

Annual Report 2023-24

The Palo Alto

PROMISE

CHAMPIONS OF EXCELLENCE



Superintendent Austin's Message



As we reflect on our journey and look toward the future, I am proud to share the progress and steadfast direction of Palo Alto Unified School District. Our commitment to excellence and innovation remains unwavering, evidenced by our continued recognition as a premier school district nationally and the top K-12 district in California. This achievement is not by chance but the result of our deliberate and focused approach to educational excellence.

In 2019-2020, we introduced the PAUSD Promise, a testament to our dedication to balance organizational goals, student outcomes, and innovative practices with a clear and purposeful vision. The essence of the PAUSD Promise lies in our prioritization of goals to maximize impact, a principle that has led to remarkable achievements:

- **Serve and Celebrate Others** - Fostering a culture of recognition and appreciation.
- **Mental Health and Wellness** - Expanding supports for students and staff, enhancing our community's well-being.
- **Early Literacy** - Leading California in reading growth for two consecutive years; a testament to our commitment to foundational skills.
- **Equity and Excellence** - Achieving significant strides in supporting previously underserved students, ensuring success for all.
- **Innovation** - Launching our new Middle College High School, embodying our commitment to cutting-edge educational practices.

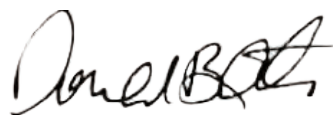
These priority areas remain central to our mission, reflecting our belief in consistency and depth over breadth. Like the world's most successful organizations, we understand the value of stability and focused growth. The PAUSD Promise is not just a plan but a commitment to our students, staff, and community — a promise that guides our evolution and achievements.

Our approach is validated by the tangible successes we've seen from the establishment of innovative educational models to leading statewide in academic growth in reading, and expanding mental health supports. Each step forward is a reflection of our collective effort, dedication, and the unique strength of our community.

As we move forward, the years may change, but our priority areas will largely remain consistent, allowing us to deepen our impact and refine our strategies. Our journey is characterized by continuous improvement, a shared vision, and a commitment to each child's success.

We are grateful for the talent, dedication, and professionalism of our educators and staff, and the support of our parent community and partners. Together, we make PAUSD a beacon of educational excellence and innovation.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Let us continue to embrace our culture of continuous improvement and celebrate the achievements of our students and community.



Donald B. Austin, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Mental Health & Wellness



*Expanding supports for students and staff,
enhancing our community's well-being.*



School-Based Mental Health Services

- Each school site has dedicated Mental Health and Wellness Associates who provide therapy services for students from TK to Grade 12.
- Wellness Centers located at each middle and high school serve as safe spaces for students to decompress and receive mental health care.
- In-house program at the high school level, offers consistent drop-in support and ongoing therapy services for students.
- Free and virtual mental health support through tbh, provides students with round the clock access to mental health care, including weekends, school breaks, and summer.

Physical Health and Safe Campuses

- Students receive periodic vision and hearing screenings to ensure educational access.
- Expanded meal offerings with a focus on locally sourced, sustainable ingredients and decreased presence of processed foods promote healthy eating habits for students.
- Secure and anonymous platforms provide students with a safe place to report concerns around bullying, discrimination, and safety.
- Sites undergo annual trainings and emergency drills to ensure that staff and students are prepared to respond to events that require attention to safety.

Student and Staff Well-Being

- Students may register for tbh services through their PAUSD ID Portal, and book a session that best fits their schedule, including evenings and weekends.
- Strong partnerships with local community mental health agencies, such as Children's Health Council, allcove, and Stanford to provide consultation, education, and resources for students and families.
- In-house Staff Mental Health Specialist provides individual sessions, groups, and educational workshops for all PAUSD staff.
- Panorama Student Well-Being Survey administered to students in grades 3-12 to provide staff with current mental health information to support students in need.



