

A SPECIAL REPORT ON FORTUNE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION'S EFFORT ADDRESSING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Fortune School Addressing Black Student Achievement

By MARGARET FORTUNE
CEO, Fortune School

I think it is important as we do this extraordinary work together of educating children in our region to a level of excellence, to always remember to tell the story of this journey as we go along.

Fortune School is a public charter school system — tuition-free, open to all, and committed to relentlessly pursue student achievement for the children who, until now, have been left behind.

Ours is a homegrown effort, created by Sacramentans to reverse the fortunes of children in our region who have struggled academically and socially in our traditional public schools. We are



M. FORTUNE

the county.

Our plan calls for 10 schools. Last February, after an eight-hour debate that started on the first day of Black History Month, and lasted into the wee hours of the following morning, the Sacramento County Board of Education approved five schools to move forward. The first school opened this fall with 174 students, more than expected. For the next four years, a new K-8 school will open each year, with each school opening K-3 or K-4 and growing a grade level a year. Ultimately, the charter school system will feature a pre-school plus six K-8 schools feeding into three high schools located in neighborhoods within the

taking on what has been the most intractable educational crisis in the county for years—the severe and persistent African American achievement gap evident in every public school district in

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Education: A Family Affair

Sené Goss And Son, Tyler, Focus On A Lifetime Of Learning

By GENOA BARROW



Sené Goss makes sure her son, Tyler Carter, knows his family will do whatever it takes to ensure that he has a strong learning environment. (Photo by Ray Johnson)

As soon as her baby boy could eat with a spoon, Sené Goss put a pencil in his little hand, knowing that it was just as important to nourish his brain as it was his stomach.

“As a parent, it starts when they’re born. It doesn’t start when they’re in the third, fourth or fifth grade and then you say, ‘oh I better start teaching them that,’” she said.

Goss, a professional singer, is mom to second grader Tyler Carter, a student at Fortune School in South Sacramento. She homeschooled him for kindergarten; the flexibility allowed her to be involved despite a busy touring schedule. She tried a public school setting for the first grade, then her father, Tommie Goss, told her about Fortune School. She was impressed by its curriculum and a commitment to improving test scores, but the focus on college sealed the deal.

“They’re the class of 2026, I like that. That’s the year they’d graduate from college, not the year they’d graduate from high school. They’re embedding that in their brains. You’re supposed to finish high school. There is no ‘I hope you make it to college.’ You don’t have an option.

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Fortune School Playground Effort Launched



Fortune School is building a playground for its students. You can make a tax deductible contribution through Pay Pal (Keywords: Fortune School of Education), or by mailing a check to: Fortune School Playground Fund, 2035 Hurley Way, #200, Sacramento, CA 95825. Your support is appreciated!

SCOE Gives Fortune School Positive Report

This report is the first in a series of reports that consultant, Francie Heim will submit to the Sacramento County Board of Education as part of a contract to provide oversight of Fortune School, a countywide benefit, public charter school system authorized by the Sacramento County Board of Education as a regional effort to close the African American achievement gap.

By **FRANCIE HEIM**

Starting a charter school is never an easy venture, but current budget cuts and cash deferrals make it even more of a challenge.

Based on site visits, multiple meetings, and communication with staff, my observation is that Fortune Charter School has the capacity to be successful and is moving forward with strong leadership (Margaret Fortune), strong fiscal support (Bonnie Bensen), strong operational support (Michelle Grace), and strong site-based instructional leadership (Kiyomi Meeker, Susan Nisonger and Herinder Pegany).

Based on my monitoring activities to date, I have observed the Fortune team is committed to being in compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is in place between Fortune Charter School and Sacramento County Office of Education. They have been timely and proactive in submission of all required documentation and responsive

to all additional requests for information.

Most importantly, teachers in the classroom are dedicated to the success of their students. Teachers spent two weeks prior to the start of school being trained in the culture of Fortune Charter School and the Five Pillars upon which the educational program is based. The academic calendar provides for an intercession break in November. Students who are in need of additional support will be attending classes during this time to ensure their academic success.

Five Pillars

1. High Expectations

Fortune School has high expectations for academic achievement and conduct that are clearly defined, measurable, and make no excuses based on the background of students. Students, parents, teachers, and staff create and reinforce a culture of achievement and support through a range of formal and intrinsic rewards and consequences for academic performance and behavior.

