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OF JUVENILE COURT, COMMUNITY, AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS OF CALIFORNIA

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2019

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SPSSC

Student Programs and Services
Steering Committee

Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School
Administrators of California (JCCASAC)

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JUVENILE COURT, COMMUNITY, AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS OF CALIFORNIA



VISION

Under the direction of the County Superintendents, and as a sub-committee of the Student Programs and Services Steering Committee (SPSSC), JCCASAC is a professional educational organization dedicated to preparing students who are enrolled in county alternative education programs to become self-sufficient adults who lead healthy lifestyles and are competent, caring, and academically prepared for their futures.

MISSION

The mission of JCCASAC is to support student success by creating a collegial network of County Office administrators who:

- Research and share best practices regarding new and innovative program options for at-risk students
- Provide training, support and assistance to new administrators
- Endorse and support legislation that advocates for the learning needs of all students
- Give input and guidance to the superintendents relative to the diverse needs of our student population

GOALS

- Improve student achievement through research and sharing best practices
- Support special projects that enhance instructional programs
- Provide regular training for new county office administrators
- Conduct successful conferences with statewide representation
- Publish the JCCASAC Journal that informs superintendents, administrators, teachers, and affiliated agencies of the latest research, effective teaching practices, methodologies, and that showcases successful programs
- Provide scholarships to eligible graduating seniors in order to encourage life long learning
- Represent JCCASAC through participation in statewide committees
- Monitor legislation affecting County Office alternative education programs
- Advocate for legislation and policies that support the unique needs of our student population

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Katy Ramezani, Ed.D.

Orange County Department of Education

On behalf of the JCCASAC Board, I would like to thank you for participating in the 50th Annual JCCASAC Conference, our golden anniversary. I hope you take a moment and reflect on your time in alternative education and know that you are part of a long lasting organization of teachers, administrators and support staff who found their purpose working with at-risk youth. For five decades, JCCASAC has inspired innovative educational programs and improving instructional practices to ensure that each student is successful in achieving their goals. Discovering Possibilities, Creating Opportunities & Changing Student's Lives encapsulates the purpose and mission of our work.

I am grateful for the JCCASAC organization and all its members as it has given us a platform to network and share best practices in serving our youths. Although, each county office program is unique, we are brought together by a shared mission. As servant leaders, we remain committed to providing high quality service and programs. As a professional organization, JCCASAC is committed to forming partnerships, reviewing legislation, creating policies and procedures to advocate for support of our students and programs. JCCASAC continues to be your best resource, stay connected and become involved by frequently visiting our website and by attending Regional and General Membership meetings.

It has been an honor serving as the JCCASAC chair this year. I am eternally grateful for having had the privilege of serving on this team and being supported by my colleagues. There is no other organization like this! It is my hope that as new members you are encouraged to get involved and network with peers all over California. You will find creativity, passion and commitment to excellence and will make long lasting friends along the way. We are excited that you are here and looking forward to seeing you next year as we kick-off another 50 years of service!

“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning”
--Benjamin Franklin.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR-ELECT



Pam Coronado **Fresno County Office of Education**

On behalf of the Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School Administrators of California (JCCASAC) Board, I am thrilled to welcome you to the 50th Annual JCCASAC Conference. The JCCASAC organization has been a leader in the State of California for the past 50 years, providing high-quality professional learning, sharing evidence-based practices, and advocating for our most vulnerable, at-promise students. We continue setting the bar high, preparing our students to become self-sufficient adults who lead healthy lifestyles and are competent, caring and academically prepared for their futures. This year's conference "Discovering Possibilities, Creating Opportunities and Changing Students' Lives" will truly inspire.

The keynoters for this year's conference will share their expertise in the areas of social emotional learning and equity for all students. Our opening day speaker, Kristen Sauers, has dedicated herself to the improvement of people's lives and has an expertise in complex trauma, the impact of violence, crisis management counseling and trauma-informed care. Kristin understands and shares practical strategies in helping us understand a child's world from a trauma-informed perspective. Dr. Eddie Moore Jr., our keynote speaker on Friday, will end our conference with a powerful message on culturally responsive teaching and how we must be inclusive of all students in our classrooms. Two former students from the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools will also share their messages of how two very special teachers touched their lives while in the Alice Worsley Court School program and the positive impact that made changing their lives in immeasurable ways. You may want to have your Kleenex handy for this one.

Our conference this year offers you 25 breakout sessions from which to choose. These sessions include presentations on school leadership, integrating the arts into daily instruction, engaging disengaged students, high-interest strategies to support all learners, CTE programs, school compliance and much more. The difficulty will be choosing which session to attend! We are fortunate to have several industry partners joining us this year to share their engaging curriculum, online offerings and CTE programs. We encourage you to visit them and hear all about how they can support us in serving our students.

Please be sure and join us Wednesday evening at 5:30 p.m. on the back patio as we honor our JCCASAC Chair Katy Ramezani for the amazing leadership she provided to our organization this past year. On Thursday, May 9, we will honor outstanding court and community school educators at the Teacher of the Year Awards luncheon. Additionally, we will honor Telka Walser, Director III Educational Options Stanislaus County Office of Education, with the prestigious Peshkoff Award for her extraordinary service to JCCASAC.

For three days we come together to share the best in instructional practice, develop new understanding, create a strong vision for education and cultivate vital relationships that support our individual and shared mission of "Discovering Possibilities, Creating Opportunities, and Changing Students' Lives." I hope this conference inspires and revitalizes you in your work to improve the lives of students we serve!

I currently serve as the Executive Director of Court and Community Schools for the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (FCSS). I started my teaching career at FCSS in 1993 as a community school teacher for a class of group home students. I eventually taught in all programs in Court and Community Schools, including the Fresno County Jail for adult learners and the Court School program located within the Juvenile Justice Campus. In 2001, I moved from the classroom to school administration serving as Coordinator, Program Manager and ultimately as Executive Director. I knew from day one with my first group of students that my heart belonged to serving our most vulnerable youth. As a classroom teacher, I had the privilege of challenging students to explore their own potential and guiding them to a brighter path for their future. In my administrative role, I am driven by my passion to transform lives through education by cultivating positive, collaborative relationships among students, staff and teachers with the goal to "change lives one future at a time."

50TH ANNUAL JCCASAC CONFERENCE WELCOME LETTER



Gayle Garbolino-Mojica
County Superintendent of Schools

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- Suzanne Jones**
Area 1
- Robert Tomasini**
Area 1
- Kelli Gnile**
Area 2
- David Patterson, Ed.D.**
Area 3
- Lynn Oliver**
Area 4
- E. Ken Tokutomi**
Area 4

Welcome to Placer County!

Located on 1,400 square miles of the most beautiful and diverse geography in Northern California, Placer County stretches from the north shore of Lake Tahoe and the Nevada state line to the historic Gold County Foothills and urban South Placer communities.

Known historically for the Gold Rush, Placer County is home to the beautiful and majestic Sierra Mountains where world-class outdoor sports such as mountain biking, skiing and snowboarding provide rich year-round activities, which is why it was ideal to host the 1960 Winter Olympics in beautiful Squaw Valley.

The foothill communities of Auburn, Newcastle, Penryn and Loomis have become celebrated for award-winning boutique wineries and craft breweries. And, in the 1920's, Placer County was the "Fruit Shipping Capitol of the World" shipping more than 69 million tons of fruits and nuts from the county.

Superintendent's Cabinet

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Deputy Superintendent
Educational Services
- Martin Fregoso**
Associate Superintendent
Business Services
- Catherine M. Goins**
Assistant Superintendent
Early Education & Administration
- Jennifer Hicks**
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- Colleen Slattery**
Assistant Superintendent
Human Resources
- Michelle Eklund**
Chief Communications Officer
Superintendent's Office
- James L. Anderberg**
Chief Operations Officer
Administrative Services
- Troy Tickle**
Executive Director
SELPA

Placer County is "gold in education" as well. With sixteen school districts that provide a high-quality and relevant education to nearly 75,000 students in more than 130 schools and 22 charter schools, student success is our passion. Our students grow, learn, engage and graduate to become well rounded, articulate and civic-focused adults. I can't imagine another area in our state that offers such a beautiful diverse geography with a robust economy, educated workforce, open spaces, parks and entertainment for all ages.

My family has made Placer County our home for more than 100 years, and I know you will love what it offers as well.

Yours in education,

Gayle Garbolino-Mojica
Placer County Superintendent of Schools



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REFLECTING ON OUR 100 YEARS IN EDUCATION – 10 TREASURES FOUND

BY RICK MARTIN AND TED PRICE, PHD
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

About the Authors

Ted Price, PhD., is Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Virginia Tech. Research focus: at-risk students, leadership, change management, principal and superintendent preparation. Dr. Price earned his PhD from the University of Southern California. Dr. Price began his teaching career at Port Hacking High School in Australia in 1969 and was a teacher, program specialist, coordinator, director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent during his 50 plus years in education.

Rick Martin has been in education for 43 years both in traditional, charter, and alternative education settings. He has served in the roles of teacher, assistant principal, principal of juvenile hall, and currently serves as a director of alternative education for the Orange County Department of Education.

What would you do if you found a hidden treasure? How about ten treasures? Exactly, you would tell everyone you know. That's just what we are doing. Having spent almost one hundred combined years in our careers in education with the majority of our assignments in positions as educational leaders we believe we have found some hidden treasures. We have even learned a thing or two; and gleaned some wisdom along the way.

Some things we learned the hard way through trials and encounters that did not go well. Other times we learned from mentors who shared their wisdom. Some even saw more talent and ability within us, than we saw in ourselves. We hope you have mentors like that too, mentors who will help to bring out the best in you. We are grateful for our many great mentors. We also learned some

things by doing a variety of administrative jobs. We had a lot of great jobs and wonderful educational experiences for which we are grateful. We were fortunate to work in places that afforded us many learning opportunities. Now, as our careers wind down, we see this as a good time and an opportunity to share our treasures found – through reflections, insights, lessons learned, and hopefully wisdom that will be helpful to new and aspiring administrators. We believe these shared treasures may help you to be even more successful than we have been. We know from experience that personal development leads to professional development and ultimately to

organizational development – in other words we believe your growth is key to an organization providing better services and programs to staff and students – and your continued growth is the key to your organization's and your ongoing success. Ultimately the organization's purpose and your purpose are to serve others. We also believe your fulfillment lies in you doing all you can to help others be successful in whatever endeavors they choose to pursue.

HAVING SPENT ALMOST ONE HUNDRED COMBINED YEARS IN OUR CAREERS IN EDUCATION WITH THE MAJORITY OF OUR ASSIGNMENTS IN POSITIONS AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS WE BELIEVE WE HAVE FOUND SOME HIDDEN TREASURES.

What follows is a listing and explanation of our treasures found during our 100 years of journeying through a myriad of educational programs and experiences. These are treasures to reflect upon when you are leading or being the boss. Check out the ten – our list of 10 treasures found. See if some or many make sense or are helpful

to you as you continue on your leadership journey. We hope the treasures found and shared in this article help you in your personal growth and in your administrative and leadership career.

Treasure 1 - Learn to care for yourself and others.

Teddy Roosevelt's quote rings true. "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." It is a truth to live by. How do you show the folks you work with that you care for them? A habit to try is to begin each day by stopping at the doorway of each staff member to greet them, ask each how they are doing,

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what are they looking forward to that day, and how can you support them? In time, you begin to know what happens on a weekend or what is happening with their families. You begin to hear about their hobbies and joys. For those moments in time each of them is the center of attention. Dale Carnegie made this statement that is worth remembering. He said, “You can make more friends in two months by showing interest in others than you can in two years by trying to get others interested in you.” What action can you take to show you care about the people you work with? Maybe it is bringing in a treat to each staff member and spending a few moments listening to them. Perhaps it is a daily email you send with a note of appreciation. Reflect on your staff, what would be meaningful to them in your expression to show you care. Remember the most important part is that your care is genuine, authentic, and it comes from you. Remember, too, it is always more important to be than to do – be there for others and finally, recall the words of the famous poet, Rumi, who once said... “Be with those who help your being.” In other words, be sure to take care of you while you’re caring for others and also be with others who care about you. Ralph Waldo Emerson stated it well, “It is one of the beautiful compensations in this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” It is a wonderful thing that as we care for others, we in return help ourselves.

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” – Leo Buscaglia

The lesson learned – Be a caring person and show others with your behavior that you care.

Treasure 2 - Become a listener.

What people desire is to be heard. By being heard, they are feeling valued, respected and in a way admired. Remember just because you are in charge does not mean you know everything. One of the main things you are asked and trusted to do is to lead and do the right thing

and leading always begins by listening. Listening does not begin by talking or telling. Keep in mind AWE, “And What Else,” and TMM, “Tell Me More.” Both acronyms are worth remembering to help you process your listening. How do you know if you have listened long enough? Listen long beyond the time you think you should and maybe even until you are uncomfortable with the silence and only then move on. Remember - when you ask a question it is about you. You question because you want to know something - questions are what is important to you. If you really want to listen, let others ask you questions and maybe even begin an answer with, tell me what you think and feel, before giving and sharing your expertise, experience, and opinion. We encourage you to reflect on the motive behind what you say. When in meetings or conversation, is your immediate response to jump in and show that you are knowledgeable, to give a different view, or defend yourself? Perhaps a better path is to wait and ask why I am going to speak. Is what you are going to say adding clarity or are you just talking to be acknowledged as present? Remember wait – WAIT, “Why Am I Talking?” Good to ask yourself that question whenever you find yourself talking.

“The most basic of all human needs is to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.” - Ralph Nichols

The lesson learned - Listen more and talk less. Be a listener.

Treasure 3 - Be a clear and direct communicator.

One area we both struggled with as leaders was in giving clear, simple and direct messages. We tended to sugarcoat the message. Often the messages were vague and indirect, ambiguous, and we hid the message hoping folks could figure out our meaning by reading between the lines. Or we have provided the cup with a half-full message and stated mainly the positive. We learned over time to keep it simple, to be clear, and be direct. It felt uncomfortable at first. We wondered if we were coming on too strong. We felt some insecurity with how others would hear what

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BY RICK MARTIN AND TED PRICE, PHD
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

we were saying because we wondered what they would think about us personally – everyone at times wants to be liked or at least accepted. But it is more important that staff hear and understand the context of the message and it is imperative that the message state how this will impact or have a personal benefit to them. In your message include the expectations and responsibilities. This is an area where we tended to have the staff read between the lines. We wanted people to desire to do the work and being direct with the expectations and responsibilities seemed like being authoritative. However, with not being clear and stating the expectations, we created ambiguity and confusion. We learned that when in doubt – ask if the message was clear, ask what they heard, ask what are the expectations, and ask what are the important pieces of the message for them. By doing so, you will know if the message you intended to be heard, is what was actually heard. And this was a lesson learned the hard way – we know now – be clear and be direct. Everyone benefits.

“When the meaning is unclear there is no meaning.” - Marty Rubin

The lesson learned - Be clear with your message. If you want others to hit a target be clear with directions. Communication is key - be clear and direct. Clarity counts.

Treasure 4 - Your behavior reveals your beliefs, and your beliefs become your behavior.

People will know who you are based on what they see. What are the things they see? They see your attitude, reaction, body language, facial expressions, who you talk to, who you associate with, how your office is organized and decorated, what your desk looks like, and how you arrive in the morning. Do your actions display strong people skills? Bob Anderson and Bill Adams in their book, *Scaling Leadership: Building Organizational Capability to Create Outcomes that Matter Most*, found that High Creative leaders consistently demonstrate caring, compassion, being big-hearted, connect well with others, and make them feel valuable. Do we show that people matter? We are on

display each day and people are assessing us on our honesty, integrity, work ethic, demeanor, speech, appearance, dress, and much more. What are we telling people about us by how we act and behave each day? Be mindful that people are always watching. If you filmed yourself for a day, what would you discover about you? Do you have a trusted person you can go to who will honestly tell you what others see? Do you have what we call, a critical friend? Someone who you would label your wise advocate? We encourage you to ask someone to give you insights into what your behavior reveals to others. Remember leadership is about being, not just doing. Remember, too, your values, beliefs, and integrity are on display each day for you to see and for people to see. You are who we think you are. Reflect on who you are and be the person you want to be – start now.