94% *of students
(Grades 6–12) feel
teachers are respectful*



88% *of students
(Grades 3–5) feel teachers
are respectful*

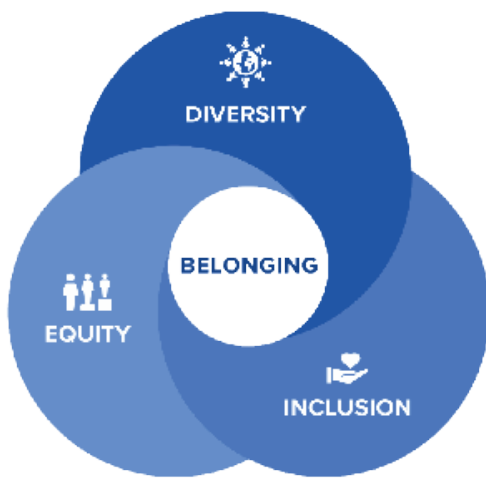
FUTURE FOCUS

Prioritize and maximize the use of all mental health and wellness services.

Equity & Excellence



Achieving significant strides in supporting underserved students, ensuring success for all.



Through an equity lens, the Systemwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT Plan) Prioritizes:

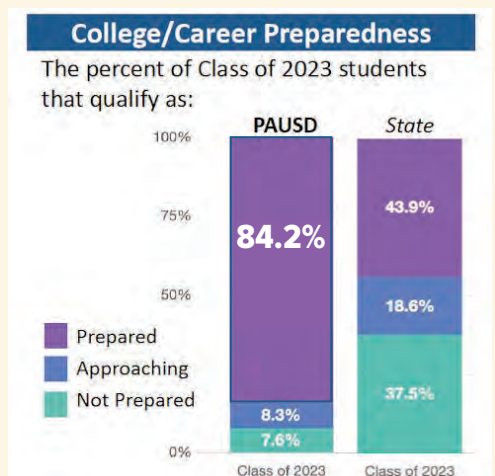
- Academic Achievement
- School Climate
- Tiered Student Supports
- Educator / Leadership Development
- Student and Family Engagement

Each month, a designated school presents a detailed report to the Board of Education to share:

- ongoing equity-focused initiatives
- analysis of the strategies employed
- measurable outcomes

Secondary Student Performance Highlights

- D/F grades reduced by 62%
- 422 fewer D/F grades in Semester 1 2023 compared to Semester 1 2022
- High schools endorsed and implemented the use of No Mark (NM) and No Credit (NC)



- California Dashboard College/Career Readiness measure PAUSD vs State

Board Equity Oversight Committee

The ultimate goal of BEOC is to assist the District and the Board in meeting goals of educational equity that serve as the basis of the PAUSD Promise, and improve District accountability for the success of all students.



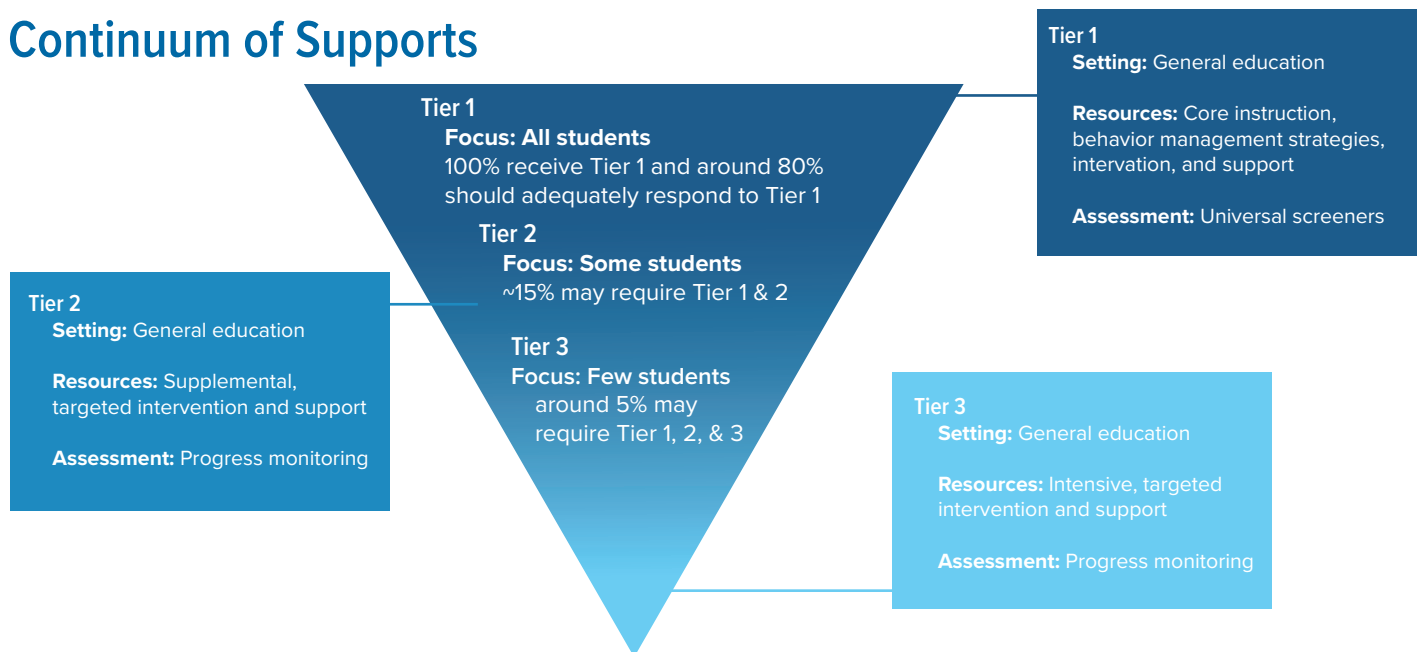
94%
**satisfied or
extremely
satisfied**