2. Choice and Commitment

Students, their parents, and the staff of Fortune School choose to participate in the program. No one is assigned or forced to attend. Everyone must make and uphold a commitment to the school and to each other and must be willing to put in the time and effort required to achieve success.

3. More Time

Fortune School knows that there are no shortcuts when it comes to success

in academics and life. With an extended school day, week, and year, students have more time in the classroom to acquire the academic knowledge and skills that prepare them for competitive colleges, as well as more opportunities to engage in diverse extracurricular experiences.

4. Focus on Results

Fortune School focuses relentlessly on high student performance through standardized tests and other objective measures. Just as there are no shortcuts, there are no exceptions. Students are expected to achieve a level of academic performance that will enable them to succeed in the nation's best colleges and the world beyond.

5. Citizenship

Fortune School trains all students to become leaders and all our staff shall model leadership qualities. Principals are given independent control of staffing and budget decisions. In addition to principals, staff members who demonstrate necessary leadership potential are given responsibilities extending beyond a single classroom. Most importantly, students are given leadership development training and opportunities to practice leadership

skills on a daily basis both inside and outside the classroom.

FORTUNE SCHOOL GENDER ENROLLMENT

(as of Oct. 21, 2011)

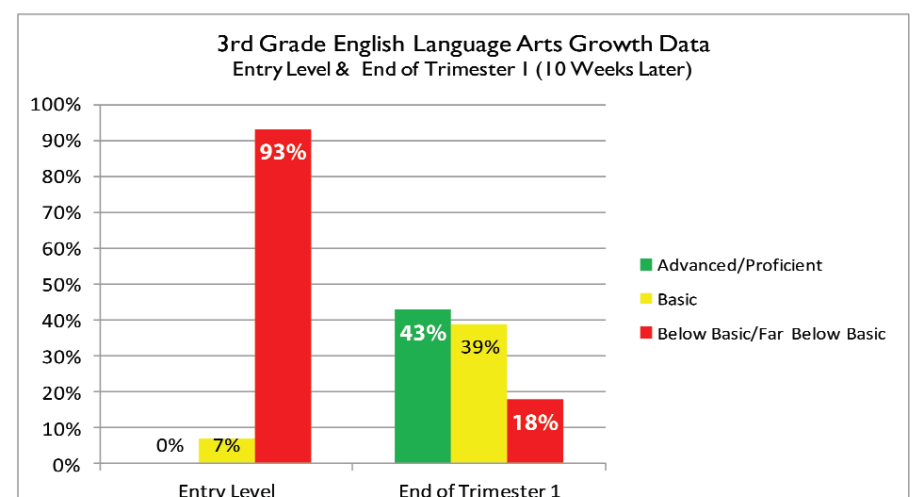
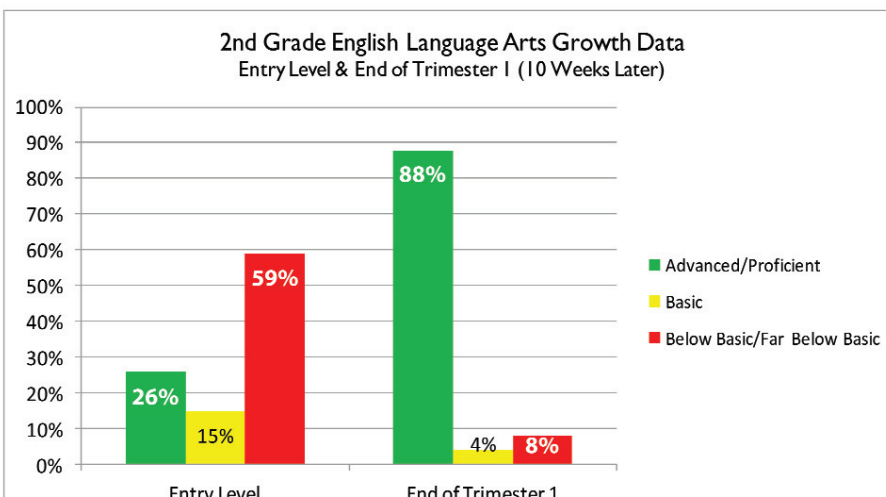
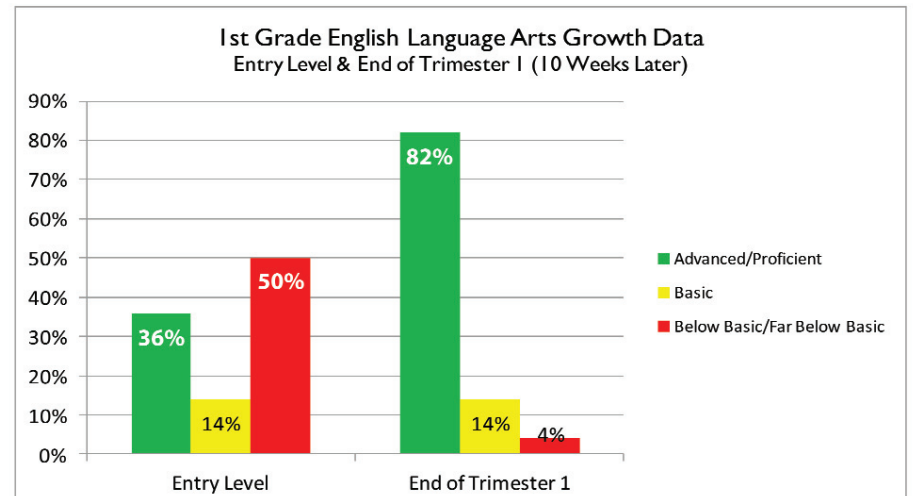
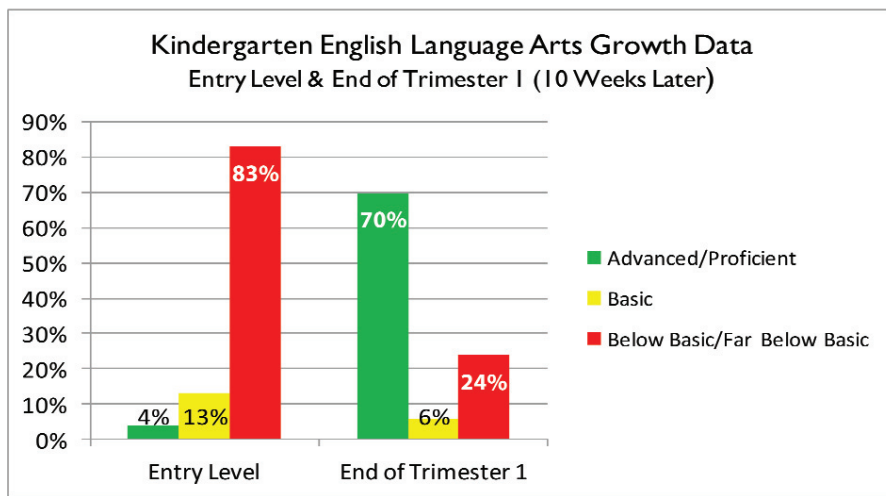
	Male	Female	Total
K	49	49	98
1	18	7	25
2	12	14	26
3	10	15	25
Total	89	85	174