*“Behavior is the mirror in which everyone shows their image.”
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

The lesson learned – Character counts. Be who you say you are. Be a leader who others say is a person of courage and integrity. Clearly, high character qualities matter.

Treasure 5 - Be compassionate.

In many ways and in many places, we live in a broken world. We also work with imperfect people. As our parents often reminded us, everyone has issues, problems and challenges. With what eyes do we see the people around us? Are they eyes of judgment as their lives are a result of poor choices? Or do we see a person who needs our listening ear, our smile, or our encouraging word? Do we feel the pain of those around us who are hurting, struggling, and facing uncertainty? Or are we too preoccupied with all we have going on to see? Compassion is taking the eyes off of us and taking the time to see, listen, hear, and understand those around us. It is a deliberate choice we make. We believe compassion is a component of service. Do you view life about others serving and working for your interests or do you view life through the lens of serving others? Look to care – not to judge – be compassionate in all you do and say.

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ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

“Compassion is at the heart of every little thing we do. It is the dearest quality we possess. Yet all too often it can be cast aside with consequences too tragic to speak of. To lose our compassion, we lose what it is to be human.” Anonymous

The lesson learned - Show compassion – no one knows what it is to walk in another’s shoes. Show compassion for the less fortunate. Be compassionate toward all beings. Your relationships are the most important part of your life and your career. Be a loving person.

Treasure 6 - Learn to delegate.

We learned over time that we cannot do everything alone. We learned to rely on others to assist in the work and to have others learn by doing the work in order to gain confidence and skills as they tackle tasks, projects, or leadership of a committee. Teamwork is built by knowing and utilizing the strengths of those members on the team. A question to ask is, what am I doing that someone could do better or do to become a more effective leader? James Penney, founder of J.C. Penney said, “The surest way for an executive to kill himself is to refuse to learn how, and when, and to whom to delegate work.” Harvey Mackay provides guidelines in an article entitled, “6 Ways to Delegate More Effectively.” He writes do not look for perfection, provide complete job instructions, stop believing you are the only one who can do it properly, focus on teaching skills and helping employees to grow, check on progress, say thanks to those who do the work and make sure that their efforts are recognized and appreciated. It is easy at times to try to do everything yourself, but you do not help others to grow, learn, and lead if you are always completing the work. Look for something that you are currently doing, that you could give to someone else to work on. Give the support needed to complete the work. Check in on progress as well as communicate your appreciation for the work. Remember do not give the responsibility without also giving the authority to act. Otherwise you are just managing and not growing your staff.

“A leader is great, not because of his power but because of his ability to empower others.” - John Maxwell

The lesson learned – Delegate. Trust others to do their jobs well. Believe the best of others. Give others the opportunity to show you how well they can do. Trust and delegate.

Treasure 7 - Use time wisely, effectively, and strategically.

It is easy to get caught up in the urgent, respond to the immediate, and do the enjoyable. When we do, we lose sight of the priority, the important, and the vision. We have been most successful when we have created a to-do list of what is most strategic to accomplish that day and where our time needs to be spent. This list keeps us focused as the distractions and interruptions are bound to come. In your list mark which items are priorities, which tasks link to the vision and goals, and ensure you are listing things that others need from you. Is it 10 minutes of your time to provide input or feedback or drop into a classroom to be visible that is needed? Arm yourself each day with the tools to keep you on track with the vision and goals. In your day carve out 30 minutes of time to reflect, to think, and to plan. You need time to be still. You need time for play and rest. Know what energizes you, know what activities alleviate stress. Do you plan them in your week? A way to begin to look at your use of time is to write down everything you do in a day and the time spent on each task. Revisit your list at the end of day and mark which items were aligned with the goals and priorities, which were things unplanned, and which were just the day to day busyness. What did you learn that you can apply to the following day? We are always surprised by how much time is spent in the routine and not clearly aligned to the priorities that lead to student success.

“It’s not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy about?” - Henry David Thoreau

The lesson learned – Everything cannot be number 1. Everything cannot have equal importance. First things first. Learn to prioritize.

REFLECTING ON OUR 100 YEARS IN EDUCATION – 10 TREASURES FOUND

BY RICK MARTIN AND TED PRICE, PhD
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Treasure 8 - You do not have because you do not ask.

Do you find it hard to ask for help, to ask for an explanation, or to ask for things to be reconsidered? We do. We wonder how things might have been different in many instances if we had taken the risk to ask. In your role as leader, there will be times when you need to ask for assistance and not gut it out alone. There will be times when you do not understand the direction or the decision and asking for an explanation will assist you to lead others through the process. You may at times have a deeper insight or a better idea or plan and by asking for things to be reconsidered it may produce a better outcome. What holds us back from asking? It is not my place to ask. If I ask, it takes away the “gift” feel of it. I do not deserve it anyway. I assume the answer is no, so why bother. There are many reasons we can come up with why we do not inquire and most of them end up selling ourselves short. If you need assistance, who is someone you can ask? Are you building that group of people to whom you can go if you need an explanation or something to be reconsidered? Practice with that trusted colleague what you would say and get their feedback on it as well as their thoughts about how you might proceed.

“You create your opportunities by asking for them.” -Shakti Gawain

The lesson learned – Be Proactive. Take risks. What’s the worst that can happen? Someone might say no!

Treasure 9 - Remember, it is about being able and willing. You are able. Are you willing?

Someone saw the good in you. We all have talents. Be brave and have faith in yourself. Do you save notes of thanks and appreciation from others? Do you have a “feel good” folder filled with cards, certificates, and notes of appreciation to remind yourself when doubts creep in or when difficult days appear, that you are valued and appreciated? If not, we encourage you to have one.

There are people who have encouraged you along the way for no one gets here alone. Make them proud of you and

make you proud of you. Next step, go find someone else to mentor and lift-up, to encourage, to listen, to share insights and your experience. Fill their feel-good folders with notes to encourage them. Make the world of education better because you were there.

“You are capable of more than you know. Choose a goal that seems right for you and strive to be the best, however hard the path. Aim high. Behave honorably. Prepare to be alone at times, and to endure failure. Persist! The world needs all you can give.” – E. O. Wilson

The lesson learned - Believe in You. You are capable of more than you know. Be a lifelong learner. Have a growth mindset and never stop learning. With enough time, dedication and determination you can learn anything – and you can have anything, you just cannot have everything.

Treasure 10 - Be grateful.

Christina Karns writes, “In fact, research does support the idea that gratitude helps people who practice it. They report fewer physical symptoms of illness, more optimism, greater goal attainment, and decreased anxiety and depression, among other health benefits.” The last lesson we wish to leave with you is the one that will have the greatest impact on you. It will change the way you see the world, your work, your relationships. Do you see them as a duty, an obligation, or do you see them with eyes of thankfulness? Gratitude allows you to look back at the past with eyes that see lessons learned and let go of hurts, look at the present with eyes of thankfulness for what you have and not what you lack, and look to the future with a heart of anticipation and gratitude for the possibilities that exist. Be grateful for what you have and do. It could be a whole lot worse and as a leader you have the opportunity to create an environment that can make things a whole lot better. Do not miss your opportunity. Here are some ideas to keep alive a heart of gratitude: write thank you cards, keep a gratitude journal, and reflect at the end of the day on all the things for which you are thankful.

We are grateful for your time spent reading the treasures

REFLECTING ON OUR 100 YEARS IN EDUCATION – 10 TREASURES FOUND

BY RICK MARTIN AND TED PRICE, PHD
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

we hold onto and may they be reminders of actions you can take to foster your leadership and success. We know you cannot do it all. It is not an all or nothing proposition. It is about doing something for someone because for that someone it does matter. It is not writing endless thank you notes, but writing one that will bring a smile and joy. It not visiting every class, but making the ones you do visit meaningful.

“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”- Melody Beattie

The lesson learned - Gratitude for all that you are and all that you have: you can never be too grateful---you did not get to where you are alone---you had help and support. Be mindful and appreciative of those whose shoulders you are standing on. Let grace be your byword.

We leave you with a few reminders to carry forward: Smile, forgive, accept what is and work to make it better, as Maya Angelou says, “When we know better, we can do better.” Do better. Your most important question – how can I help? Your most important behavior – be present. Your most important action – take care of you so that you can take care of others. Always be an encourager, and do not be afraid to laugh, cry, sing, and dance. Nurture relationships – they are all that matter and all you have, and certainly more important than things. Find solace and fulfillment in the work you do. Cherish each person and each moment – our 100 years went by faster than we would have ever imagined – it was almost over in a flash.

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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

BY: JENNIFER IZANT GONZALES, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Abstract

Traditionally, California's alternative education schools have served the state's most vulnerable students and students whose needs are not met by traditional schools (Legislative Analyst Office, 2007; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008; CDE, 2017). Alternative education programs often offer successful strategies such as smaller class sizes, more support services, vocational training, and emphasize a safe and supportive environment. Increasing academic rigor in alternative education settings has often been discussed but takes a backseat to the more pressing issues such as meeting the specific needs of the diverse student population. This article discusses the approach of the Santa Cruz County Office of Education (Santa Cruz COE) in continuously improving and moving towards appropriately rigorous and engaging academic curriculum for all students.

California Alternative Education

Alternative education options in California are extensive and include continuation high schools as well as programs run by school districts and County Offices of Education (COE) court and community schools. Non-traditional schools, such as alternative education programs, are some of the most under-researched education entities despite the fact that they educate a significant number of California youth (Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2008; Legislative Analyst Office, 2017). According to the California Department of Education (CDE), county community schools serve a diverse group including students who are: expelled, on probation, referred by the student attendance review board (SARB), or requested to attend by their parent or guardian (CDE, 2017). Students who do not have their needs met at traditional schools in California, often find a more suitable and supportive environment in alternative education. While alternative schools generally operate differently than traditional schools they are still greatly influenced by and held accountable to standards mandated by the state and federal government.

Accountability

Court and community schools are held to accountability measures similar to traditional schools such as creating and submitting a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), going through Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) process, if accreditation is desired, and participating in standardized testing like the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). When California transitioned to the Local Control Funding Formula in 2013, alternative schools did not initially participate in the newly created Dashboard because appropriate measures and indicators were not yet approved (CDE, 2018).

Beginning in December 2018, the Dashboard for Alternative School Status (DASS) will be publicly available. The former accountability system for alternative schools categorized in the Alternative School Accountability Model (ASAM), which began in 2001 under 1999 Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) was highly criticized because the metrics were identical to traditional schools and ineffective as measures and tools for alternative schools (Ruiz de Velasco and Gonzales, 2017). Ideally, alternative schools are held accountable by the California Department of Education, the United States Department of Education, and local school boards to ensure they are educating students with integrity. Unfortunately, state accountability measures for alternative schools have not been without their faults and only time will tell if the new system is appropriate and effective.

Systems of accountability impact large changes like continuous improvement efforts that encompass developing interdisciplinary curriculum. When attempting to make system-wide, multi-year improvements that question and alter the status quo, standard accountability measures can be used as a reason not to implement change, or follow through with change, out of a fear of the change negatively impacting accountability reports or not being in compliance. Genuine accountability in schools, specifically in alternative schools, comes from staff, student, and community reflection. The WASC and LCAP process involve all stakeholders and critical data are shared and reflected upon. In order for alternative schools to continuously improve and develop more rigorous and engaging programs, it is imperative for staff to be committed to honestly evaluate their programs, engage in

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productive dialogue, and understand that organizational change is challenging and essential.

Organizational Change and Continuous Improvement

Schools, like businesses, do not exist in a vacuum and must continually adapt and innovate to thrive in the ever-changing world dynamics that surround them. Continuous improvement and sustainable change rely upon systems-thinking and a commitment to a culture of learning and capacity building from staff (Fullan, 2005; Kirtman and Fullan, 2016; Schein, 2017). To promote continuous improvement efforts the deeply emotional and psychological aspects of change must be understood and recognized by leadership through effective communication and teamwork (Kirtman and Fullan, 2016; Kotter, 2002; Schein, 2017; Evans, 1996). Fundamental improvement in school does not come from initiatives, rather it is cultivated through a culture of continuous improvement (Anderson and Kumari, 2009). It is difficult to tell if many schools are continuously improving because most school research is on individual initiatives.

Continuous improvement, coupled with a culture of learning sets the foundation for meaningful and necessary change. It is often said that the most dangerous and expensive phrase in the business world is, “We have always done it this way.” Arguably, this is true for education as well but rarely is a culture of continuous improvement authentically developed and thus education systems fall back on the way things have traditionally been done. Moving from a stagnant and familiar organizational system towards change and continuous improvement is daunting and there needs to be a sense of urgency created to promote “unfreezing” and to empower action (Evans, 1996; Kotter, 2002; Schein, 2017). The sense of urgency that sparked change for the Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Department came through the WASC process.

WASC Continuous Improvement Cycle

When executed with fidelity, the WASC six-year accreditation cycle can be used as the foundation of continuous improvement and change for alternative education programs. The stamp of approval earned

through the WASC accreditation cycle requires schools to go through a rigorous self-study which leads to an action plan that is developed by the whole school community. The essentials of the mission of the Accrediting Commission of Schools, WASC, is to assure all stakeholders that the educational institution has appropriate objectives, is organized and staffed to meet their objectives, adheres to the WASC criteria for accreditation, and continuously improves through self-evaluation (WASC, 2016). The WASC self-study creates the opportunity for organizational change through authentic self-reflection.

The WASC self-study process innately mandates staff to be vulnerable and open to hearing ideas that might contradict the way they have always done their job or have run their particular school, program, class, or student support service. In order for this level of dialogue to occur it helps if the organization has a culture of learning and capacity building. Without the genuine discourse that happens in the self-study process, the action plan that is created might be superficial. Once an action plan has been created and the school has completed their six-year full-cycle visit, the difficult work of carrying out the plan begins, which requires follow-through, self-reflection, and a mid-cycle checkpoint. The Santa Cruz COE utilized their self-study process to evaluate all aspects of their programs and created a plan that included increasing rigor and engagement through collaborative professional development that focused on instruction and curriculum development.

Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Programs

The Santa Cruz County Office of Education has a robust alternative education program with 19 school sites that offer 24 unique programs. These programs range from a court school located inside the juvenile detention facility to the newly constructed Sequoia High School campus in Watsonville which houses a variety of programs that serve the youngest learners in the child development program all the way up to students in their twenties. Geographically, the alternative education programs are divided between North and South County schools. One of the largest Santa Cruz COE alternative education programs is Oasis High

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School, an independent studies program located on the Cabrillo College campus in Aptos, California. This school is considered an early college high school and offers A-G independent studies courses for students who aim to attend a four-year university directly after high school graduation. Aside from the large Sequoia High School and Oasis high school programs, there are numerous small alternative schools that meet the specific needs of their learners.

In both North and South County, there exists a myriad of Santa Cruz COE schools that each have a specific focus. The different focal points include a vocational emphasis, sobriety focus, hybrid programs that combine independent studies and small group classes and all schools support the whole student and building resiliency. The staff who work at these schools are dedicated educators with a variety of experience. The diversity of alternative education programs along with the wide range of locations offered by the Santa Cruz COE is the core of its success but it also makes organizational change efforts challenging. The specific organizational change plan of improving rigor through continuous improvement and curriculum development involves staff members who are spread throughout an entire county creating a unique set of challenges and opportunities.

Organizational Change Plan

The organizational change effort put into place at the Santa Cruz COE has two major components that work in tandem to appropriately increase student academic rigor and engagement. The first component of the change is to develop common curriculum that is engaging, interdisciplinary, supports the diverse learners, and is developed through a collaborative process that utilizes the expertise of the alternative education teachers. The second component of the change is to follow through with all of the continuous improvement efforts outlined in the Santa Cruz COE WASC action plan. Both components of the organizational change effort necessitate a clear plan that is routinely evaluated by staff and administration.