Reported by Special Education parents in an ongoing post IEP meeting survey completed by over 300 respondents during the 2023-24 school year.

Special Education

- 63% of students included in the general education class for 80% or more a day. Ongoing focus will be improving on processes to reduce data gaps, improve work conditions for educators, engage parents effectively, and ensure that programs and services lead to meaningful outcomes.

Continuum of Supports



FUTURE FOCUS

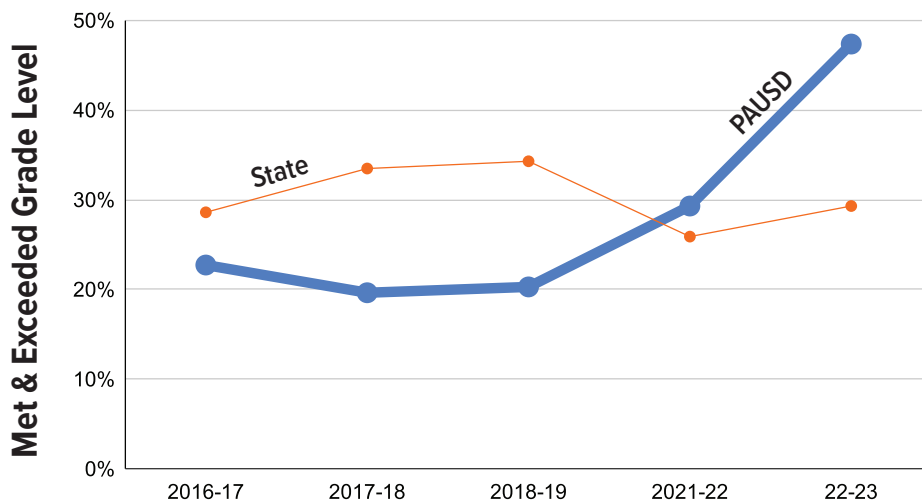
Reduce chronic absenteeism in groups that did not meet SWIFT goals.

Early Literacy



Leading California in reading growth for two consecutive years; a testament to our commitment to foundational skills.

Grade 3 ELA – Hispanic Students Excel



Percent of Grade 3 English Language Arts/Literacy by Ethnicity for Economically Disadvantaged – Hispanic or Latino Students that met or exceeded standards on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments.



Empowering Excellence: An Overview of ESRI

- The Every Student Reads Initiative (ESRI) was established in the 2021-22 school year with intentional teacher, principal, and District-level focus on methodology, curricula and professional learning.
- This initiative demonstrates PAUSD's commitment to reducing the disparity in achievement outcomes between historically underserved student groups: African American or Black, American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic or Latino students compared to their White and Asian peers. Similarly, disparities in performance exist for English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students.
- Educators continue to engage in researched-based instructional practices to ensure all students are reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.