FORTUNE SCHOOL ETHNIC ENROLLMENT

(as of Oct. 21, 2011)

	Enrollment	Percent Of Enrollment
African American	102	58.62%
Hispanic	37	21.26%
Mixed Race	19	10.92%
Caucasian	8	4.60%
Pacific Islander	3	1.72%
Hmong	2	1.15%
American Indian	1	.57%
Filipino	1	.57%
Other Asian	1	.57%
Total	174	100%

FORTUNE SCHOOL GROWTH DATA — Student Achievement From End Of First Trimester



Second Grader Ready To Take On The World

Today California, one day Paris. After seeing the exotic locale featured in the film "Cars 2," Tyler Carter has decided that he just has to visit and experience the city in person. Tyler, a second grader at Fortune School in Sacramento, recently wrote of his travel plans. His Parisian adventure, he writes, would include a trip to the famed Eifel Tower and exploring the best gourmet cuisine the city has to offer him.

Tyler, 7, has been given a passport of sorts by his teacher, Liliya Neyman, one that allows him to visit — and share — far away places such as Paris or closer to home, his grandmother's garden, where she teaches him lessons about the strength of a mustard seed.

Tyler and his second grade classmates at Fortune School are encouraged to write in their journals as part of their daily curriculum. For Tyler, journaling isn't just something he is being made to do, but something he has come to enjoy and to which he looks forward.