Alternative Education Advisory Committee

To support continuous improvement efforts on a broad scale, a leadership team, named the Alternative Education Advisory Committee (AEAC) was created. Having a guiding team that is dedicated to the change efforts and motivated to learn and lead is essential to large-scale system change (Kirtman and Fullan, 2016; Kotter, 2002; Schein, 2017; Evans, 1996). This leadership team embodies a wealth of knowledge and dedication to the students and the Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Department. The AEAC is comprised of classified and certificated staff from sites in both North and South County. In a safe setting that promotes collaboration, the team works together with administration to self-assess programs and the efforts being made towards the WASC action plan goals. The team will also act as communicators for all the sites they represent and can bring information to the meetings and back to their sites. The AEAC promotes a more lateral leadership approach that empowers participants to lead and play active roles in the change process. In order to address the need to develop common curriculum, a shift in professional development efforts had to be implemented to create more time for collaboration.

Professional Development: Collaborative Learning Communities

The student based curriculum and instruction needs, coupled with staff desires for more collaboration and choice, as revealed through interviews, surveys, and the WASC process, necessitated a change in professional development. The Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Department recognized the need to develop common and engaging curriculum which is facilitated through appropriate pedagogy that supports the academic and social-emotional needs of students. Professional learning for educators must take into consideration not only the student needs that are being addressed but the learning needs and desires of the staff. Best practices in professional development focus on staff as learners where collaboration, knowledge sharing, and coaching are prioritized. (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). The alternative education administration considered these research-based best

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practices and staff desires when changing professional development.

Developing common curriculum takes tremendous time, effort, and collaboration. Beginning 2017-2018 the Santa Cruz COE professional development plan included a new program for teachers named Collaborative Learning Communities (CLCs). The intent of the CLCs was and still is, to provide cross-content collaboration amongst staff in order to support all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. In 2017-2018, instructional staff from North and South County school sites met to discuss best practices and personal experiences. Teachers partnered with others who worked in a similar school setting and worked together throughout the year. The teachers focused on one particular instructional routine and the impact on student learning and their teaching. At the end of year one, each group shared their project and its impact with staff.

The first year of the CLCs focused on pedagogy, specifically instructional routines, and beginning Fall 2018 the CLCs built upon the foundation that was formed and introduced curriculum development (see Appendices A and B for a more detailed description of the plan for year one and two). The CLC meetings occur once a month with the first meeting serving as an introduction and an opportunity for staff engagement and buy-in. Staff will have a choice in the unit they select as well as who they partner with. There will be curriculum resources and support offered during the meetings and release time for staff to collaborate. The desired outcome is for each group to create a relevant and engaging unit that is interdisciplinary, student-centered, teacher created and modified for the complex alternative education setting that has students of multiple grade levels and school and life experiences that contribute to the learning environment. The curriculum unit framework is developed with teacher input and flexibility (see appendix C for more details on the unit components). The curriculum framework sets the parameters, directions, and standards for curriculum practice while allowing and encouraging flexibility and variation (IBE, n.d.). The goal is to follow through with

developing common curriculum in a collaborative way that ultimately positively impacts student achievement and engagement as measured through grades, credits, and survey data.

Reflection

Moving forward, the Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Department will continue on its path of continuous improvement and curriculum development. The AEAC will meet quarterly to self-assess and reflect on action plan items and to create future actions. Specific steps that have arisen from self-reflection, aside from professional development, include the counseling structure within the department, data collection and analysis, specifically involving the student intake process, and monitoring individual student learning plans and post-graduation goals. The CLCs will continue to develop curriculum and collaborate on best practices and the goal is to widen the scope to incorporate independent studies curriculum. Independent studies is a growing sector of the Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Department and the CLCs are adapting to meet this need by providing an independent studies CLC. It is important to continuously assess the needs of the organization and students and modify the action plan accordingly.

The Santa Cruz COE Alternative Education Department's WASC action plan was developed through a collaborative process that recognized the needs of the students and staff. Following through with the plan and developing specific steps to reach the goal of maintaining continuous improvement while increasing rigor and engagement for students via a common curriculum facilitated through instructional routines that support the academic and social-emotional needs of students, is the structured task of the leadership team.

Both the continuous improvement efforts and the specific curriculum development endeavor are aimed at improving overall engagement and rigor for students and arguably staff as well and with any change effort there will be challenges. Time constraints along with communication,

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understanding individual staff learning styles, and staff history and experiences with the organization all present opportunities for connection as well as challenges. Professional learning is explicitly written into the standards for both teachers and administrators, but this alone cannot build a culture of learning. If the educators and all staff of the organization, regardless of years of experience, desire learning then systemic change efforts are more likely to thrive. When coordinating continuous improvement efforts and professional development aimed at curriculum development, it is important to remember it takes time, commitment, vision, and an understanding that each staff member contributes a unique viewpoint and expertise.

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STUDENT LEARNING PLANS IN MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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INFINITY LEARNING MAPS (ILMs) SERVE AS A TOOL FOR STUDENTS TO IDENTIFY THEIR OWN LEARNING AND TO DISCOVER HOW SCHOOL SYSTEMS CAN SUPPORT THEM TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR GOALS. THEY SERVED AS THE CENTERPIECE FOR AE'S FIRST-EVER PARENT-TEACHER-STUDENT CONFERENCES AND PAVED THE WAY FOR IMPROVED STUDENT-TEACHER-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE FOCUSED ON STUDENT LEARNING.

The need to adjust the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) process and how it is utilized to drive instruction is critical to successful student outcomes. Monterey County, California is a community plagued by gang violence with significant incarceration among its school-age population. Efforts to improve school-to-prison pipeline prevention in Monterey County are informing the ILP process (Diehl, 2017). To aid the planning and delivery process, Student Learning Plans (SLPs) have been initiated in many public schools to give students and their families the necessary exposure and guidance required to complete high school better prepared to enter the workforce or pursue a post-secondary degree.

SLPs are a comprehensive plan that can change and evolve as the student approaches graduation. Transition plans devised by the teacher and student, with the backing of the family, are clearly defined. The implementation and success of the SLPs are contingent upon the student's support system at the respective school and the persons responsible for compiling the SLP. These SLPs are created in conjunction with Infinity Learning Maps (Annan & Wootton, 2016).

The Infinity Learning Maps (ILMs) Program was adopted by the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), Alternative Education (AE) program as a platform for understanding and developing SLPs with a particular focus on the transition into college

or career. Learning Maps have been incorporated into all AE settings for both adults and youth. ILMs serve as a tool for students to identify their own learning and to discover how school systems can support them to accomplish their goals. They served as the centerpiece for AE's first-ever parent-teacher-student conferences and paved the way for improved student-teacher-parent relationships that are focused on student learning. Evidence verifies that the Infinity mapping exercises are valued by each of these groups (students, teachers and parents) and helps them to make qualitative changes in the way they support new learning:

The results indicated that each group made qualitative changes in the way they supported new learning. Students' selected challenges moved from general to specific and the strategies they used changed from reactive, passive responses to those involving active learning. Changes in teacher and parent strategies reflected this shift with the predominance of early suggestions for support requiring passive responses and later strategies encouraging students to take an active role. Student, teacher and parent participants considered that the Infinity Learning Maps had been helpful for talking about learning, finding out what to change, and supporting achievement. (Annan, Annan & Wootton, 2016).

Backstory

MCOE Alternative Education has developed and

maintained programs based on individual, societal, and institutional needs. AE programs cater to the most at-risk youth and adult students facing challenging circumstances in Monterey County. Learning modalities are addressed through individual, direct, and small-group learning arrangements. Curriculum and instruction are delivered through direct instruction, online learning, and experiential, project-based learning. Student enrollment into programs is determined by a variety of factors that include age, skill level, interest, graduation progress, learning style, and probation status.

MCOE Alternative Education operates several different education facilities and programs throughout the County. These programs include:

1) Court Schools – offering education services for incarcerated youth and adults through three schools at the Monterey County Juvenile Hall, the Monterey County Youth Center (a medium-term rehabilitation Center), and the Monterey County Jail (offering adult education)

2) Pathway Programs – offering career pathway-focused education through the S.A.F.E. program (Sea Air Fire and Earth - a transportation pathway option) and the iTAP program (Innovation Technology Arts pathway option)

3) Silver Star Community School – providing a full-service program at Rancho Cielo operated in collaboration with the Monterey County Probation and Children's Behavioral Health Departments, utilizing a blended-learning approach with a focus on direct instruction

4) Silver Star Center – a truancy abatement program run in collaboration with the Monterey County District Attorney, Probation, and Children's Behavioral Health Department

5) Independent Study Programs – offered in South Monterey County and the City of Salinas for youth and adults. Details about these programs are outlined in **Appendix 1.**

All programs are supported by an array of administrators, coordinators, specialists, and support staff. They work in the areas of truancy, expulsion, court liaison assistance, transition plans with a focus on college and career readiness, special education, foster-youth, homelessness, English Language Learners, and other associated areas with administrative requirements.

Student Learning Plans

Recently, Individual Learning Plans became a legal requirement. AE administrators in Monterey County wanted to maximize engagement and make ILPs a living document. Senior Director of Alternative Education, Chris Devers, did not believe that students would benefit from add-ons to the already complex array of assessments and monitoring notes collected for standardized reporting. The team needed to find a way to cut through the clutter, and bring the students' interests and needs to the top of the pile.

In their search for an engaging solution, Monterey County AE leaders attended a Harry Singer Foundation-sponsored workshop in Oakland and discovered an appreciative scripting approach called Infinity Learning Maps (Annan & Wootton, 2016). When people think of mapping in education circles, they typically refer to mind-mapping (Buzan, 2010). Mind maps serve an important curriculum purpose around 'what' students know, the content they are thinking about, and what they need to know next. The ILM approach supports students to unpack 'how' and 'why' they learn the way they do. Students start by exploring the interactive web surrounding their learning. They then branch out to identify broader learning competencies relevant to their personalized situations. In doing so, the students start to create plans for the next steps in their learning: plans for the moment, next week, the month ahead, and long term goals for the year. It is an immediate plan, relevant for the here and now.

As the students develop their SLPs, they delve (sometimes unintentionally) into the science of learning-how-to-learn with their teachers and families. A set of 10 structured activities outline the foundation of the ILM approach. These activities are summarized below.

Infinity Learning Maps approach

Teachers facilitate a series of learning-how-to-learn activities with students over 1-2 semesters. Structured activities involve 10 steps that start with personalized learning situations and end with strategic improvement priorities:

1. Students engage in warm-up activities that explore 'learning.'
2. Students draw Infinity Learning Map 1. Each map represents the student's current learning situation; the people, tools, places, and interactions that help them learn.
3. Students analyze their maps to identify priority areas for growth or improvement.
4. Students discuss their maps with peers, teachers, and family and look at broader learning competencies to finalize their areas of improvement.
5. The students load their personalized data about their maps and improvement areas into the database.
6. Students go about making their improvements and monitor their own progress using a suggested formalized method or using their regular monitoring routines.
7. Teachers and leaders link each student's personalized data to the Infinity database, which gathers data from multiple project sites to generate learning trends that are unfolding among students.
8. Teachers discuss with the students the learning trends that they are pursuing in relation to career pathways.
9. Students use their Infinity Learning Maps to report their learning progress in student-led conversations with teachers and parents. Students, teachers, and parents discuss learning trends and career opportunities.
10. Students reflect on their improvements, celebrate successes with peers, teachers, and families and move on to their individualized learning plans.

A priority for AE leaders integrating the ILM approach into SLPs was the placement of students in 'the driver's

seat' when developing personalized plans. There were two immediate benefits. First, AE leaders had to find a way to develop ILPs that was relevant to the students. Second, staff started to think about the balance between content lessons for graduation credits and meta-cognitive learning activities that cause the students to step back, reflect on and adapt the way they choose to learn and live. Pressures around standard assessments and graduation remained, but there was a fresh confidence among the students to address some of the small, often unnoticed and unattended to aspects of learning.

Narrative Theory

An immediate priority for AE was to build confidence in young adults to make useful next-step learning decisions. An underlying principle of the confidence-building theory is that all students carry a script in their minds about themselves as learners (White, 2007). Students act consistently with these stories. Typically, scripts are shaped by the numerous messages students receive about themselves from the web of interactions surrounding their learning. Students also actively contribute to these scripts, which shape their perspectives as they grow up. The interactive webs surrounding students' learning can often get tangled with conflicting messages from their environments. Often these students' scripts are associated with diminished confidence and anxieties around learning.

Students' self-scripts, however, are not set in stone and can be modified. Furthermore, students' stories can be reframed so that the young people see themselves and their lives in a positive light and develop optimism for the future.

Educators have known for some time that personal learning stories can be re-scripted (Sax, 2011, White 2007, Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007). However, many educators and organizations put in considerable time and effort developing educative plans for students in challenging situations, at times taking a 'fix-up' approach.

This contrasts with the positive Infinity Maps process in which the capability of students is appreciated and students have the opportunity to actively re-script their own stories.

Teachers, specialist staff, aides, and parents can support rather than direct students' decision-making to untangle stories, ascribe meaning to conflicting ideas, and identify the strengths and supports in their learning environments. Adult support teams can build considerable student confidence by positioning them to take ownership of their personalized learning plans, inclusive of improvement goals. Naturally, these adults will wish to observe procedures for ensuring students' safety and well-being. The support of more experienced adults remains vital for students' learning and well-being, and they must be prepared to increase the scaffold and support decision-making during extremely stressful times.

Once students draw their first Infinity Learning Map, they typically see, usually for the first time, the web of interactions surrounding their learning. Their images, in whatever form they choose to create them, help the students to reflect on aspects of their learning that they might improve, develop, adapt or eliminate. Once AE students started making these decisions, they observed that they had the beginnings of plans, plans that were relevant for them. As most AE staff recognize, relevance for the learner is vitally important for young adults who are in challenging circumstances and strive to enter adulthood as active and positively connected citizens. Making considered choices in learning and living situations has become increasingly important as the modern world offers a diverse range of opportunities along with greater challenges (Bialik & Fadel, 2018; Hannon, 2017).

Case Studies

A reflection about the student-led planning from teacher Scott Davis in the Silver Star Community School program provides a useful introduction to several case studies:

The Learning Maps have helped several of our students grasp the myriad of ways they learn, especially from unexpected sources. For example, a couple indicated how little siblings and their dogs teach them patience and responsibility. Others have highlighted settings like forests, parks, and churches that help them learn to be quiet, reflective, and "in the moment," a phrase that the Maps have helped bring into our discussions. Also, students come to the realization that they have roadblocks to learning that they can and will change and that those changes involve all the people and tools in their lives (Scott Davis, 02/03/2019).

The case studies are organized into titles that represent a set of learning trends, outlined below. The learning trends came from an analysis of the maps, explanatory videos, and data that AE students produced during their individual planning exercises. The term 'trends' is used to identify three concepts that are removed from the original data (i.e., the student's maps, the explanatory videos and the Google-form data about the maps and areas for improvement). All data was put into tables and then grouped and labeled under common themes. Then the labels were analyzed to identify associated learning continuums. The term 'Learning Trends' represents those continuums. The students confirmed that these trends depicted their decision-making and aspirations to improve their learning. The trends are outlined below.