54% of students below grade level in Fall 2022 are now at or above grade level on the End of Year i-Ready Diagnostic reading assessment.

Instructional Practices

Tier 1

- Benchmark Advance/Adelante reading curriculum
- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness curriculum Grades K-2
- Decodable texts
- Orton-Gillingham Methodology Grades TK-3
- Orton-Gillingham Methodology Grades 4-5

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

Tier 2

- Phonics Intervention Grades K-5
- Phonemic Awareness Intervention Grades 2-5

Tier 3

- Benchmark Advance Intervention curriculum aligned with Tier 1 Benchmark Advanced reading curriculum for special education students.

Universal Screener for Dyslexia Markers

i-Ready Diagnostic Reading Assessment for Dyslexia Markers

FUTURE FOCUS

Augment teacher training for specific students not meeting target goals.

Innovation



Launching our new Middle College High School and embodying our commitment to cutting-edge educational practices.



Middle College High School Launching in Fall 2024!

- PAUSD's third high school located on Foothill College campus
- Cohort-based small learning community
- Flexible scheduling with hybrid high school/college courses

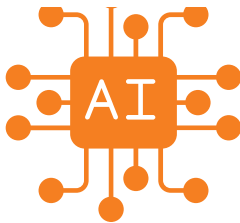
Building Strong Partnerships for Student Opportunities

Over 500 student work permits are issued yearly through the Work Experience Program, thanks to 175+ local businesses.



PAUSD and Toyota Sunnyvale partnered to recognize Paly's Central Coast Section (CCS) Champion football team.

Artificial Intelligence – Innovating How We Learn



- PAUSD Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance, developed collaboratively with 35 diverse stakeholders, emphasizes the transformative potential of AI in education, fostering ongoing adaptation and community input.
- 35 community members with diverse backgrounds and knowledge in different domains or industries, including higher education, artificial intelligence computing, mechanical engineering, automotive industry, biotechnology, healthcare, social media, and technology companies.
- PAUSD's Technology/AI Ad Hoc groups consists of students and staff on a mission to explore technologies that enhance learning. The groups focus on using AI tools wisely with the key areas of exploration:
 1. Privacy and Ethical Concerns
 2. Balanced AI Use
 3. Subject-Specific Applications
 4. Evolving Pedagogical Dynamics
 5. Upholding Academic Integrity

4k+ *diverse students annually participate in CTE programs with industry-aligned pathways.*

Evidence-Based Grading (EBG)

- EBG working towards evidence focused on student growth and performance
- Trained 76 secondary teachers and administrators in November 2023, with 100% reporting useful ideas.
- Pilot teams prepared to implement EBG by Fall 2024.
- District wide professional development for secondary



FUTURE FOCUS

Systemize evolving innovative practices, including use of generative AI tools.

Serve & Celebrate Others



Fostering a culture of recognition and appreciation.

Community Engagement

- Collaborated with local organizations providing authentic opportunities for students to showcase their work and engage with real-world challenges.
- Held annual events inviting families of students with diverse learning needs for inclusive activities and engagement.



Staff Celebrations

- Recognized internal candidates for leadership positions, with nearly 65% of recent leadership roles filled internally.
- Celebrated exemplary staff contributions, such as six PAUSD bus drivers honored by the California Highway Patrol for their dedication to student transportation and safety.

Student Engagement at All Sites

Implemented Serve and Celebrate Others activities across all sites, such as Clean-Up days and weekly assemblies, to recognize and celebrate students' achievements and contributions.



Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathways Host Post-Secondary New Year's Ball

- The New Year's Ball, "Let's Dance!", was sponsored by PAUSD's Career-Themed Pathways.
- The JLS Culinary Science students baked and served banana-chocolate chip, blueberry, and apple crumb mini muffins.
- Over 70 students from neighboring Post-Secondary Programs (six districts) came together with PAUSD students to enjoy the event.



Paly's 1st Futures Dance with the Help of the Best Buddies Club

- Paly hosted it's first Futures Program dance for approximately 230 students (including their aides) from all over the Bay Area.
- Futures is a program of inclusion; students with disabilities are a part of the Paly community taking the same classes, eating lunch on the quad, and participating in athletic teams.
- The Best Buddies club helped with creating decorations, signs and assisting at the craft tables.