"I write every day," he said. "I like it."

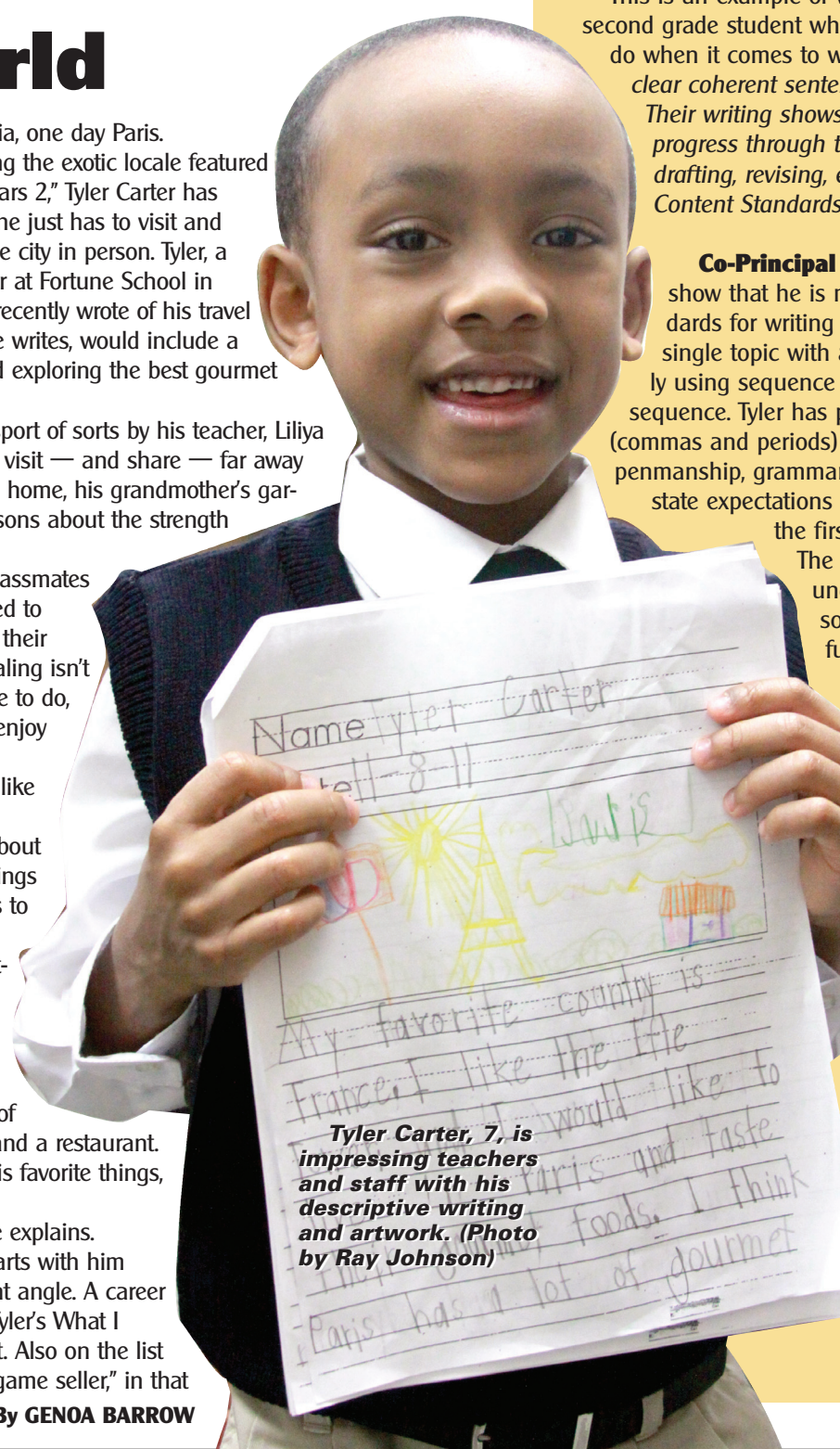
Each day finds him writing about experiences he has had, new things he's learning or things he wants to tackle. Writing in his journal helps Tyler improve his handwriting, practice punctuation and explore and expand his vocabulary. He also draws pictures that illustrate his thoughts. His Parisian tale includes drawings of the French flag, the Eifel Tower and a restaurant.