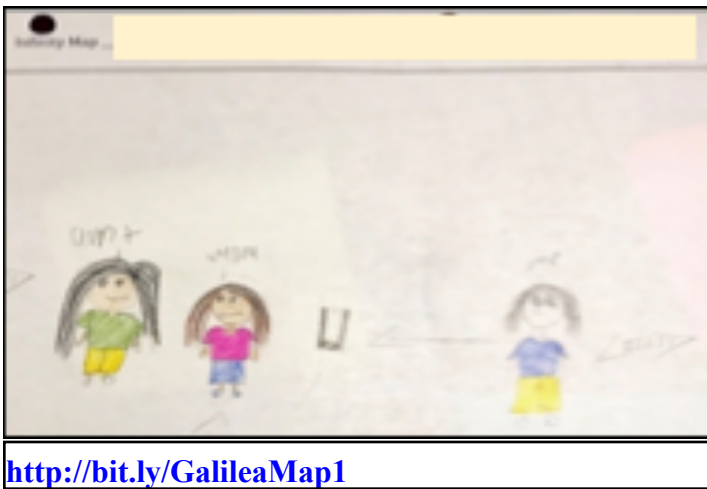
- Shy to confident
- Avoidance to risk-taking
- Time on my hands to value time to learn
- Just getting by to making opportunities happen
- Blind loyalty to "the streets" to a positive, safe, loving life



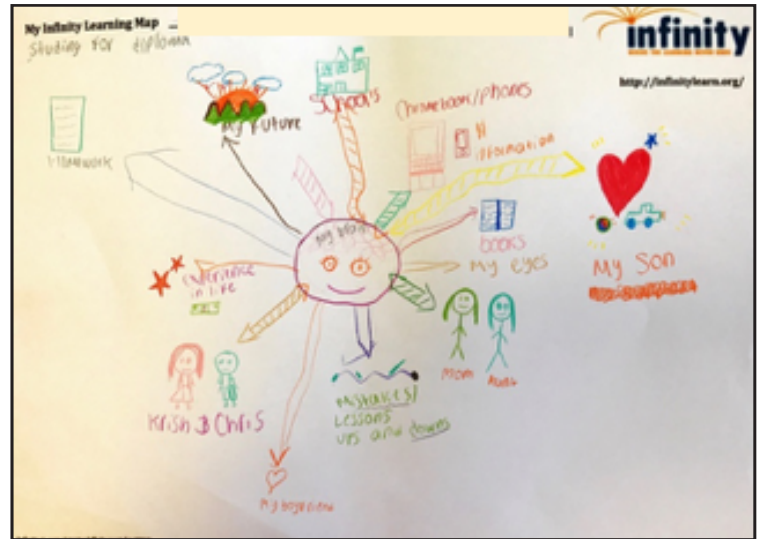
Case study one: Shy to confident

Galilea became a high-school graduate after attending the SAFE program. In her last year, Galilea used the Infinity Maps to explain her story of going from an introverted,

shy student to speaking up in order to understand the curriculum necessary to graduate. Her first Infinity Map depicted a small web of interactions (Aunt, Mom and me) and tools (phone). When Galilea compared Map 1 (small map) with Map 2 (larger map) below, she realized that she had an extensive support network for her learning: “I wasn’t going to school so much and these maps made me realize who really supports me at school and helps me to do better to get my diploma and graduate!”



Galilea also realized she was asking teachers to explain things better so she could understand the curriculum concepts in her last year. Galilea’s confidence grew as she started visualizing her learning: “Something that really helps me is my mistakes in lessons because without them you wouldn’t learn, so that’s me going up and down and right now I’m going up because I’m going to graduate.” Another priority part of Galilea’s story was her love and dedication to her newborn son. He was a driving force behind her motivation to graduate. This realization helped Galilea understand learning was important for graduation and even more important for life thereafter. Galilea’s teacher was delighted with her personalized planning and follow-through. “These (maps), I see as more planning for life. I think it is a wonderful concept to be able to give students the ability to share with us things that we would never pick up from them if we were just giving them direct lessons all the time, and really giving them license to be themselves and show their creativity



as well as their thought processes because we can’t be in their minds... she [Galilea] is getting someplace where she sees value for herself and her son!”

Case study two: Avoidance to risk-taking

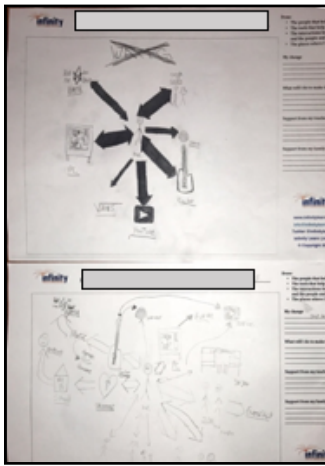


Arianna chose to go to Rancho Cielo. She was a quiet, anxious girl in a big school and had lost her love for writing. Arianna’s boyfriend, Rodrigo, also went to the ranch program. He was shy and reluctant to talk about learning and life in general. He wanted to pursue his talent in music but found it difficult to get moving. A local newspaper documented Arianna and Rodrigo going through their personalized planning exercises (The Salinas Californian, 2017).

On his map, Rodrigo drew thick, bold lines in pencil connecting him to his computer, to his grandpa and grandma, and to his electric guitar. The lines to YouTube and the Internet were strong but not as thick. Thinner lines went to Vans (a skateboarding shoes and apparel shop) and to BMTH “Don’t Let Me Drown” (a rock band named Bring Me the Horizon and its hit song).

Arianna chatted enthusiastically when explaining her map. “Instead of avoiding problems or things that I’m not good at,” she said, “I’m going to try and do them so I can

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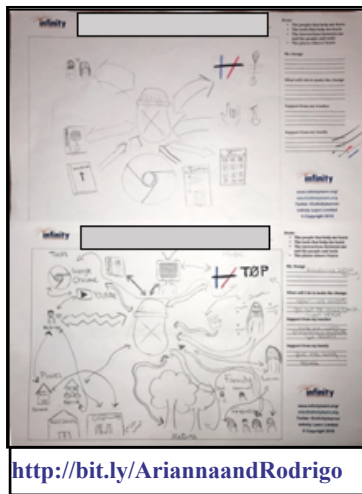


take those risks and do those types of things.”

Arianna drew her first map in April. On this morning she was adding to it. “There’s a lot of things different now. Like before I guess family was the main focus. But over time, I’ve figured out that they are a big part of my life and so I’m starting to open up more. I’ve got a job and I’m learning

from a different place now.” She’s a shelf stocker at a CVS Pharmacy. Mysterious slanted lines and letters were sketched in one corner of her map, which she explained:

“That’s my music. 21 Pilots actually is a really big part of my life. I’ve liked them for a couple of years now. Their music is like really nice and it helps me focus.” Arianna’s bright outlook and budding talent were noticed in April by Sharon Law Tucker who arranged for the teenager to attend a writer’s workshop.



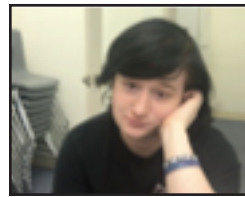
Case study three: Time on my hands to value time to learn

Two students, Antonio and Bryan, had plenty of time on their hands, but they were not valuing time to learn. They both changed track, Antonio, by planning based on setting goals, and Bryan motivated by fear of a bleak future if he did not get moving.



Antonio attended the program at Rancho Cielo. His Infinity map showed that he had a passion for music. The way it worked for him was that he learned to play songs on his guitar

by listening to YouTube videos on the internet at home. In conversations about his way of learning, he revealed that he was not getting around to learning new songs or playing the guitar at all. Antonio made an explanatory video at <http://bit.ly/AntonioMusic>. In it, he made a commitment to himself to improve his time management and get back to his passion. “My map shows my love and passion for music. Something I would change is time management and (I’d) make a specific time to play the guitar.” He subsequently performed at his Rancho Cielo graduation and started to get some gigs around town.



Bryan was new to the SAFE program at the time that he drew his first Infinity map. It was a minimalist image: him and a musical note. They were a representation of him sitting at his table with green headphones on listening to music as a way of

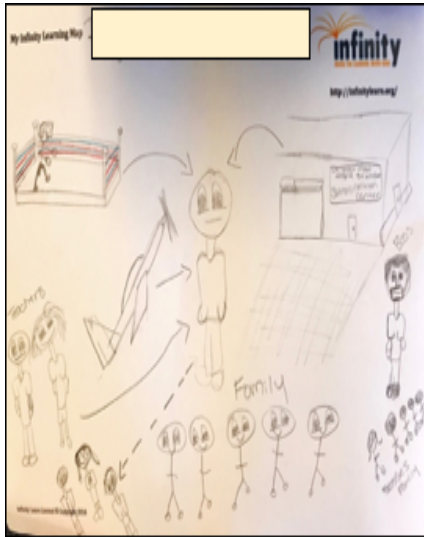
shutting out the world. Bryan’s second map and his explanatory video at <http://bit.ly/BryanSalinas> reflected a transformational shift in learning behavior and outcomes. The map and his comments in his video showed that he was starting to value time to learn. Bryan wanted to: “Not be scared of flying because this is a flight program/school. Well, I didn’t really want to finish school but now taking that risk would get me further in life so I have to take it.” Bryan had taken off his green headphones, was engaging in lessons and was taking risks to get over his fear of flying. It was like he was a different person. Bryan’s just-in-time decisions reflected a realization that he had to knuckle down to graduate. To his credit, he did just that.

Case study four: Just getting by to making opportunities happen



Diego represented a peer leader in the SAFE program. He had the vision, energy and humor, competencies that typically lead to becoming a successful learner and contributing citizen. Diego was one of the lead students to support Harrison Ford’s recent visit to the Bob Hoover

Academy. <https://www.flyingmag.com/every-kid-can-fly>



During the personal planning activities, Diego quipped that he was keen to get his pilot's license before his driver's license. However, Diego was just managing to get through his life and learning commitments, with support from his caring grandmother. Drawing Infinity Map 1 helped Diego focus. The image of

his interactive web helped him recognize and value the people who supported him.

In a second map Diego stated: "I noticed that I have been slacking a lot. When working on my own on the computer I will not let anything or anyone distract me. Like if an ad for a video pops up or a notification on my phone I will leave it until I have finished my work. Diego also commented on the overall impact of the planning exercises, "What was useful was me setting my goals and my ideas on paper. That way I can visualize what I am striving for." <http://bit.ly/Diegoimpactofmapping>

Diego followed through on his goal-oriented ambition to get past the slacking-around days. He graduated from the SAFE flight school and went on to apply to train for the marines. He got turned down the first time, and then, after making some necessary adjustments, was successful in his second application. In the wait time, Diego studied to complete two more courses and got up every morning at 5 a.m. to catch public transport to Pebble Beach to work as an electrician's support. Diego had developed the considerable capability to set goals and follow through, which are recognized capabilities to succeed into the future in the modern world (Bialik & Fadel, 2018).

Case study five: Blind loyalty to "the streets" to a positive, safe, loving life

Many students refer to "the streets" or their "neighborhood" as a prominent label for negative networks in their lives. Silver Star program teacher Scott Davis captured the challenging circumstances that many students face as they navigate their neighborhoods. Scott's description captures the sensitivities of each individual situation. There are many delicate balances that have to be considered and there is no set manual for navigating sustainable solutions. Scott's comments here suggest that it is possible to chip away at personalized planning and, over time, create small breakthroughs that might lead to giant strides forward.

My favorite student desire to change involved a 15-year-old girl, G.B. (I use her initials, for she wishes to be anonymous). She gained a voice through her map. She became empowered by the realization of how she had drawn "The Streets" and "Gangster" as characters in closer proximity to herself on the map than her family, school, and teachers. She used the wiggly (crazy learning) arrows for The Streets and Gangster. In her video, she was able to articulate her fear and the grip that these negative forces had in her life. She talked more openly with us about how she wants to change that influence and how she wants help from her mother to do so. When we held a parent conference, we discussed how students use Learning Maps, however, she expressed that she did not want to reveal the content of her map to her mother. We honored that request, but we encouraged her to find other ways to talk to her mother. I look forward to her next map to see what steps or changes may have occurred (Scott Davis, 02/30/2019).

-- Scott Davis, teacher at Silver Star, Salinas.

The map below represents a snapshot of the images in the minds of students in similar circumstances to the

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student described in the above paragraph. The map focuses strongly on the positive networks of family, peers, teachers, and workmates that the students want to grow. Those positive networks are typically portrayed in bright colors. This student believes that it is just as important to actively work towards shutting down negative networks and habits as it is to grow the positive sides of their learning and life.

Another common trend under the umbrella of blind loyalty to “the streets” is students who aspire to make a “quick buck.” The concept was evident in the maps, videos, and conversations among a number of students in the Youth Center program. A common comment went along the lines of, “The most important thing in life is to make a quick buck.” When the students were confronted with the math that doing a robbery or drug deal typically leads to “no bucks” and long-term incarceration, the conversation with the students typically reverted back to the view that making a “quick buck” was still a worthwhile exercise. Discussing the concept may seem a futile exercise, but the exercise aimed to put doubts in the student’s mind that they could mull over in their own time.

Administrator’s reflections

The adverse childhood experiences that some AE students have to endure requires a trauma-informed approach to address their needs and increase their resilience. In this process, the teams strive to embrace culturally proficient strategies designed to promote and improve communication, instill restorative justice, and honor student’s cultures. In AE, student disengagement is a challenge that educators within AE face on a daily basis. This dilemma leads to a variety of adverse results which drains teacher motivation and compounds the student’s inability to transcend the confines of the juvenile justice system’s educational environment. This situation includes a lack of available resources, due to the restrictions of secure setting facilities. As evidenced by the work

being conducted in the AE program, an innovative and proven method of engaging otherwise disengaged and traumatized students was piloted at the Monterey County Youth Center.



The AE administration team believes the approach underpinning the ILMs provides an opportunity for students to reflect, communicate what is of importance to them, establish educational and life goals, and identify socio-emotional issues that hamper their learning and success in school, personal life, and work. The importance of providing educational options to students is critical to engaging students and motivating them to

complete high school. Through a journey of self-discovery and mutual respect and through the development of a strong student/teacher relationship founded in empathy, the mapping exercises have contributed to an improvement in student/staff relationships and reduced the rate of out-of-school suspensions. The SAFE school had only two incidents resulting in out-of-school suspensions over a five-semester period. Through the mapping, reflection and improvement activities, a deeper respect and connectedness to school culture has become a reality for many students.

Educational Liaison, Laura Amezcua, reflected on the value of the ILMs to inform the AE approach to develop SLPs:

I felt that ILMs were a unique approach to re-engaging students in their learning progress. This greatly improved our students’ academic success. During the 2017-2018 school year many students reported for the first time during high school they felt that their needs and wants were not only listened to by school staff but they were being incorporated into their high school completion through the development of Individual Learning Plans. The SLP process has been transformed through robust student engagement by incorporating ILMs.

Students are completing and utilizing SLPs, due in large part to strengthening the student-teacher relationship and by respecting student's experiences, culture and life-long goals.

Another senior administrator, Jeff Hardig, emphasized the relational value of the ILMs for staff to know and understand their students:

While our students benefit from the ILM approach, it can be argued that our teachers' benefit is equal, if not greater. The greatest student challenges for an educator are educational apathy, self-fulfilling prophecy of failure, and in far too many instances, personal traumas, both physical and emotional. This reality is most evident and common in our court schools, especially Juvenile Hall. Because of these personal challenges, the majority of these students will sit passively, and or defiantly, during instruction and not reach out for help; some because of embarrassment and/or anger, and some because they're not consciously aware of their learning barriers. Both of these contribute to frustration and a sense of hopelessness. The ILM process creates a bond between student and educator and allows the teacher/aide to understand and address the unique needs of each student. This process is vital in all of our school sites, but even more so in our Court Schools.

Innovative programs designed by the AE administration team have led to numerous students re-scripting their stories about themselves as learners. The case studies presented in this article with a lens on SLPs informed by ILMs verify the re-scripting in action. But those developments alone do not fully account for the positive shifts occurring in Monterey County. The overall culture of the programs and the mindset shifts of the staff towards an appreciative and respectful view of the student population also contribute to new-found energy and engagement among the students, as is outlined by the description of Ana below.

“Ana, a former homeless and foster student in our SAFE program improved her attendance by more than 20%, passed all of her courses with a grade of “C” or better and became re-engaged in many of the college and career extra-curricular activities: “I love flying! This school (SAFE) makes school fun and I’m actually doing my work and getting good grades. I went to Summer school last year and had a lot of fun, we went to Cal Poly and found out how we could get in. Plus, the school (SAFE) helped

me get a job and I’ve been working, too” (Joe DeRuosi Jr, 2019).

Ana and many of her peers are beginning to re-script their stories of themselves as capable, active, connected learners who are much more hopeful of a healthy and prosperous life than they were when they entered the alternative programs. The re-scripting is critical to the successful transition into life-long employability and career advancement as well as caring for family and community.