THE POWER OF
ONE

FUTURE FOCUS

Increase equitable experiences for all students and sustain a culture of recognition and appreciation.

Glossary

504: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act reflects Congress' intent that schools receiving federal funding provide protections and services to students with disabilities. (PAUSD Website)

Ad Hoc Committee: Short-Term Ad Hoc Committees serve in an advisory capacity; they may make recommendations, but their actions shall not be binding on the Board or Superintendent (BP. 1220).

AVID: Advancedment Via Individual Determination

Behavior Specialists and Behavior Intervention

Coaches: Provide coaching and support in behavior management and implementing/modeling developmentally appropriate strategies that meets the individualized needs of students.

Benchmark Advance/Adelante: Aligned with Science of Reading research, Benchmark Advance and Adelante are core language arts programs that provide a cohesive structure for the development of literacy skills and content knowledge. (Benchmark Education)

Certifications: Verifications of skill or knowledge attainment based on generally-accepted skill standards for an occupation. PAUSD offers several certifications through its CTE programs.

CTE: Career Technical Education

Early Literacy: Literacy is a combination of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Early literacy refers to learners using these skills from Kindergarten through 5th grade. (Superintendent Update, 12/10/21)

ELA: English Language Arts. Information to help students achieve progressive levels of mastery so that they may communicate effectively in English and, ultimately, participate fully in society and the world of work. ELA classes help students improve their listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills.

General Obligation Bonding Rating (S&P/Moody's): Rating systems to provide clarity around the components of credit risk.

IEP: Individualized Education Plan

Mental Health and Wellness Associates: Provide mental health support through group and 1:1 counseling, class presentations, parent and teacher consultation, site team collaboration, parent and staff psychoeducation

Mental Health Contracted Providers:

tbh-Provides secondary students with 24/7 individual and group virtual coaching sessions, parent education, bilingual therapists and culturally inclusive supports, and connections to resources;

Care Solace-Assists staff, students, and families in finding local mental health related programs and counseling services.

National Board Certified: National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education and provides numerous benefits to teachers, students, and schools.

Niche: Online resource providing information on K–12 schools, colleges, cities, neighborhoods, and companies across the United States.

OG: Orton-Gillingham methodology is a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy when reading, writing, and spelling does not come easily to individuals, such as those with dyslexia.

Pathway: A pathway is defined as a two to three-year course sequence that consists of an introduction (optional), concentrator, and capstone courses, as determined by the CDE.

Per-Pupil Spending: The amount of money spent on education by a school district or the state, divided by the number of students educated. For most purposes in California, the number of students is determined by average daily attendance (ADA). (EdSource)

Phonemic Awareness Curriculum: Explicit phonemic awareness curriculum that places the instructional focus on the phonemes or sounds we hear in words. (Heggerty)

PiE: Partners in Education

PTA: Parent Teacher Association

PTAC: Palo Alto Council of Parent Teacher Associations works with District staff, Board of Education, community partners, and PTAs at 17 schools to support the students and families.

SaFE: Student and Family Engagement. SaFE Specialists provide schoolwide support and resources to identified students and families.

SWIFT: System-Wide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) driving the PAUSD equity agenda.

Tiered Interventions:

Tier 1 intervention are high-quality classroom instruction, screening, and group interventions.

Tier 2 interventions are targeted interventions whose intensity varies across group size, frequency and duration of intervention, and level of training of the professionals providing instruction or intervention.

Tier 3 interventions are intensive interventions and include comprehensive evaluations, which may involve an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). (RTI Action Network) For example, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

TK: Transitional Kindergarten. Currently, children in California can enroll in Kindergarten if they turn 5 on or before September 1. Younger children born after that date will be eligible to enroll in TK.

Unity Day: Unity Day, started by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center as the signature event of National Bullying Prevention Month, continues to grow every year as a tangible representation of the universal message that our society wants to promote kindness, acceptance and inclusion to prevent bullying. Parent Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights (PACER).

Wellness Center: Wellness Centers provide safe, supportive environments on school campus where students can go to discuss a variety of issues from depression, grief, self-esteem, family life and stress to dating violence, sexual identity, and health needs. Through on-campus programming and community-based partnerships, students receive coordinated health education, assessment, counseling, and other

support services to maximize student engagement and success.

