

**Dr. Celia Ayala, Senior Advisor, L.A. Universal Preschool (LAUP)**

With over 40 years of professional experience in education, Dr. Celia Ayala is recognized as an innovative leader in the field of early education, and has advocated successfully for early learning investments, quality improvements, policy, workforce development, and programs and resources for thousands of children and families. Under her leadership, LAUP has afforded more than 130,000 children to become better prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Over the ensuing decades, whether serving as a public school teacher, principal, curriculum and instruction director, or CEO of LAUP, she has worked passionately to increase access to quality early education, comprehensive and relevant family services, and masterful classroom instruction. She holds firmly to the belief that educating children depends upon a long-range, holistic approach that involves family, educators and the larger community.

Most recently, Dr. Ayala's visionary influence led LAUP to be recognized as a state and national model—in early education coaching, training and consulting, early language development, fiscal coaching, family engagement and more. This year, Dr. Ayala rose as a member of the first ever Congressional Pre-K Caucus; a bipartisan caucus that intends to provide a forum for members of Congress to examine high-quality ECE programs, and to develop bipartisan policy recommendations to improve and expand ECE opportunities for the nation's children.

In 2008, former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Dr. Ayala to the California Early Learning Improvement System Advisory Committee, where she helped develop and implement a statewide quality improvement system for early learning—a comprehensive framework that has now come to fruition through the implementation of quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) across the state, including the QRIS Block Grant.

Prior to joining LAUP as CEO in 2007, she served as the Assistant Superintendent, Division of Children & Family Services, at the Riverside County Office of Education. In that role, she managed all early childhood education programs and activities within the division, including the county's Head Start program. Dr. Ayala has also served as the Pasadena Unified School District's Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Technologies; principal at James Madison Elementary School; and Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Education's Division of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Dr. Ayala received a doctorate in education from the University of Southern California; her Master of Arts degree in education administration from California State University, Los Angeles; and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and Sociology from the University of Southern California.

Dr. Ayala's lifelong goal of making lives better for children and improving literacy was inspired by her mother's inner strength and commitment to her family. She and her husband have been married 39 years and are the proud parents of two sons, Gabriel and Adrian.