Next steps and conclusion

There is a strong desire among administrators in AE to link the personalized SLPs to career pathways. AE is currently working with students to incorporate their College and Career Readiness Transition (CCRT) plans into a section on the SLPs. The team is developing procedures and guidelines for this process, which include updating the SLP and CCRT section once per semester. These changes are being implemented during the Spring 2019 semester. They will include Career Technical Education pathway sections for those students in any one of our pathway programs.

To conclude, Monterey County Alternative Education is supporting all students to create a new success story for themselves. Creating small improvement steps in learning and recognizing and celebrating those steps can lead to giant strides in life. SLPs are one avenue to activate the small steps that could achieve big gains over time. Of course, there are other contributing factors, such as: administrators with innovative design mindsets, the culture of the organization, empathetic and appreciative staff and strong connections with families and community. In Monterey County Alternative Education, these elements are being woven together to create a comprehensive solution to the myriad of challenges facing the student population.

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Appendix 1.

Monterey County Community School programs

1. The Silver Star Community School, located at Rancho Cielo in Salinas, is a comprehensive, full-service program offering intensive educational instruction and services designed to improve the health and academic performance of the youth participants. All students are interviewed prior to acceptance and must have a desire to make positive changes in their lives.

2. The Silver Star Center, located within the Silver Star Resource Center in Salinas, collaborates with the Monterey County Office of the District Attorney to provide educational programs and supports for students referred for truancy problems. Students attend classes for two-three hours daily and complete two to four hours of assignments at home.

3. The S.A.F.E. Pathway Program has teamed with community partners – Bob Hoover Academy and Hartnell Community

College – to provide students invaluable life and academic experiences as they train in the field of transportation. Experiential learning opportunities include Robotics, Dispatch, Ground School, Welding and Avionics.

4. iTAP (Innovation Technology Arts Pathway) provides a Media Arts and Technology program for students who are earning their high school diploma but also want to further their education in the Computer Science and Technology fields. iTAP partners with the Media Center for Art, Education and Technology (MCAET).

5. The Salinas and South County Independent Study Programs, located in Salinas, Soledad, Greenfield and King City, provide individualized and small group learning using Common Core curriculum and online coursework. These programs offer personalized learning schedules for students who need to work to supplement the family income, have difficulty getting to and from daily classroom settings, or frequently may be called upon to care for another family member, older or younger.

6. The Adult Education Program, a partner with the Salinas Valley Education Consortium, offers educational opportunities and services to adult learners. The program offers a high school diploma or HiSet preparation and testing. Transition to college and career is provided through career technical education, college entry assistance, and workforce readiness training.

7. Wellington M. Smith Jr. School provides for the educational needs of those youth who are detained in the Monterey County Juvenile Hall. The juvenile hall is a secure detention facility for minors charged with new criminal acts and/or probation charges or violations. Both males and females can be incarcerated at Wellington Smith School at Juvenile Hall where the average length of stay is 20-30 days. These students are typically not yet sentenced and in some stage of the judicial process. The probation staff, behavioral health staff, nursing staff, and the teachers and paraprofessionals collaborate to address the social, physical, behavioral, psychological, emotional and educational needs of these incarcerated minors.

8. The Monterey County Youth Center was opened in 1995 by the Monterey County Probation Department as a long-term placement facility and houses males, typically 9th grade and above with sentences of nine months to one year. It is rare that a 7th or 8th grade student would be in the Youth Center. The Monterey County Office of Education provides the educational component for the youth center. The teachers and support staff work collaboratively with the Monterey County Probation and Mental Health Department personnel in their efforts to support and advance the growth, development, and education of the young people who are sentenced by the juvenile courts.

WHERE IMAGINATION MEETS REALITY: EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO BECOME LIFELONG READERS

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I love to read. I have always loved to read. I still remember the first chapter book I finished on my own: Beverly Cleary's, *Ramona and Her Father*. I remember reading Stephen King's *The Shining* in 6th grade, and although I suffered from horrific nightmares over the next few weeks, I was also elated from the accomplishment of reading an adult book in its entirety at the age of 12. However, my love of reading did not spawn from nothingness. Not surprisingly, I was fortunate enough to grow up in an environment where my parents and teachers not only read to me, but also fostered a culture where I had great books to choose from and was able to cultivate a sense of achievement, success, and intrinsic motivation.

Reading is more than just a hobby or a pastime. A great book, especially if read at the right time in one's life, can change one forever. It opens doors, fosters maturity, enhances knowledge and provides an opportunity to view the world through a different lens. Ultimately, reading is an essential tool if one is to continually obtain knowledge throughout his or her lifespan (Croston). Unfortunately, most students do not have the same viewpoint on books or literacy-based activities. Reading for pleasure, especially among alternative education students, is almost nonexistent, and has created a frightening epidemic ("Reading at risk: The state response to the crisis in adolescent literacy").

Students who only read in school are more likely to have deficiencies in writing, vocabulary, language acquisition, and social-emotional maturity. It's well-established science that reading boosts vocabulary, sharpens reasoning, and expands intellectual horizons (Begley). However, the lack of reading is having a profound effect upon students'

abilities to cultivate empathy and social bonds with others. Having the ability to understand what other people are feeling is critical for building social relationships. "Reading also creates an actual social bond between the reader and characters. Studies have found that fans of any fictional enterprise can feel real grief when a favorite character dies" (Begley).

So, how might we go about inspiring our non-readers to become lifelong readers? When I first began teaching, my mindset supported the vision that in order to engage my students, I simply would create interactive and entertaining lessons wrapped around a classic novel I enjoyed as an adolescent. Much like my teaching predecessors, I believed my adulation for these novels would transfer to my students, thus creating an instantaneous joy for reading. Unfortunately, my students' engagement was

less than I had anticipated, actually their engagement was virtually non-existent. Regardless of my methods, students remained unmotivated to read and viewed it as another dreadful school-based requirement. So, an investigation into my own methodology and schema began and after a long and evidence-based journey three main components were developed to inspire students to become lifelong readers.

I WOULD ARGUE THAT INTRODUCING HIGH INTEREST NOVELS INTO THE CURRICULUM, EVEN IF THE READING LEVEL IS BELOW THEIR GRADE LEVEL, HAS A PROFOUND EFFECT UPON STUDENT LEARNING AND MOTIVATION.

First and arguably the most important aspect to inspire students, is the inclusion of high-interest novels into the curriculum. I think we all fall into the "that's the way I learned" pitfall, which is easy to do. While I enjoyed some of the obligatory standard novels in middle and high school, I also grew up reading and was able to circumnavigate complex text. Had I not had this skill, I would likely have been as unmotivated as our students

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when it came to reading. I feel like we are predisposed or even pressured to introduce classic novels to our student body, but if they are not interested what is the point? I don't know if I have ever had a student who could identify with Nick Caraway's opulent lifestyle. I would argue that introducing high interest novels into the curriculum, even if the reading level is below their grade level, has a more profound effect upon student learning and motivation. As Krashen points out, "reading 'easy' books is not a waste of time; it may be that the 'lighter' reading we are denying readers contains text that could be meaningful and important to the reader". Furthermore, students who read meaningful text become actively engaged and interested in the subject matter (Croston).

Teachers often utilize the Lexile framework to determine appropriate reading materials. Lexile level does in fact have a value in education when utilized in tandem with student interest and age appropriate content. However, as a stand alone criterion, Lexile level can severely limit student choices, engagement, and comprehension of selected text.

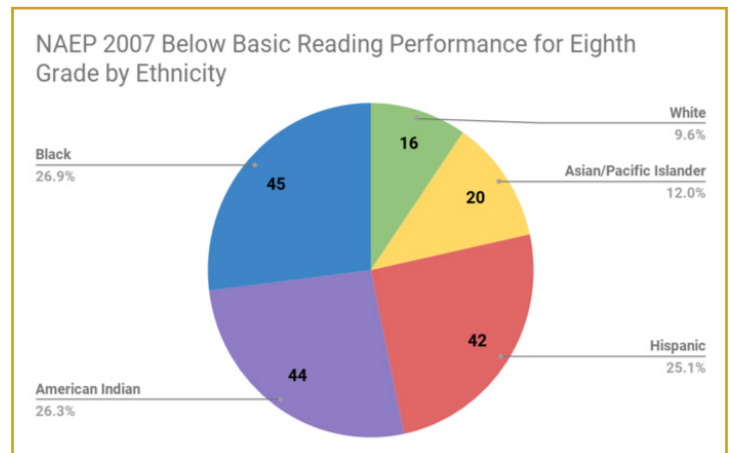
Incorporating current and relevant novels supports student engagement and motivation in reading. Teachers who familiarize themselves with modern novels and use the student's interest and background as a criterion for choosing a book often have a successful and captive classroom. Much like the drawbacks of classic novels, teachers often choose the same books over and over again...let's call this the "*The Outsiders*" effect (Hinton). While *The Outsiders* has value, it happens to be the "go to" in the alternative education setting. The theme may be timeless, but there are vast choices of books for students that incorporate aspects they relate to, especially with the advent of technology and social media.

High Interest Novels

Developing a love for reading, while experiencing empathy for the first time through engaging in a relationship with a fictional novel character may be the first step towards making students life-long readers. Once a spark for reading is ignited, students will have steadfast success in their reading development and education. According to Croston, studies show that being a wide and frequent

reader increases a student's reading achievement by 10-15 percentile points on standardized tests (Guthrie and Alvermann). This is vital across the curriculum, not just in an isolated English classroom. Students who have far below grade level reading tend to struggle in all other core subjects and this correlates with school dropout rates, failure to attend college and ability to find successful employment ("Reading at risk: The state response to the crisis in adolescent literacy")

It is not uncommon for students who enroll in alternative education programs to function below grade level in most academic areas. Similarly, most at-risk students' reading levels are usually below basic. Most of the students in alternative education have endured poverty, trauma, chronic truancy, and/or lack of family guidance, which has directly contributed to their academic decline. According to Balfanz, students from low income, urban areas are reading at three or four grade levels below their expected proficiency. Furthermore, ethnicities often represented in at-risk schools have more than twice the percentage of below basic readings as White and Asian/Pacific Islander ethnicities (Archer). As evidenced from the chart below, this information is not only staggering, but extremely troublesome.



Note: Adapted from The Nation's Report Card: Reading by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2007. (Archer)

Researchers have tried to investigate why these ethnicities are so far behind. According to research, these students struggle with the ability to make text connections, interpret

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passages (“Windows of Opportunity: State Strategies to Close Educational Gaps and Raise Achievement Levels for All Students”) and struggle with word identification, fluency and meaning (Buly and Valencia). There also seems to be a high level of helplessness and passive failure with disenfranchised youth (Johnston and Winograd). While these findings seem discouraging there is hope. According to Archer, these students are capable of reading at an advanced level. However, introducing texts to students that fail to connect to their self-interest, hobbies and background will never elicit the motivation they need in order to progress.

According to Daniel Pink, there are two types of motivations: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is driven by internal rewards, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external forces. For example, grades, paychecks, and trophies are all examples of extrinsic motivation. Conversely, intrinsic motivation is more associated with personal growth or a desire to succeed. When dealing with our students, ultimately the goal is to bolster their intrinsic motivation with regards to reading. Research has found that intrinsic motivation is seen as a more powerful incentive for behaviors that require long-term execution (Deci and Ryan).

What are some methods that can be implemented to create intrinsic motivation in students? Fostering intrinsic motivation can be a daunting task; however, “by focusing on fulfilling fundamental emotional needs, teachers can enhance students’ motivation to learn” (Rogers and Renard). McCombs and Pope view motivation “as an inherent, natural capacity and tendency within the person. To learn and grow it needs to be elicited rather than established” (McCombs and Pope p.15). Creating an environment that supports students in controlling their learning, thinking, and behavior, while fostering an opportunity to express their voice all while providing choices in educational opportunities supports the growth of intrinsic motivation (McCombs). From this some clear patterns emerged. First, student choice and autonomy were cited as important factors for fostering students’ motivation and engagement with reading. Second, simply

providing time for independent reading is immensely important in getting students to see themselves as readers, and therefore become more engaged and motivated to read. Finally, talk around text was found to be paramount to motivating students to engage in independent reading (Mitchell).

Providing access to high-interest reading materials opens the door of opportunity for engagement and increasing literacy. Often the argument from educators is that students must read the grade level classic, but when one is asked “why” the response remains unchanged. “It’s the way it has always been done” or “They need to read the classics.” Just because something has always been practiced in a certain way does not necessarily make it right. Making the argument that the classics are not important may not be valid...they most certainly are, but are they relevant? The books considered to be classics are defined as such because they contain thought provoking socio-ethical situations, allusions, symbolism, rich text and are often challenging. These are indeed valuable criteria, but can they only be met through one avenue? If a student is a low-level reader who lacks the intrinsic motivation to read for personal growth then what’s the point? Is it better for a struggling reader in an alternative setting to read *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne or a current young adult novel students can identify with and enjoy? The choice is simple. While the value in classic literature can be interpreted as timeless for some, it is the educator’s responsibility to create lifelong readers first. Once a student finds enjoyment in reading and develops a sense of pride and confidence, a teacher can then introduce classic literature into the curriculum. As stated by Worthy and McKool, “When students become interested in what is being read, curiosity develops into motivation to read more. Instructional approaches or materials that are motivating, as well as teachers who show interest and enjoyment in the subject of activity, can sometime lead to the development of long-term interest”.

The Limitation of Lexile Levels

When choosing a book, one question often asked in education is, “What is the book’s Lexile level?”

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Unfortunately, this is usually the only question posed. Rarely are educators asked about theme, subject matter or the interest level of the students. Lexile level is simply a “readability formula that assigns a reading level to texts based on word frequency and sentence length” (Krashen). As stand alone criteria for choosing text, this can be dangerous and costly to students.

When I think of Lexile levels, I am reminded of the movie *Dead Poets Society*. When students first meet their poetry teacher (Robin Williams), he has them read an introduction in their textbook titled “Understanding Poetry” by J. Evans Pritchard, where students are instructed to measure each poem on a scale of importance and perfection to find the poem’s ultimate greatness (Weir). Thankfully the teacher has the students rip the page out of their textbooks in response to the unnecessary and pointless mathematical evaluation of poetry. I often feel that same way when it comes to Lexile levels. If we use this as our only criteria for our students’ reading materials, we severely limit their choices. Lexile levels can also be extremely misleading when used as a solitary measure of books’ appropriateness.

When viewing the comparative lexile levels chart below, notice that there are three classic literature books on the list. Based on the argument that was previously presented, which stated teachers should avoid classic novels in favor of high-interest choices, notice the classic novels have a lower Lexile level; therefore, supporting the “idea” that these are “reading level appropriate” novels. While this line of reasoning has clout, choosing books that are well known, i.e., classics, to utilize in standardized curriculum can mislead the nature of Lexile levels. For example, if I wanted an appropriate book for my 3rd grade son, according to this chart, *As I*

Lay Dying by William Faulkner would be a more suitable choice than *Diary of A Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney. Yet, as educators, we understand that this is not only ridiculous, but misleading and even cruel. If I made my son read Faulkner in the 3rd grade he may not speak to me again until the 4th or 5th grade. Conversely, if we use Lexile levels only, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis would be a better choice for middle school students over *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

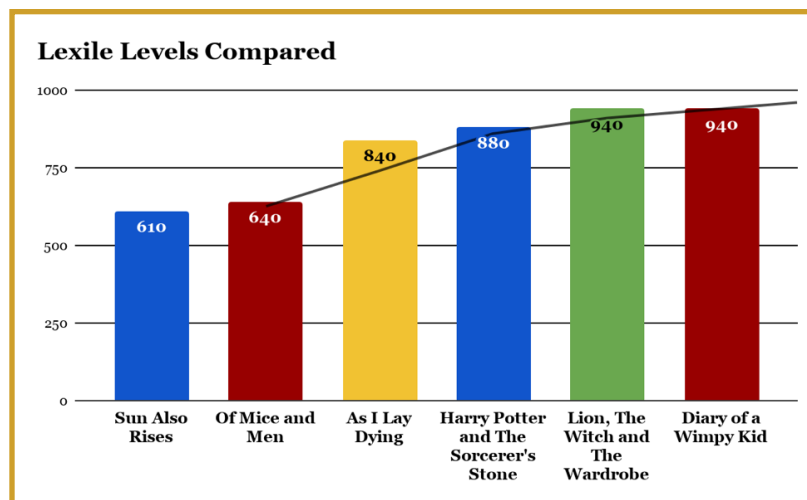
As previously indicated, the interest level of the student is the most important factor when predicting how likely they are to become lifelong readers. With regards to a book’s Lexile level, researchers have found that interest level has a profound effect upon what students read, as well as the complexity of the text, the selection, and comprehension. According to Carter, adolescents “can often understand large sections of books that are ‘too hard’ because of their interest in and knowledge of the topic.” This is supported as well by Schwanenflugel & Flanagan, who found that “when readers have a good bit of prior knowledge on a topic, even difficult texts can be easier to read and

understand because they can draw on their own knowledge to fill in gaps in their comprehension.” Lexile levels have a time and place and should be examined as a resource for complex texts within the curriculum; however, it may be unsuitable as the solitary measure for selecting material to support increasing reading and literacy levels. As evidence

illustrates, lead the students to high interest texts and they will often choose reading material that is at or above their actual grade level (Carter).

