

Dear Making Waves Community:

It is with great humility and honor that I join the Making Waves Team. I come to the leadership team with an array of experiences that I feel make this venture a wonderful fit. First and foremost, I see myself as a Wave-Maker. In my mind, I come from a background which often mirrors many of our students. I began life with three strikes against me: I was an African American male, I was reared by a single mother and I was poor. What allowed me to find a different path than my parents and peers was education. The greatest equalizer and most powerful tool for my liberation were books. I loved reading. I could not get enough of the written word, the stories, the facts, the philosophies. With the help of my grandparents and a few key educators along the way, I have become the man, the husband, the father and the educator I am today.

As an adult, it is important to me to "give back" by making a difference in the lives of underserved students and their families. I do this work to honor the caring adults who supported and mentored me through unstable and turbulent times as an adolescent and teenager. After attending six elementary and middle schools, three high schools and participating in a variety of extracurricular activities such as football, basketball and track, academic decathlon team, math teams and student council, I made my way to UCLA. I certainly did not get there without perseverance, dedication, hard work and the guidance and support of others. My grandparents were the first to lead me in a positive direction. Thank goodness for the elders in our communities who watch out for small children when their parents are not able to be the guiding light. Dr. McKinney, my last high school principal believed in me and did not let me throw away my chance to go to UCLA by insuring I had a summer job before I started college to help me pay for expenses.

Through working at UCLA's Uni-Camp, (a student run summer camp that took kids from East and South Central Los Angeles to the San Bernardino Mountains for a week of camping), I solidified my devotion and passion to work with urban youth. While I initially followed my hoop dream to Europe after graduating from UCLA, it did not take long for me to realize the responsibility and desire to become an educator. With classes and degrees from UCLA, Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University in Chicago, UC Berkeley and Harvard Graduate School of Education, I was able to create a career path that has led me to where I am today. Through my work at East Bay Conservation Corp, The Branson School, and Chicago Public Education Fund and as Founding Head of Sol Aureus College Preparatory School (SAC Prep), I have been able to produce programs and see results that allow all students to experience success.

With an engaging and rigorous curriculum, clear benchmarks and assessments which guide and direct students' learning and mastery of subject matter, never forgetting the social and emotional development of each age, my vision for Making Waves is one that encompasses success for all Wave-Makers. Each young person will receive the type of education that will ensure their enrolling in and graduating from four year colleges and universities all over this country and the world. I also envision an educational model for others to follow in order to eliminate the crisis that we so desperately need to end in our urban core. Through signature programs for our students, teacher and leadership training programs, integrated and vibrant family programs, and the design of 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms, Making Waves Academy Upper School will be the educational model moving forward.

I am humbled, grateful and excited to come home to the expanded Making Waves Academy. As the new leader at Making Waves Academy Upper School, I invite you to come and share in our journey and watch it blossom for years and years to come.

With gratitude and heartfelt thanks to John H. Scully and Glenn W. Holsclaw,



Alton B. Nelson, Jr.  
Founding Head of Making Waves Academy Upper School



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