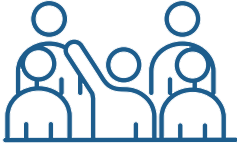
Wellness Coordinators: Oversee mental health contract agencies and referrals, coordinate with school counseling team and represent mental health and wellness in school team meetings; Crisis response leads; Parent coaching and psychoeducation for parents, and staff training around mental health

Wellness Outreach Workers: Facilitate wellness activities schoolwide and for targeted groups of students; coordinate support with community based mental health organizations; manage Wellness Center and triage student needs; provide parent education, and coordinate with wellness focused students groups

Palo Alto Unified School District

Annual Highlights

10,271



Students Enrolled

1,697



High Quality Staff

15 to 1



Student to Teacher
Ratio

\$30,489



Per-Pupil
Spending

#1

Ranked Unified School
District in California
by Niche

1M⁺
Million

Over one million
meals served

100%



Access to arts, music,
and library instructional
programs

#1

Ranked best places
to teach in Bay Area
by Niche

43



National Board Certified
Teachers

121



Career Pathway
Electives

\$5M
Million

Raised by PiE to
support our
students

AAA



Moody's and S&P
General Obligations
Bond Rating



PALO ALTO

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

***Over 10,000 students served
through the following schools.***

Elementary Schools

- Addison
- Barron Park
- Duveneck
- El Carmelo
- Escondido
- Fairmeadow
- Herbert Hoover
- Juana Briones
- Lucille M. Nixon
- Ohlone
- Palo Verde
- Walter Hays

Middle Schools

- Ellen Fletcher
- Frank S. Greene Jr.
- Jane Lathrop Stanford

High Schools

- Henry M. Gunn
- Palo Alto
- Palo Alto Middle College

Additional

- Greendell
- Packard Children's Hospital/Stanford
- Palo Alto Adult School

Palo Alto Middle College High School at Foothill College

Innovative Learning for Tomorrow's Leaders

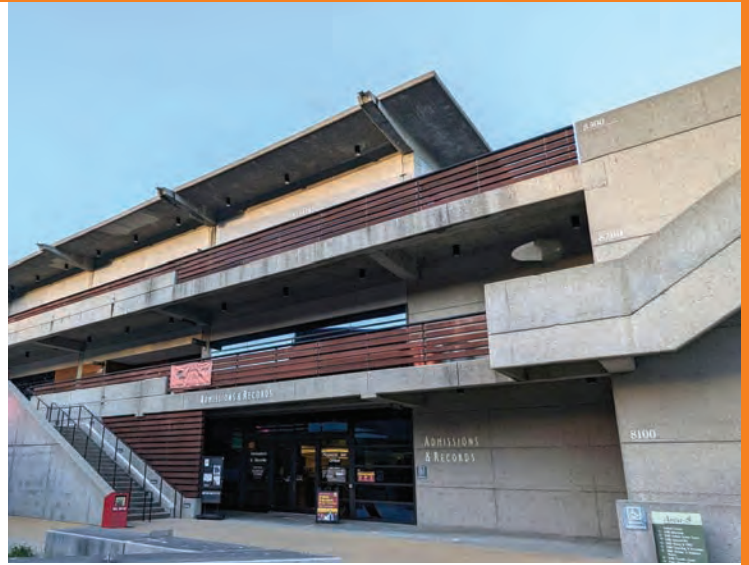
Designed to inspire a love for learning while preparing students for success in both higher education and the workforce. We aim to create an environment where students are motivated and supported to reach their full academic potential through:

- a cohort-based small learning community
- flexible scheduling
- diverse experiences

Individual Student Academic Planning

- Meet all A-G requirements to be college eligible upon graduation
- Earn significant college credit or AA/AS degree or certificate
- Work with PAMC counselor to develop an educational plan to meet high school, college, and career goals, unique to each student
- Support for success in college coursework





A Unique Educational Experience

This PAUSD high school is located on the Foothill College campus, and offers access to high school and college courses.

More Information



mc.pausd.org





PALO ALTO

UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Promise Website



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