Keep Novels Relevant and Give Students Voice and/or Choice

An effective method to keep students motivated and



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interested is the implementation of current and relevant novels into the curriculum and the avoidance of “The Outsider Effect”. Working in alternative education for nearly 20 years many of my students have been in a classroom setting where *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton was part of the designated curriculum. *The Outsiders* is a fine novel with a timeless theme and has a place in the world of literature. However, this book has been taught in the alternative education setting superfluously. Within the last 10 years, several high quality young adult novels have gained interest. Unfortunately, many educators tend to continue to teach the curriculum of yesteryear, due to many factors, i.e. interest, exposure, guidelines, etc. With the advent of technology, social media, and the current political climate, it’s advantageous to incorporate a wide range of novels that better reflect students’ backgrounds and interests.

While there is a plethora of websites dedicated to current and relevant novels for our young readers, the following are some of the best places to start:

- <https://www.teachhub.com/top-12-young-adult-books-reluctant-readers>
- <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklistsawards/booklistsbook>
- <http://www.claspprograms.org/americasaward>
- <https://pnla.org/young-readers-choice-award/>

Another integral component when choosing a novel is the application of student “voice and/or choice” (Reed). From the research of Katie Novak, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has demonstrated the importance of choice within the curriculum, choice in avenues to access the curriculum as well as demonstrate skills. For example, students should be provided the opportunity to access the curriculum in a multitude of learning modalities, i.e., reading book, audio version, watching and listening. Furthermore, students will benefit from a choice of how to demonstrate the skill in the respective area. Reading and access to the curriculum is no different. Literacy experts have a great deal of evidence that giving a child a choice in what they read not only motivates them but allows them to take ownership of their learning (Rich, 2009). So how

might this look in the classroom? Honestly, I feel that it depends on the overall environment and culture of the classroom. There is no “one size fits all.” As long as students have some type of “voice and choice,” even modestly, it will likely enhance student learning and outcomes (Rich, 2009).

Conclusion

As I embarked upon my professional and personal journey of creating lifelong readers in my classroom, I remember trying to find a book that not only would grasp my student’s attention, but also a story in which my students could feel empathy for those they had never met, the chance to “lose themselves” for the first time in a world that they couldn’t possibly experience, unless it was solely in their minds. After much research and thought, I chose the book, *Unwind* by Neil Schusterman, a novel that depicts a dystopian society that challenges the ethics and morals of parents and adolescents alike. I was sure to incorporate UDL, Restorative Practice, and Character Education into my teaching methods to try and reach all students. Would this theory of mine, that students who read high interest novels, actually increase their desire to learn? Two situations answered this question unequivocally.

First, a young man, 16 years old in the alternative education program, who had never actually, self reportedly, finished a novel, not only finished *Unwind* ahead of the teaching schedule, but went on his own and got a library card, so he could check out the sequels. Second, a young cadet in a military program, who was scheduled to go home for the weekend, attempted to “steal” the novel because he couldn’t wait to finish the book. Both students reported being non-readers prior to finding a novel they could not only relate to, but could put themselves in the character’s skin.

As educators, our decisions are largely supported through interpretation of evidence based practices and data. However, one cannot ignore that acknowledging and supporting the interest, voice, and creativity of our youths to help drive educational choice may have substance. Moreover, high interest novels will not only increase literacy and Lexile levels, but also will open their minds to a world where imagination meets reality.

WHERE IMAGINATION MEETS REALITY: EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO BECOME LIFELONG READERS

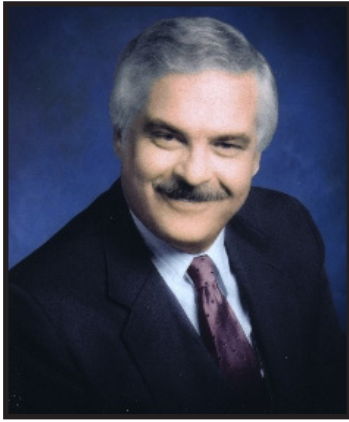
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JOHN PESHKOFF AWARD



John Peshkoff (1935-2006) was one of the founding fathers of JCCASAC (then known as Juvenile Court School Administrators of California). John served as the JCCASAC president in 1977-78 and again in 1990-91.

He advocated for legislation and practices which support quality educational services for students in alternative education programs. He also served as a mentor, friend, and cheerleader to his peers and colleagues in the field.

The John Peshkoff Award is presented annually for memorable vision, service, leadership and commitment to JCCASAC students and programs.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2019 RECIPIENT

TELKA WALSER

STANISLAUS COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

I am humbled and honored to be selected as the 2019 Peshkoff Award recipient. I remember my first JCCASAC conference in 2004 when I listened to Bob Michaels and a few others share who John Peshkoff was and what he did for county run Alternative Education programs in the state of California. I feel fortunate to know most of those who have received this honor in the past and am thankful to have worked alongside them and to have learned from their experiences.

I started my educational adventure in the comprehensive world and after moving from teacher, coach, and Activities Director, to Dean of Students, to Vice Principal, to Principal and having my one and only child I was ready for a new challenge. In 2003, I accepted a position at the San Joaquin County Office of Education ONE™ program. My learning curve there was STEEP. I learned so very much...about team work, about court schools, about Ed Code and about the larger world of county-run programs where children were being served academically and emotionally by some of the MOST dedicated and driven people I know. Most importantly I learned that I loved working in the court and community school world and that I was home.

One of the best suggestions I was gently given that first year was to run for a

JCCASAC Board position. I joined the Board as a Northern Section Member at Large and I didn't leave the Board for 14 years, Through a move to a new COE, job changes, Superintendent changes and the advent of the LCAP it is the most rewarding professional experience I have enjoyed. I've met creative and hilarious educators from county offices who work with the same students and programs, in counties across the state, some larger, some smaller, urban, rural and everywhere in between. In meetings, conferences, mini-conferences, and visits, we all shared and learned and questioned and worked to make our programs the best places for some of the most disenfranchised students in our communities.

I want to acknowledge and express my appreciation for the passion, compassion, energy, support and drive demonstrated by each of the JCCASAC Board members who I was fortunate to serve with over time. I thank my own county colleagues who are there with me, every step of the way as we do the day to day work for our students in Stanislaus County. I also am very thankful for the support of my husband and son along this wonderful and wild ride !

I gratefully and proudly accept the John Peshkoff Award. THANK YOU!



HONORING JCCASAC PAST PRESIDENTS

1970-71 Don Purdy Santa Clara	1983-84 Ken Kammuller Marin	1995-96 Claudette Inge Alameda	2007-2008 Peter Kostas Mendocino
1971-72 Chuck Lee San Diego	1984-85 Wayne Toscas Santa Barbara	1996-97 Ken Taylor Kern	2008-2009 Mary Lou Vachet Orange
1972-73 Doug Booth San Mateo	1985-86 Greg Almand Contra Costa	1997-98 Mick Founts San Joaquin	2009-2010 Mary Bell Sacramento
1973-74 Joe De Mello Contra Costa	1986-87 Hedy Kirsh Orange	1998-99 Dolores Redwine San Diego	2010-2011 Sean Morrill San Diego
1974-75 Marshall Lomax Los Angeles	1987-88 Shirl Schmidt Shasta	1999-00 Vic Trucco Sonoma	2011-2012 Janine Cuaresma San Joaquin
1975-76 John Hull Sacramento	1988-89 Chuck Lee San Diego	2000-01 Janet Addo Los Angeles	2012-2013 Deni Baughn Orange
1976-77 Rocco Nobile San Diego	1989-90 William Burns San Mateo	2001-02 Michael Watkins Santa Cruz	2013-2014 Gary Vincent Monterey
1977-78 John Peshkoff Santa Clara	1990-91 John Peshkoff Orange	2002-03 Jeanne Hughes Kern	2014-2015 Monalisa Vitela Imperial
1978-79 Jerry Matney Orange	1991-92 Orene Hopkins Contra Costa	2003-04 Jacqueline Flowers San Joaquin	2015-2016 Telka Walser Stanislaus
1979-80 Miltie Couteur Butte	1992-93 John Stankovich Kings	2004-05 Jeanne Dukes San Luis Obispo	2016-2017 Christian Shannon Kern
1980-81 Marty Familletti Riverside	1993-94 Bob Michels Santa Clara	2005-06 Paula Mitchell Santa Clara	2017-2018 Wendy Frink San Joaquin
1981-82 Joe De Mello Contra Costa	1994-95 Larry Springer Los Angeles	2006-2007 Maruta Gardner San Diego	2018-2019 Katy Ramezani Orange
1982-83 Roy Savage Riverside			



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2018- 2019 JCCASAC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

ABOUT THE JCCASAC SCHOLARSHIP:

Twice a year, the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California (JCCASAC) offers scholarships to Court and Community School graduates who will be attending college or have passed the GED within the 2018-19 school year. The scholarship is intended to pay for tuition and/or books up to \$500. Two scholarships will be awarded in the southern section and two in the northern section this January. Each county may submit two applications per semester (for a total of four in a year).

Congratulations to Our Scholarship Winners!

Deandre Gantt
San Francisco County

Angelica Rubio
San Diego County

Andrea Vazquez
San Diego County

Destinee Rodriguez
Stanislaus County

Marissa Sandoval
San Joaquin County

Janet Alvarez
San Diego County

Silvestre Viga
Kern County

Marisol Ybarra
San Joaquin County



SPSSC

Student Programs and Services
Steering Committee

*Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School
Administrators of California (JCCASAC)*

JCCASAC Teacher of the Year

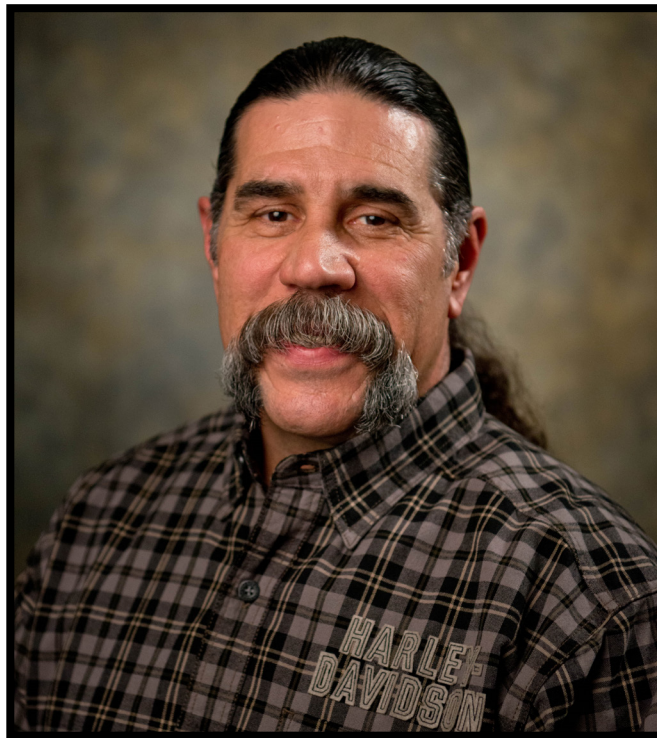
JCCASAC board members are excited to announce the fifth annual JCCASAC Teacher of the Year award recipient and nominees. County operated school administrators from across California were encouraged to nominate one of their outstanding court, community or alternative school teachers for this extraordinary recognition. JCCASAC seeks to celebrate excellence and honor teachers who are exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and inspire students of all backgrounds and learning abilities while carrying out the mission and vision of JCCASAC. These teachers are passionate, collaborative professionals dedicated to empowering students to become competent, creative thinking and caring adults who lead healthy lifestyles and are academically prepared for an ever changing and global economy.

CONGRATULATIONS TO GREG BARRAGAN FRESNO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Mr. Greg Barragan is from Fresno County Office of Education where he teaches welding. To date, Greg has been able to guide 51 of his students to gainful employment in the welding industry. Greg loves to tell stories about the previous young adults he has worked with and about the successes they have achieved. His success rate can be attributed to relationship building with his students, as well as with colleagues, campus agencies, and community industry sectors. Additionally, Greg puts in a lot of extra effort canvassing the community to garner commitments of support

for his program, so he will be able to continue his passion.

Many former students still keep in touch with Greg, as he has earned a safeguarded spot in their lives. He continues



to mentor those that have come through his door, building each one of them up to meet their potential. "Are you ready now?" Greg asks when preparing a pathway for a student that needs another chance at getting back on track.

When asked what is most enjoyable about his job, he has simply said, "Changing lives."

JCCASAC Teacher of the Year-Nominees

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES.



Kathleen Dennis, San Joaquin COE

Ms. Kathleen Dennis is from San Joaquin County Office of Education, and she is an exemplary teacher who is dedicated to the growth and development of her students. She currently teaches garden biology, integrated science, and college and career readiness at San Joaquin Building Futures Academy as well as a Project Based Learning course for intern teachers at Teachers College of San Joaquin. Ms. Kat is both loved and respected by both her students and her colleagues, serving not only as an inspiring teacher but also as a teammate, collaborator and leader.



Ellen De La Cruz, San Diego COE

Ellen De La Cruz has been a Juvenile Court & Community School teacher for more than 21 years in a variety of settings. She helped start the Trauma Response Unit (TRU) in 2016 at SOAR Academy Kearny Mesa. The TRU Unit is a collaboration between educators, counselors, and probation staff in an effort to support youth that are experiencing high levels of stress due to trauma; many of the youth are both delinquency and dependency youth. TRU provides engaging, culturally responsive, and therapeutic learning experiences. She believes that kids in the TRU unit can work their way out of the Juvenile Justice System.



Gail Hume-Nivette, OCDE

Ms. Gail Hume-Nivette began her career 21 years ago working with adjudicated youth. She has taught contract learning in the community with students who were truant, expelled, on probation, or teen parents. Now she works with young adults who dropped out and have returned to get their diploma. She really enjoys the one-to-one alternative setting where she can focus on each student's individual needs more effectively.

JCCASAC Teacher of the Year-Nominees



Barbara Kennison, LACOE

Ms. Barbara Kennison is a teacher at Central Juvenile Hall where she teaches special education students in a special day classroom setting. Respected and loved by both her students and colleagues, Ms. Kennison displays knowledge, tenacity, resilience, motivation, persistence, and a strong work ethic daily. She is always willing to go above and beyond taking ownership and advocating for her students, while maintaining a positive attitude that is a much-needed asset to the school's climate and culture.



