

# A History of Heads Up

25 YEARS OF HELPING  
STUDENTS REACH THEIR  
FULL POTENTIAL

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**The early 1980s were a time of significant change for Head-Royce School.** In 1980 the school went through a Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) assessment that provided recommendations to increase the school's ethnic diversity. Concurrently, the school was transitioning leadership and in the process of finding a new Head of School. Given the directive from WASC, the Head-Royce hiring committee was looking for candidates who could address the school's diversity efforts in an innovative and sustainable way.





**Year Heads Up started**

# 100K

**Amount of start up grant from Irvine Foundation that started the Heads Up program**



**10 Public schools included in the first year of the program**

The new Head of School selected was Paul Chapman, and in addition to focusing on enhancing the Head-Royce experience for its students, he had a vision of starting a program to prepare motivated Middle School students who had been underserved to thrive in academically challenging high schools and colleges. Using the successful Summer Bridge Program as a model, he secured a start up grant from the Irvine Foundation of \$100,000 to start a similar program at Head-Royce. In 1986, a pilot program began by providing scholarships to five students to attend the already established Summer Middle School Program at the school.

The pilot met all of its goals and proved the model could work at Head-Royce. Faculty member Barbara Gee had a strong desire to reach out and serve public school students, so she stepped up and agreed to be the program leader. Officially launched in 1987 and eager to distinguish itself from similar programs, Heads Up worked in partnership with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to target low-income students of color who attended its schools. The goal was to increase Head-Royce’s contribution to the greater Oakland community but also provide an overall boost to OUSD by preparing students in their

formative Middle School years so that they could return them back to OUSD High Schools as role models and leaders. Barbara Gee reached out to collaborate with HRS Alumnae Denise Saddler ’71 and Sue Woehrle ’56 to establish the OUSD partnership that would prove instrumental in the program’s long-term success.

“The Heads Up Program has helped me to prepare for the grade I’m in and for the next grade!” **SAMIA BOARD, 7TH GRADE**

That first full year of Heads Up brought in 30 seventh grade students from 10 OUSD schools. The students entered Head-Royce’s Summer Middle School Program with five newly hired teachers to work specifically with the Heads Up students on the core academic areas of reading, writing and math. In addition to the summer experience, the students were asked to return to



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Head-Royce once a month throughout the year to reconnect with faculty and reinforce the skills they gained throughout the summer.

The program was a huge success, growing steadily over the next few years to serve 30, 60 and eventually 90 students annually. In the mid 90s, Heads Up added a teaching intern to provide classroom experience to aspiring young educators and in recent years it has added a tutoring program to further enhance the experience of the students. The tutoring program connects Heads Up students with current Head-Royce High School students and faculty once a week during the academic year. The High School students serve as mentors and work with the Heads Up Middle School students to play sports and board games and have discussions about important issues that arise in middle school. These relationships help students build a broader network of support for themselves that enhances their personal and academic development.

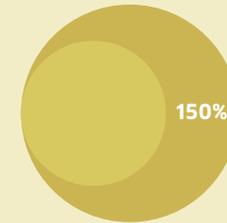
Over the years, Heads Up has prospered under the direction of Barbara Gee and her successors. Today, Heads Up serves over 100 students annually and has supported over 1,000 students throughout its 25-year history.

Students like Heads Up alum Quyen Vo '03 found the experience instrumental in their education: "The program's amazing faculty not only provided a pillar of stability in my life during those challenging Middle School years, but also helped open doors for me and set me on a path where I could pursue interests and adventures." Quyen used the tools provided him in Heads Up to seize opportunities and interests. He graduated from Yale and later received a Ph.D. in history from University of Cambridge. He is currently a J.D. candidate at UC Berkeley Boalt School of Law.

**"Heads Up has helped me with public speaking."**

**KAMEA MASSEY, 6TH GRADE**

Heads Up has a rich history of 25 years in serving low-income OUSD students of color and, throughout its growth, has honored its original mission and vision of supporting the greater Oakland community. Heads Up's history demonstrates Head-Royce's commitments



**Increase in the number of students served between 1987-1996**



**The tutoring component of the program has been in place for 4 years**

**1000+**

**Students served by Heads Up in 25 years**





to diversity, scholarship and citizenship. Today, the program uses its rich history as a building block to guide its direction. Under the direction of Anthony Taula-Lieras Heads Up remains active and visible in the community and continues to help young people reach

their full potential. Thanks to the generous contributions of Head-Royce students, families, faculty and administrators who fund and operate Heads Up, the program is going strong and looking to further its mission in new and innovative ways.

“Heads Up has helped me learn a lot about poetry.”

ALI TOWNSEND, 6TH GRADE

Heads Up alumna **Sophia Taula-Lieras '00** recently returned as a speaker for the 2012 Heads Up Saturday Program and shared her reflections on her experience with Heads Up students:

“I didn’t know what to expect from Heads Up but I knew I was excited because I had been chosen to be here. There was something special about me that had secured my spot for the summer and even though I didn’t know what was going to happen, I was excited. Head-Royce was a very different world from my previous school. Basketball courts, swimming pools, tennis courts, vending machines, crazy artwork hanging from everywhere, small classes with state-of-the-art technology. I remember wondering, was there really a place for me in all of it?”

What I soon learned was that Heads Up wasn’t as much about the place as it was the people I found in it. The people that I met along the way, teachers, other students, counselors and administrators quickly helped make this another home for me. It was safe, fun and challenging. I liked having such small classes that my teachers really knew me, spent time with me and sincerely encouraged my work...I also remember that first summer with Heads Up being the first place where people talked about college. Before, college was just the place my dad said I had to go and in order to start dating boys I had to graduate. No one in my family had gone and they mostly just said I had to go but it didn’t actually seem like a real place

or option for me. It didn’t become real to me until I had teachers and counselors who were college students and recent graduates. They made college look and sound very cool. In retrospect, I see that Heads Up brought these people into my life to teach me that I deserved to go to college.

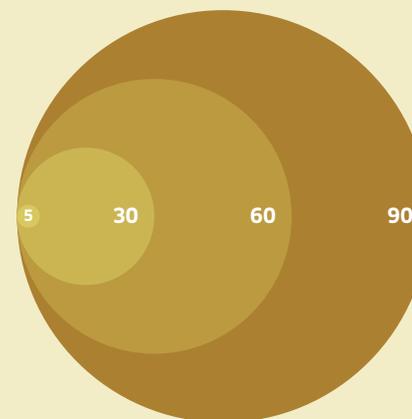
Heads Up is very different from being in school. Heads Up is a purposeful choice to get up on days that are really “break” days. Your beloved summer vacation and your precious Saturdays. If you have chosen Heads Up you are choosing much more than being at Head-Royce one day a month and 6 weeks in the summer. You are choosing your future. You are telling yourself and the people you know that you choose to better yourself. You choose to strengthen skills you need to succeed. You choose to create a future grounded in hard work and sacrifice. You choose to be surrounded by peers with similar goals and adults who want to uplift you.”

**Sophia used the tools she gained in the Heads Up program to become the first in her family to go to college. She graduated from Harvard University and returned to Oakland to serve the Native American Community in Oakland as a Social Worker.**

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Faculty involvement annually grew from **5** in the first year to **25** today



Students served annually grew from **5** in the first year to **90** students today