshaw High School public feeder schools. In order to measure the change in proficiency during the elementary school experience among local public schools, we tracked the percent of students at each school that placed below basic STAR result levels from 2nd to 5th grade in English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics. We find that there are significant increases in the percent of students that perform in the below basic and far below basic STAR result categories. Only one school, 54th Street elementary, improved in its STAR averages from 2nd to 5th grade (in ELA, from 31% below basic to 20%). Seventy-Fourth Street Elementary had the greatest decrease in proficiency, moving from 6% to 52% of students with below basic knowledge in mathematics. ELA proficiency also dramatically decreased for this school, going from 11% scoring below basic in 2nd grade to 38% below basic in 5th grade. Interestingly, 74th Street elementary also leads the Crenshaw High School public feeder elementary schools in API scores (734). The maps below (Figure 2) chart the change in math proficiency among Crenshaw High feeder elementary schools (charters excluded).

Figure 2. Percent Below Basic Math STAR Levels among Crenshaw High Feeder Schools, 2nd and 5th Grade 2007



Source: California Department of Education 2007

Middle School Level

Audubon and Mann Middle Schools score significantly lower than the state API average (720) at 569 and 521 respectively. Muir Middle School, which partially feeds into Crenshaw High School, scored comparatively at 552. Further proficiency analysis through reported STAR results show that Mann, Muir and Audubon had significantly higher proportions of students with below basic STAR levels than average district and county schools. The percent of Mann Middle School students with below basic STAR levels roughly doubled county averages.

Figure 3. Percent Below Basic STAR Levels, South LA Middle Schools

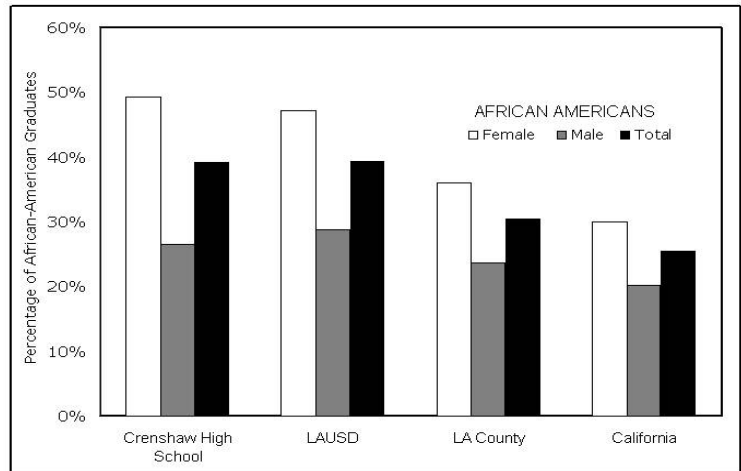
	English-Language Arts			Math	
	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Mann	68	60	61	65	67
Audobon	54	53	54	44	48
Muir	65	60	55	35	38
District	43	30	41	71	81
County	33	31	32	59	69

Source: California Department of Education 2007

High School Level

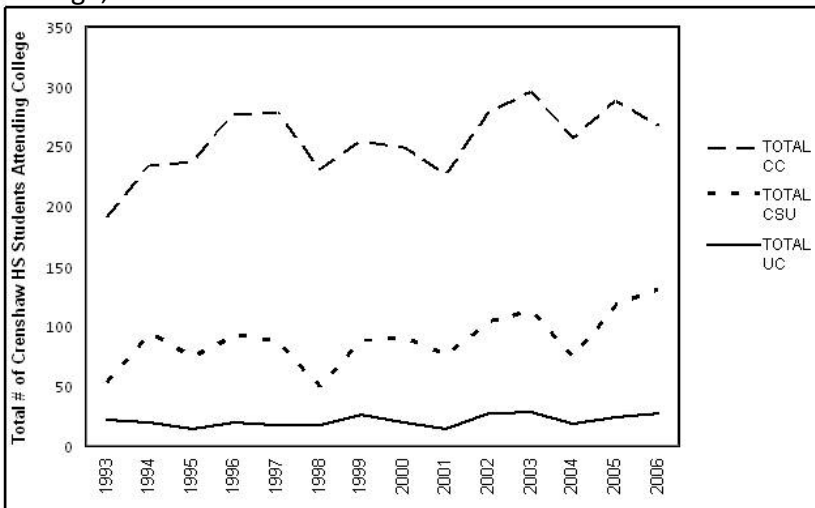
In 2007, Crenshaw High School performed poorer than district and county averages in regards to API score, graduation rates and college attendance. Nonetheless, African American students outperformed those in the county and state in terms of meeting A-G course requirements (that enable them for enrollment in UC schools). African American female students did exceptionally well compared to the district and state with nearly 50% of graduates meeting all A-G course requirements. College attendance among Crenshaw High School students, however, remains low. See Figure 5. In 2006, only two graduates were accepted into UCLA. Since 1993, the number of students attending UC schools has remained relatively static, while there has been an increase in CSU and community college attendance.

Figure 4. Percent of African-American Graduates, 2007



Source: California Department of Education 2007

Figure 5. Number of Crenshaw High School Students Attending College, 1993-2006



Source: California Post Secondary Education Commission 1993-2006

This analysis of the Crenshaw High School education pipeline shows that poor performance begins at the elementary school level where changes in proficiency levels are most significant. Further analysis into the performances of elementary level students on standardized tests may reveal some explanations for the increase in poor performance on STAR tests between 2nd and 5th grades. Based on the findings in this report, the elementary school level is a critical time for intervention within the Crenshaw High School education pipeline.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Park Mesa Heights is defined by census tracts 2345 and 2346.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The Los Angeles Urban League (LAUL) traces its roots to 1921 when the Tuskegee Industrial Welfare League merged with the National Urban League, with Katherine Barr as the first LAUL President. Today, the LAUL has a staff of over 300 and a budget in excess of \$26 million, making the 86-year-old Los Angeles Urban League is one of America’s largest civil rights entities. Its current mission is to enable African Americans and other minorities to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights through advocacy activities and the provision of programs and services in our uniquely diversified city and region. The effort in Park Mesa Heights (an area roughly bounded by the W. Vernon Avenue on the north, S. Van Ness Avenue on the east, W. Slauson Blvd. on the south, and Hillcrest Drive and Crenshaw Blvd. on the west) utilizes a strategy of concentrating efforts on a selected neighborhood to develop and refine approaches that maximizes the chances for success in the area of public safety, employment, education, housing, and health. Charles Boyd, Deputy Neighborhood Officer for Safety and Systems, served as the main liaison for the UCLA-LAUL collaboration.

Established in 1969, **UCLA's Department of Urban Planning** has consistently been ranked among the nation's top programs in the field of urban planning. It contains one of the largest clusters of policy specialists on campus, and faculty research has had a major impact on planning and public policy on every level, from local community development to the problems of rural development and environmental degradation in the Third World. The Department's faculty and alumni are recognized intellectual and professional leaders in the provision of public services, transportation, housing and community development, environmental regulation and resource management, and regional and international development.

The UCLA Center for Community Partnerships works to nurture and develop partnerships between community groups and UCLA in order to improve the quality of life for area residents. The Center provides funding to partnerships between UCLA and the community; supports research to help tackle regional and local issues; sponsors forums and events; and convenes meetings of forward thinkers and practitioners. Dr. Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Community Partnerships, and Margaret Leal-Sotelo is the Director of the Center for Community Partnerships.

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