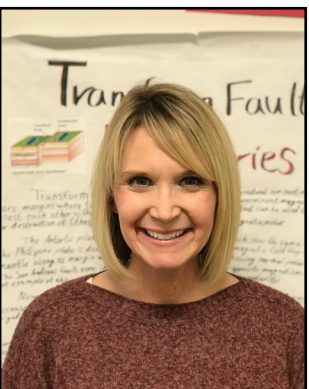
Jeffrey Brent Rodriguez, Stanislaus COE

Mr. Brent Rodriguez is from Stanislaus County Office of Education, where he brings energy, consistency, and an unfailing determination to succeed in his culinary arts classes. Upon entering Brent's classroom, visitors are struck by the level of teamwork and creative energy demonstrated by his students. Brent is a professional of the highest caliber, and he has a genuine understanding and sensitivity to his students and their needs.



Adam Sanchez, Kern County

Mr. Adam Sanchez is from Kern County Superintendent of Schools where he is considered a valuable member of the community school staff. His work ethic and his ability to connect with students and staff has helped him to become an emergent leader that others look to for support. His passion in working with students is evident through the effort and time he spends in developing high quality and meaningful lessons. Additionally, he goes above and beyond during the holidays, spending extra time teaching students Christmas carols and engaging in community events with parents.



Meredith Tanaka, Placer COE

Ms. Meredith Tanaka is from Placer County Office of Education, where she is a teacher at the middle and high school charter called, *Pathways iCARE*. Meredith models kindness in the classroom while maintaining high expectations. She has created an environment where students are proud to share and post their work.

When you walk through the halls at the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility in San Diego, you may hear the sound of drilling and the smell of freshly cut lumber. This is because of the projects being made in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program that started in the fall of 2017. With the collaboration of San Diego County Probation Department and the San Diego County Office of Education, students now have the opportunity to work with construction materials and tools. The items students use daily in the program, would have been considered too dangerous for a juvenile correctional facility in the recent past. The shift in thinking comes from an understanding that students need real-life skills and opportunities that will better prepare them for the future.



Alex Long is the CTE instructor at East Mesa and teaches an 8-week Building and Construction Course. Students must fill out an application and interview before starting the program. The school staff and probation work together and talk with each student interested in the program before deciding who will be enrolled. As Alex states, "I let the students know it will be like being on a job site. I'm your employer and you are my employees." The course begins with the first week of orientation and a crash course in what Alex refers to as the "soft skills." Students discuss what it means to be professional and the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately. "That means absolutely no cussing and no horseplay," states instructor Alex.

Mesa and teaches an 8-week Building and fill out an application and interview before and probation work together and talk with before deciding who will be enrolled. As will be like being on a job site. I'm your The course begins with the first week of Alex refers to as the "soft skills." Students

Beginning the second week, students start to learn how to safely use the equipment and practice on a series of activities that allows them to gain confidence in using each tool. Students learn a variety of "hard skills" such as, how to solder copper piping using a torch, make accurate cuts with a table saw and how to drill, to name a few. During the 8-week course, students will plan, design and build their own project and the program ends with students sharing what they learned at a "Celebration of Learning" exhibition. Teaching staff, probation, and parents all show up for the exhibition. "It is really rewarding to share what I have been working on and to see my parents here, gives me a lot of pride," says one student.

Over the last few years, Career and Technical Education has become one of the priorities for San Diego Juvenile Court and Community Schools. East Mesa additionally has a Horticulture course and will soon be starting a Culinary class. "The Building and Construction course was the first CTE program. It was so successful, we had to get more opportunities for students," Students that choose to participate in improvement in overall attitude and have to maintain their behavior and be students have been excused from the due to fighting.



Over the last two years, each cohort Students have a voice in the decision-what to build. "I don't choose what they decision for themselves. It is part of the in that process," states Alex. The past chairs, kitchen sink units with working designs and tiled coffee tables. The speakers from the construction workforce where they discuss what skills and personality traits they look for in a new hire. Students also go on field trips to local construction businesses, where they learn about the hiring process. Instructor Alex states, "By the end of the 8-weeks, students will have learned the basic necessary skills to go out and begin a career in construction and potentially join the workforce."

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8-week program exposes students to guest of students has built something different. making process and will ultimately decide are going to build, students have to make that learning process and I'm here only to assist cohorts of students have made Adirondack garbage disposals, standing lenticular photo

THE SECOND CHANCE LAB: A BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION CLASSROOM

BY: RYAN MURRY

KERN COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Murry is a community school administrator working with the Kern County Office of Education. He is involved in MTSS, Boys Council, technology and PBIS at his sites.

The community school program continues to review and implement best practices to support the most challenging and fragile students in the communities they serve. Some community school students still struggle and are in need of additional tiers of intervention in order to be successful. One community school has added The Second Chance Lab to the list of available interventions, which utilizes a modern approach for academics and social emotional success.

The Second Chance Lab is a self-contained classroom for students who have not been unsuccessful in the community school classroom rotation environment. Instead of dropping a student or moving them to a different program or school, the student is transferred to The Second Chance Lab. The purpose of the lab is to encourage students to learn from the mistakes that brought them to the lab in the first place and to help them avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Students may return to the classroom rotation after they have met certain requirements: students must remain in the lab for a minimum of ten days of attendance, students must earn a minimum of 70% on their assignments, students must complete the social and emotional goals assigned to them.

The Second Chance Lab utilizes the online learning program, Odysseyware, for instruction. Students are able to wear headphones and, if they choose to, listen to their lessons as they follow along, which decreases distractions and helps support struggling readers. The self-contained classroom is staffed by a credentialed teacher and a paraprofessional who support students socially, emotionally, and academically, and ensures students are assigned classes to meet graduation requirements. Students who have an IEP are able to complete their general education minutes while in the lab but continue to rotate out to the Learning Centers for their special education instructional time.

The social, emotional component of The Second Chance Lab is paramount to supporting student success when he or she returns to the regular classroom rotation. Students are assigned modules in the BASE Education Program to help them think about the negative behaviors and consequences they have been engaged in and change those behaviors in order to positively meet their goals.

Students arrive in The Second Chance Lab for a variety of reasons including drug possession, defiance, truancy, fighting and classroom disruptions, and after other means of correction have failed. Students are assigned BASE Education modules to target the behaviors they are trying to change. In addition to the BASE Education Modules, students are referred to substance abuse counselors, social workers, AmeriCorps mentors, and therapists as needed. The lab is aligned with the school-wide PBIS program and students receive encouragement and incentives aligned with their peers in the classroom rotation.

A parent, student, and administrator conference is held prior to entry into the lab, where lab requirements and behaviors are clearly discussed and a contract is signed by all three parties. Once a student completes the requirements of the contract, another meeting takes place with the administrator before the student is returned to the classroom rotation.

The lab was implemented in September 2018 and has continued for spring semester due to its effectiveness in supporting student success. Since the lab's implementation, the following results have been tracked:

- 65 students have attended the lab
- 550 Base Education modules have been completed (approximately 8 modules per student)
- Only 5 students had to return to the lab due to ongoing behavior issues
- Students earned a minimum of 3 credits in the lab, but many students have earned 7-8 credits

The Second Chance Lab's success is also attributed to the teacher and the paraprofessional in the classroom: they have gone to great lengths to place PBIS reminders and requirements for exiting the lab on the classroom walls.

The community school education team continues to improve the lab in order to meet the needs of all eligible students. The lab, like all interventions, is not the end-all for student behaviors, but it does allow students time to reflect on their previous actions while earning high school credits in a calm environment.

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

BY: DAVID DIEHL

About The Author

David Diehl is a retired Police Sergeant and is currently a Vice Principal for a Model Continuation High School in California. He is a former court school educator and has worked extensively with gang and system-involved youth. He is a Doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy at Pepperdine University who holds a M.S. in Administration, a M.S. in Human Resource Management, and a B.S. in Organizational Behavior.

His Doctoral research and personal passion involve identifying elementary school barriers that may potentially disengage marginalized youth who are street socialized and are at-risk for gang affiliation. His passion and current Doctoral research have been inspired by the 22 former students he lost to gang related homicides and many others who were tried as adults during the 5 year span while teaching in Juvenile Hall. Virtually every student he encountered explained that school alienation was a factor in becoming gang affiliated. He has a strong desire to educate others, especially teachers and school administrators, about the need for cultural competence and the ability to understand street socialized youth during their elementary school years. Exclusionary practices create a cumulative negative impact that can lead to school alienation, dropout, and eventual juvenile incarceration, which appreciably increases a youth's chance of becoming incarcerated as an adult.

His unique combination of 25 years experience as a police officer, a middle school teacher, a court school teacher, and a VP of an Alternative High School, provides a perspective that can elucidate those who work with youth who emanate from low socio-economic environments and marginalized communities prone to violence.

Introduction

The need for a caring school culture that promotes a sense of connectedness and belonging is essential and must begin the day a child begins their educational experience. Yet, for those of us who work in alternative education environment, we often hear the all too common story of a school experience that didn't meet the students needs. Meeting the needs of a student is a broad connotation that can vary considerably depending on the school setting and the student describing the experience. However, when students experience a sense of belonging to their school environment, the possibility for future success increases. As a students begin their educational trajectory, especially those minority students who emanate form underserved communities, they are likely to come into contact with less experienced teachers who have come from culturally and economically incongruent backgrounds. Furthermore, their value systems, ingrained during their own upbringing, can create responses to behavior wherein street socialized youth are unnecessarily disengaged from the classroom community.

To complicate matters, our educational system has experienced school massacres, appalling dropout rates,

and significant racial inequities. Consequently, various measures have been taken to rectify these issues and provide safeguards for our students' safety. One of these safeguards was the institution of a zero tolerance policy. Initially, this policy was specifically designed to address the possession of a weapon by a student and mandate unequivocal consequences in the form of an expulsion; however, that policy began to morph into a much broader interpretation of what was acceptable in many school districts (Devoe, Kaufman, Miller, Noonan, & Baum, 2004). As a result, the use of negative consequences, removal from the classroom, suspension, and expulsion, have increased significantly causing students to become excluded, disengaged, and unfairly labeled (Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). Moreover, as the financial resources of school districts dwindled and classroom sizes increased, teachers did not possess the classroom management skills necessary to handle many of the students they were tasked to instruct, leading to the disparate levy of negative disciplinary consequences to minority students (Vavrus and Cole, 2002). Suspensions and removal from the school became common consequences for students who were accused of the quite subjective offenses of defiance, disrespect, or insubordination. Black and Latino students

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were suspended at a much more frequent rate than their White peers (Martinez, 2009). The exclusion form of discipline compounds the ongoing disengagement that has plagued many of our schools, resulting in poor attendance, behavior problems, dejected students, juvenile delinquency.

Disengagement

Becoming disconnected from the school environment can have long-term, negative effects on a student (Cramer, E. D., Gonzalez, L., & Pellegrini-Lafont, C., 2014). The dropout phenomenon and the decision to leave school necessitates being examined through the student's life course. School detachment and the relationship to delinquency and eventual dropout have proven to become evident in the elementary grade levels (Wehlage, and Rutter 1985; Alexander, Entwisle and Kabbani, 2001). The themes that have consistently been identified are lack of attendance, poor behavior, and low socioeconomic status (Dembo, Wareham, Poythress, Meyers, Cook & Schmeidler, 2007). These factors begin to place the students in formal or informal groups that can have an accumulative disengaging effect. However, it is important to reiterate, indicators of school disengagement can be detected as early as the beginning of first grade, and according to Wehlage & Rutter (1985), it is the behaviors that are most apparent, not attitudes, which become evident in the later in the scholastic life course. Despite hurdles that lacking a diploma can pose, the social and emotional effect of being alienated from an institution that is designed to nurture, protect, and educate, can be troublesome. Ironically, 68 % of incarcerated inmates in the United States are high school dropouts. Leaving school without obtaining a diploma constitutes dropping out of school, an obvious and intentional form of detachment. Dropping out of school is a process that occurs over time and is the culmination of many events and circumstances that can lead to the eventual withdrawal from school (Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbani, 2001). Departure from the school system occurs over 5000 times a day in the United States & approximately 50,000 times a year in the State of California (Dataquest, 2015). In 2015, Hispanic students in California accounted for 34% of the dropouts,

representing the largest ethnic group to depart from school without a diploma. White students accounted for approximately 7% within this same year (Dataquest, 2015).

During the course of a child's schooling their level of disengagement can become more evident and apparent. Early indicators of disinterest or non-participation become early predictors of future engagement levels and this disinterest can become evident in the beginning of elementary school (Finn, 1989; Croninger and Lee, 2001; Finn and Cox, 1992). There is a growing body of research which suggests that early disinterest is indicative of future disengagement, increasing the chances of dropping out of high school. The literature also supports the notion that low levels of engagement become more evident during the transition to middle school. Balfanz, Herzog & MacIver, suggest that middle school may be the last chance at redirecting a failing student's path who is at risk for leaving school prior to fulfilling graduation requirements (2007). Not surprisingly, students report increased alienation in the educational environment once in middle school. Several factors may influence this notion, such as the transition to adolescence, leaving an environment where they had a single teacher throughout the day, or higher academic and behavioral expectations at the middle school level. Moreover, the onset of adolescence becomes a crucial time as students face decisions about who they are and who they will become (Eccles, et al., 1993). However, factors that may lead to increased disconnection in middle school, such as low grades and substandard achievement, may be linked to the student's negative relationships with teachers in elementary school (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). The bifurcation that occurs in the middle school transition is the time that juveniles are most like to seek affiliation with a gang (Pyrooz and Sweeten, 2015) and is the same age that clear signs of disengagement and predictors of dropping out of school can be observed (O'Connor, Dearing, & Collins, 2011). Factors which naturally place a student in a higher risk category increase the propensity for police contact. Furthermore, Eccles and Midgley maintain that scholastic motivation and the positive perception of school diminishes significantly in middle school (Eccles, et al., 1993). Detachment from school in the middle years

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can be more problematic for students who reside in lower socio-economic environments. In a longitudinal analysis, spanning eight years and following 13,000 high poverty, urban students from Philadelphia, Balfanz, Herzog & Mac Iver concluded that strong disengagement and dropout predictors can be recognized in Middle School (2007). These researchers concluded that 60% of the students would ultimately fail to graduate based on the following high yield predictors: poor attendance, receiving a poor final behavior grade, or failing math or English in sixth grade.

The reasons for disengagement are complex and can involve a multitude of factors; however, a constant within this broad area of student disengagement is the presence of a teacher within the student's life. The predictors of disengagement and potential school detachment can become easier to identify once students have reached middle school (Eccles and Midgley, 1989), at which time it is believed that the chance of re-engagement diminishes (Skinner and Belmont, 1993). Therefore, examining the elementary school experience and the influence a teacher has on a student's level of connectedness to the school is worth investigating (Murdock, 1999). The necessity to have a strong social emotional foundation and sense of connectedness with the school environment becomes increasingly essential at this juncture in the student's life. Those who display early behaviors that are deemed potential precursors, require effective, early intervention (Dembo, et al., 2007).

Cultural Competence

Inevitably, along a student's educational path, they will encounter teachers with differing cultural backgrounds, personalities, value systems, and dispositions (Coopersmith, 2009). As the student population becomes increasingly diverse, the pool of teachers is comprised of predominantly white female teachers from middle-class backgrounds (Major and Brock, 2003). Within the United States, public schools typically reflect white middle class values (Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2008). Though this perspective, behavior is interpreted through this through this paradigm, often times causing white middle class values to be the guiding light within the classroom community of a predominantly Latino and African American student body (Klingner,

Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion, Tate, Duran & Riley 2005). In California alone, 70% of public school teachers are white (ed-data.org., 2017). Based on these statistics, the majority of students from marginalized communities will not be matched with a teacher who possesses similar experiences and cultural attributes. Once the student enters the classroom, they bring their unique blend of culture, values, and personality which is being shaped as they age and progress through school. A student whose background mimics that of their teacher may seemingly be able to relate better to the teacher and share similar views of the quality of their relationship (Murray and Zvoch, 2011; Warikoo, 2004). Understanding the student's cultural experiences and their socialization is crucial. Since it is predicted that the teaching population will continue to remain homogenous and the student population will become increasingly diverse, teacher preparation programs and in-service training should include increasing teachers' capacities in developing intercultural understandings. (Warikoo, 2004). Connections beyond the classroom become vital when building relationships and increasing engagement. Since the family is an integral part of many minority students' lives, developing strong lines of communication and encouraging participation is essential.