Coloring, he says, is one of his favorite things, that and math.

"I draw in a different way," he explains.

The process, he continues, starts with him looking at things from a different angle. A career as an artist ranks at the top of Tyler's What I Want To Be When I Grow Up list. Also on the list are "writer," "singer" and "video game seller," in that order.

— **By GENOA BARROW**



Name Tyler Carter
 Date 10-8-11
 My favorite country is France. I like the Eifel Tower and a restaurant.
 Paris has a lot of gourmet foods. I think I would like to visit Paris and taste some of the food.

Tyler Carter, 7, is impressing teachers and staff with his descriptive writing and artwork. (Photo by Ray Johnson)

Here, Fortune School Co-Principal Kiyomi Meeker gives an expert analysis of Tyler's writing answering the question, "Is this sample of writing from seven year-old, Tyler at grade level?"

This is an example of what the California Department of Education says a second grade student who attends public school, like Tyler, should be able to do when it comes to writing strategies: "Writing Strategies: Students write clear coherent sentences and paragraphs that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing successive versions). (English Language Arts Content Standards for California Public School, Grade Two)"

Co-Principal Meeker: Tyler's writing samples show that he is meeting the second grade standards for writing strategies. He is writing about a single topic with a consistent focus. He is properly using sequence words to create a logical sequence. Tyler has properly used punctuation (commas and periods) in this writing sample and his penmanship, grammar, and spelling are exceeding the state expectations of a second grade scholar within the first 10 weeks of the school year.

The sample below shows that Tyler understands at least one of the reasons authors write (to inform) and that he is successfully able to do that as a young writer. Great job, Tyler!



K. MEEKER

How to drive a car
 Name Tyler Carter
 Date 10-5-11
 First, you unlock the door. Next, you open the door. Then you get in the car. Last turn the key and get in the car.

Education Important To Goss Family...

— *Continued from Page 1*

College is the expectation. I really like that they set that standard for them."

College may be years away for 7-year-old Tyler, but Goss is making sure he stays focused. She proudly notes that he is one of the top two readers in his class, likes math and "does fractions for fun."

Goss doesn't take Tyler's education lightly and doesn't allow him to either.

"I make him think. He has to listen in class and reflect on what he's learning. I don't hold his hand when it comes to his homework," she

shared.

She also challenges him, nurturing his eagerness to learn, by buying books intended for older children.

"You can't place limits on a child. If you put something in front of them, they'll get it."

Goss considers it her job as Tyler's mother to "cultivate" his education.

"A teacher does part of the job. The rest is (what you do) at home, a lot of parents get that wrong."

Her father commends her efforts.

"She stays involved and will ask Ms. Neyman, his teacher, questions, visit the room, and contact her when-

ever she needs to. My daughter loves being involved, going on school field trips with Tyler and making class visits to observe."

Goss, her father says, strives to make sure Tyler knows that creating a strong learning environment is an effort by his entire family.

"My wife is a big reader and has always loved to not only read to Tyler, but also has always had Tyler read to her as well. His other grandmother loves puzzles and has methodically purchased him increasingly difficult puzzles to work on and he's gotten really good at it," he shared.

"The whole family, from his mother to his auntie, both grandmas and grandpas, and his father, shows an interest in his education and will take time to work with him formally and informally when he asks questions about his homework or just life in general. He's a very inquisitive little man," he continued.

Sené Goss says she now finds herself incorporating lessons her parents taught her and her sister.

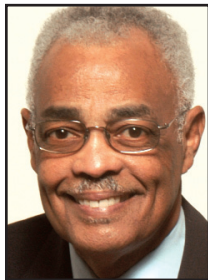
"Our parents had extremely high expectations for us because they knew our potential, just like I know Tyler's potential."

11 Parenting Tips

Here Are Some Keys To Raising A Confident Student

By DR. REX FORTUNE

Hello parents, you are your child's first teacher! And it is my pleasure to share with you some ideas and beliefs about parenting that should help you move your child, grandchild or foster child along the road to becoming successful in school. I speak to you about these things as a grandfather, a parent of three grown children, and a former teacher, school site administrator and a school superintendent for twenty years. Actually, I have studied the nature of parents' support for their children for over forty years of my life as an educator and have come to the conclusion, that there are specific things that successful parents do to help their children reach educational goals. I call these Promising Parent Practices. Here are my top tips for you:



DR. FORTUNE

Eleven Promising Parenting Practices:

1. Develop your child's vocabulary from birth to kindergarten, including reading to them before they can talk.
2. Make routines for learning opportunities at home.
3. Teach your children at an early age that school is one place for learning, home is another.
4. Establish multiple ways to communicate with your child's teachers — email, phone, text — in order to maintain ongoing communication with each other.
5. Monitor your child's progress with their school work daily. Share the responsibility to monitor your child's homework with other close members of the family. Give praise where warranted. Arrange for help when needed.
6. Let your child know that learning is important, not just by what you say, but by what you do.
7. Establish good habits early to support that learning at home and homework will take priority over TV, playing video games, listening to music, texting, and Facebook. Remember, as your child gets older, lack of consistent concentration can be a major distraction for absorbing knowledge. So, train them how to focus when they are young.
8. Provide a suitable place for your child to learn at home.

9. Seek out other resources from the community or the school to help your child study effectively.
10. Consider tradeoffs that favor learning opportunities over expensive toys, clothes, games or other costly entertainment.
11. Consider yourself a learner and seek out opportunities to learn tips for parents in magazines, books, the school, the internet and other community agencies.

Where did these ideas come from? They came from my recent research which will be published in a new book, *Bridging the Achievement Gap: What Successful Educators and Parents Do*, and a DVD entitled *Bridging the Achievement Gap what Successful Parents Do*. Look for my new book at FortuneandAssociates.com in 2012.



KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT IS NOW OPEN AT FORTUNE SCHOOL

ALSO ANNOUNCING K-4 ENROLLMENT AT OUR NEW SCHOOL, WILLIAM LEE COLLEGE PREP

COME TO AN ENROLLMENT MEETING to learn more about this tuition-free, college preparatory public school system.

TIME: Saturdays at 10:00 am;
Wednesdays at 6:00 pm.
LOCATION: Fortune School 6829 Stockton Blvd, #380 Sacramento, CA 95823
For an application contact: 916-287-4470 or go online at fortuneschool.org



Enrollment Meeting Dates:

Saturday, Jan. 7th
Wednesday, Jan. 18th

Wednesday, Feb. 1st
Saturday, Feb. 18th

Wednesday, March 28th
Saturday, March 31st

Saturday, April 14th
Saturday, April 28th

Wednesday, May 2nd
Saturday, May 12th
Wednesday, May 16th

Saturday, June 9th
Saturday, June 23rd
Wednesday, June 27th

Saturday, July 7th
Wednesday, July 11th
Saturday, July 21st
Wednesday, July 25th

Saturday, August 4th
Wednesday, August 8th

Vision Of Fortune Schools...

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Sacramento City, Elk Grove, Twin Rivers and Natomas school districts.

Our commitment is to do whatever it takes to prepare students for college, starting in kindergarten, using a proven local model that has produced results.

We are producing this publication called *The Scout*, as a special to *The Sacramento Observer Newspaper* to keep the community informed of our progress and provide insights to other educators in the region who may be interested in our practices. One of my favorite figures in American History, Harriet Tubman, was a scout in the Civil War, serving the Union Army. During one of her more famous military campaigns she rescued over 700 slaves. This publication is named in her honor. We hope to serve her memory well by telling the story of what the descendants of the survivors of slavery are doing with our freedom.

We care about the Sacramento region. So, in furtherance of our mission to promote student achievement in all schools, not just our own, our doors are always open to educators who wish to tour Fortune School to learn about what we are doing. We even offer state accredited programs that lead to credentials for teachers and principals based

on our education model.

Families are the focus of this four-part special edition to THE OBSERVER. We want to highlight what our Fortune School parents do at home and at school to ensure their child's success, telling the stories of our families and showing student work with expert analysis from our team of educators. In this series, we will also share original research on what successful parents and educators do to bridge the achievement gap in California public schools that have beat the odds by producing high academic achievement among minority children living in poverty. We hope you enjoy this series and find it useful for the children in your life.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Margaret Fortune is the President and CEO of Fortune School. A native of Sacramento, Margaret was the first African American woman to be elected student body president at the University of California at Berkeley, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science. Margaret earned her master's in public policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She has been an education advisor to two California Governors and has opened four public charter schools in California. You can write to Margaret at mfortune@fortuneschool.us.