According to Terrell and Lindsey (2008), teachers and students tend to treat each other differently because they have lived different life experiences. Through this capacity building in cultural proficiency, it would be a significant step



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in the right direction if the school could empower low-income and minority families to become the advocates and sources of information at the school site. Therefore, in order to address the various factors that lead to overt or passive withdrawal from the school environment, it is necessary to explore strategies that can increase sustainable school connectedness for students beginning in elementary school. Initiating and maintaining school connectedness through the individual teacher may address a plethora of troubling issues, such as juvenile delinquency, gang affiliation, criminal justice involvement, and the inability to complete high school. Moreover, since it is predicted that the teaching population will continue to remain homogenous and the student population will become increasingly diverse, teacher preparation programs and in-service training should include consider increasing teachers' capacities in developing intercultural understandings and developing sustainable relationships with the students families (Warikoo, 2004). Providing education and the school system resources to increase their cultural awareness, adopt culturally proficient classroom management strategies, and create a schoolwide philosophy of inclusion for all students, is crucial in developing an environment that can embrace diversity.

Teacher Relationships

The power of the positive student-teacher relationship is immense (Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). When a student possesses the perception of a strong teacher-student relationship, this becomes an exceedingly significant factor that increases engagement as the student progresses through their educational life (Ainsworth, 1979; Jennings and Greenberg, 2009); (Feil, et al., 2009); Kennedy (2011). This interpersonal connection can become the tether which binds the student with the school environment. Therefore, the preventive strength that the relationship component retains, is epoch-making. A wealth of literature supports the importance of the relationship a student has with their teacher (Wentzel, 1997; Baker 1999; Furrer and Skinner, 1993, Skinner and Belmont, Noddings, 2002; Murray, C., & Zvoch, K., 2011). The connection between the student-teacher

relationship and student engagement is noteworthy based on the numerous reasons cited for student withdrawal and detachment. Interestingly, a primary reason cited by surveyed dropouts for leaving school is that they did not feel they had a meaningful relationship with one or more teachers (Cassidy and Bates (2005); Fine (1986); Wehlage and Rutter,1986).

The research is abundant in the discussion of how the teacher-student relationship is manifested and the type of effect it has on a student's trajectory as they navigate their childhood and educational paths (Baker, 1999; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early and Barbarin , 2005; Skinner and Belmont, 1993; Wentzel, 1997). The importance of developing a relationship appears to be a logical opinion; however, the manner in which a relationship efficaciously evolves can be difficult to define. Strategies to connect with students may differ substantially based on many variables. Therefore, developing an understanding for the student one teaches, and the most effective manner in which to connect with the student becomes crucial. Many public schools value systems are reflective of the white middle class culture, (Patterson, Hale & Stessman, 2008), and behavioral expectations are implemented through this template. However, students with culturally diverse backgrounds, who reside in marginalized communities, often have incongruent perceptions of acceptable behavior (Klingner, Artiles, Kozleski, Harry, Zion , Tate, Duran & Riley, 2005). There is plethora of research on culturally relevant pedagogy to increase academic engagement within our diverse educational environment. Nevertheless, efforts to understand students, where they live, their values, and manner in which they are being socialized, is lacking.

The belief in developing strong relationships is seemingly dependent on the teacher being able to cultivate this important bond. Moreover, there is a body of research that posits the idea in which a student's level of interest, or ability to engage, can either positively or negatively impact the relationship. Interestingly, the child's disposition, which is beyond their control at a young

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age, can potentially create a wedge in the student-teacher relationship. Unfortunately, if the student perceives that the teacher is less than caring, the student's engagement is negatively affected, as are their communication skills (Skinner and Belmont 1993; Baker, 1999; Murray and Zvoch, 2011). An aggravating component to the complexity of the student-teacher relationship is that students who exhibit externalizing negative behaviors, and arguably need the strongest relationships, tend to alienate the teacher through their behavior (Murray and Zvoch 2011). To compound matters, teachers who lack the requisite classroom management skill have a tendency to address off task behavior by utilizing punitive classroom management tactics, as opposed to instructional strategies (Lane, Wehby & Cooley, 2006). Moreover, teachers will display a more positive disposition when a student has higher behavioral engagement. Conversely, students with lower behavioral engagement may be treated in a negative manner, causing a behavioral downward spiral. Therefore, students who are inherently engaged at a higher level are treated better and those who are not. Consequently, the disengaged student may continue to be treated less approvingly (Skinner and Belmont, 1993; Baker, 1999). The affirmation that a more engaged and cheerful student receives only enhances their esteem (Skinner and Belmont 1993; Furrer and Skinner, 1993; Baker, 1999). A significant impact on a student's perception of the teacher is correlated to the teacher's involvement with the student. Moreover, when a teacher believes that they have a mode of positive communication with the student, it improves the student's ability to self-regulate their learning (Ryan and Patrick, 2001; Skinner and Belmont 1993; Wentzel, 1997). The engaged student who possesses more a higher level of socially acceptable characteristics, continues to reap the praises, thereby increasing their position of engagement and status within the classroom. Within this structure, the student who is less affable or exhibits difficulty in commuting in a manner that is considered acceptable to the teacher, is only pushed out of the inner circle that is being subconsciously created by the teacher (Voisin, et al., 2006; Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Ladd- Birch & Buhs, 1999). Studies have shown that antisocial and aggressive behavior can be related to poor student teacher

relationship (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early & Barbarin, 2005).

Characteristics that are out of the control of the student, such as their gender (Ewing and Taylor, 2009), economic status, (Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early and Barbarin 2005; Rudasill, 2011) and learning differences have also been found to affect the quality of their relationship with the teacher. Studies have shown that students who were emanated from low-income households or received special services, had tenuous teacher relationships in 4th, 5th, & 6th grades (Rudasill, et al., 2010) Pianta, Howes, Burchinal, Bryant, Clifford, Early & Barbarin, 2005). Furthermore, according to Immordino, Yang and Damasio, an emotional connection is needed for students to learn (2007). Teachers must first connect emotionally to maximize a student's ability to learn. A growing number of students entering school have experienced some form of trauma or experience that has rendered them less able to assimilate into the school environment. Teachers who have a better understanding of how trauma can impact their students will be more likely to connect and empathize with their children. Kennedy postulates that students who have previously failed or experienced trauma will perform better in environments where there is a trusting relationship with the teacher (2011). Comparatively, students whose families had higher income levels and received no special services were likely to have close relationships; however, teacher student relationships that were mutually strong could mediate these negative factors (Rudasill, et al., 2010). Invariably, as the student transitions through the grades, the experiences with their teacher may have shaped whether or not their connection with the educational environment has increased or decreased (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). Although a student's sense of connection and opinion of their relationships with their teacher can change, trust has been shown to be mediating factor in a student's engagement and approval of their educational environment (Kennedy, 2011). The importance of positive and supportive relationships with teachers is a critical component in forging authentic connections with

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students. These delicate relationships, if intentionally developed, will result in students' perceptions of trust and safety (Ainsworth, 1979; Feil, Walker, Severson, Golly, Seeley & Small, 2009; Kennedy, 2011).

Summary

Strong, culturally competent teacher relationships lay the foundation for a school culture that can significantly improve a student's perception of attending school and increase the level of success which can transcend beyond the school site. The enhanced perception of the school experiences can manifest itself in improved academic achievement, attendance, and a reduction in behavior issues. It is worthy to note that the manner in which exclusion occurs can be subtle or overt; regardless, it can play an important role in student disengagement, which lays the foundation for a student to seek acceptance and affirmation from a alternative, an often negative source. Although there is overwhelming research which elucidates the importance of implementing interventions and establishing strategies to improve attachment to the school environment prior to 6th grade, it is not always successful, or feasible. To ameliorate school engagement and conduct appropriate interventions, a focus on cultural competence, classroom management strategies, teacher behavior, and methods to enhance engagement is essential.

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THE HISTORY OF JCCASAC

BY BOB MICHELS, PAST PRESIDENT

WITH THANKS TO KEN TAYLOR AND JEANNE HUGHES

Before we can discuss JCCASAC, it is important to discuss the history of Court and Community Schools in California. Fifty years ago the responsibility for operating court schools in county operated detention facilities was that of the California Youth Authority, today known as the California Division of Juvenile Justice, a division of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Generally, CYA would assign the responsibility to the probation department, who generally contracted with the local district or districts. The educational services that would result were often fragmented, lacked a focus on the unique needs of the court school student population, and often became a simple extension of a nearby K-12 school program. A common result was an educational program that was generally substandard and often forgotten. At best, students received a satisfactory education. At worst, students received little or no education and the education they did receive was unsatisfactory.

There were a number of counties that had developed strong working relationships between the county probation department and county office of education relative the education of incarcerated youth. As early as 1971 and 1972, legislation was introduced to shift the educational responsibility of students housed in county operated detention facilities from the California Youth Authority to the County Board of Education. These early efforts by the Santa Clara County Office of Education failed. In 1976, a bill was introduced and passed that shifted the responsibility from CYA to the County Board of Education. Court schools were the first mandated instructional programs that were the responsibility of the County Board of Education.

County Offices of Education (COE) were now able to hire their own teachers for court schools and provide appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of the students. The COE operated programs were in juvenile halls and ranches and group homes and day centers.

The creation of community schools was much easier. Fifty years ago, the status offender (W&I Code 601) who was a runaway, a truant, or out of control was commonly locked up and served through the educational programs within the juvenile detention facilities. Assembly Bill

3121 (1975) decriminalized these status offenses for juveniles and changed the entire structure of the juvenile justice system. When the law was changed to eliminate the use of detention as a tool for dealing with the status offender, there was an immediate need to serve this population. One answer was the requirement that each county establish nonsecure crisis resolution centers for these students. Another answer appeared in the form of legislation that Los Angeles and Santa Clara Counties were instrumental in getting introduced in 1976 that was known as the Community Schools Bill.

The organization that is now known as JCCASAC (Juvenile Court and Community Alternative School Administrators of California) was founded in 1969 as JCSAC (Juvenile Court School Administrators of California). The organization began as a group of professionals with a common interest that was instrumental in the development of the early court school programs. Its first major success as an organization was seen in 1976-1977 when it supported the efforts of key Northern and Southern California counties in the passage of legislation establishing court and community schools. With each passing year, the organization matured and took on new dimensions. It was not until the late 1980s that the organization changed its name to JCCASAC and included "Community" schools in its title.

What was once a stand-alone organization operated by JCCASAC administrators now works as a sub-committee of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Organization (CCSESA).



TEACHER AGENCY AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BEHAVIOR INITIATIVES

BY: DR. JEFFREY HUNT
FRESNO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

About the Author

Dr. Jeffrey Hunt is an educator with nearly 20 years of experience in alternative educational settings. He currently serves as the Director of Charter Schools for the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools.

Fresno County lies within the central San Joaquin Valley of California and is home to both urban and rural student populations because of prominent agricultural and service industries. According to DataQuest, California's online student information portal, Fresno County schools combined urban, rural, and suburban student populations to total 204,000 students during the 2017-18 school year. Hispanic students represented the largest racial-ethnic student group consisting of nearly 65% of students. African-American students represented 4.9% of Fresno County's enrolled student population in 2018. The disproportionate number of suspensions of African-American students and students with disabilities brought negative attention to multiple school districts in Fresno County, both urban and rural. According to Blume (2015) proficiency and academic progress data for students who miss significant days of school for disciplinary reasons has shown deficiencies in elementary school and slower progress through high school academic requirements. These number of students suspended, compounded by Blume's findings have implications on student learning outcomes and high school graduation rates.

Multiple school districts in central California responded to discipline statistics and their accompanying scrutiny by implementing targeted approaches to improve campus climate. A growing number of policy makers and student interest organizations called for behavior intervention measures that stem from the development of caring communities of learners (Hantzopoulos, 2013). Sullivan (2007) proposed policies to create positive school environments and support the emotional and behavioral development of students. Hughes and Kwok (2007) asserted policies to improve campus climate should seek to enhance student-teacher relationships because strengthening these relationships was tied to higher student academic outcomes, particularly among African-American and Latino students. From these and

similar findings, many Fresno County schools began exploring campus climate innovations. Restorative Practices was one of several innovations implemented in central California, particularly in urban school districts.

This composition recaps a study that used a teacher survey and interviews with teachers and administrators to examine the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school (Hunt, 2018). The study examined teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and impact of the implementation of Restorative Practices. The purpose was to use the findings to inform the practice of implementing such initiatives on campuses, particularly campuses with veteran staff members.

The researcher explored existing literature to describe employee agency, campus climate, and the implementation of innovations through the sequence of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., 2012). Restorative Practices is an innovation schools have explored to increase their abilities to meet the needs of students on their campuses, particularly historically underperforming student groups.

Problem

The driving problem for the study was that schools failed to consistently consider both measurable teacher perceptions of campus climate and teacher agency when implementing campus climate improvement initiatives. School leaders consistently referenced student behavior outcomes when rationalizing the adoption of campus climate initiatives. Local, state, and federal accountability measures assessed campus climate with student behavior outcomes. State and local accountability outcomes were limited to cumulative and disaggregated student suspension and expulsion data. Al-

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though local accountability required schools to assess teacher perceptions of climate and engagement, outcome reporting required schools to report completion as opposed to actionable data analysis with improvement targets.

The study on the implementation of Restorative Practices highlighted best practices in initiative implementation, with a particular emphasis on teacher agency and stakeholder engagement in the implementation process.

The Quality Implementation Framework

DuPre and Durlak (2008) found strong empirical evidence to conclude the level of implementation affected outcomes of innovation goals in promotion and prevention programs. Promotion and prevention programs included intervention and pupil service innovations. The participating school in this study implemented Restorative Practices as a prevention and intervention initiative.

Durlak et al. (2012) developed the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF) by synthesizing 25 research-based implementation frameworks. The QIF identified 14 actions essential to the successful implementation of innovations. The synthesis grouped the actions into four phases of implementation. The four phases are:

1. *Initial considerations regarding the host setting*
2. *Creating structures for implementation*
3. *Ongoing structure once implementation begins*
4. *Improving Future application*

Their development of the Quality Implementation Framework involved the study of implementation frameworks in service settings such as schools, mental health facilities, healthcare facilities, community based intervention organizations, and substance abuse prevention organizations. Of the 14 critical steps identified in the framework, nine cite connections to organi-

zational staff and pupil engagement. The study defined implementation as putting a strategy into practice to achieve desired outcomes (Durlak et al. 2012).

Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting

Organizations must put assessment structures in place to consider the readiness of the implementation of new innovations (Durlak et al., 2012). Assessment includes defining the need for the innovation by identifying organizational needs addressed by the innovation. Initially, organizations must ask why they are exploring the innovation. What problem(s) or condition(s) will be improved by the innovation? Who in the organization will benefit from the innovation? In schools, needs may include student outcomes for racial ethnic groups, students in specific grade levels, students with varying language proficiency, students with special needs, or other identified needs.

Involving teachers in the organizational needs assessment and innovation adoption process gives them the opportunity to own the innovation from inception and contribute to implementation as an agent. Throughout the implementation process, teachers must be active agents (Durlak et al., 2012). Agency is supported through the process of stakeholders participating in an evaluation of the host setting. Stakeholders should be involved in assessing the needs of the organization, as well as the appropriateness of the implementation of an innovation such as Restorative Practices.

Agency for this study was the perceived capacity of teachers to influence decision making. To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances (Bandura, 1986). Where agency exists, stakeholders are participants in the operations of organizations, as opposed to onlookers or bystanders. Agency for teachers is the feeling of being a participant in their current professional reality.

In addition to involving staff in the organizational needs assessment, organization must consider the ca-

capacity of staff to execute the innovation. A capacity building strategy called for in the QIF is staff recruitment and maintenance. The selection process for key role players in an implementation can be complex, but it is vital work (Fixsen et al., 2005). In successful implementation, organizations should employ “effective practitioners, excellent trainers, effective coaches, skilled evaluators, and facilitative administrators” (p. 36). Implementing campus climate initiatives involves the careful identification and selection of key players. Skills should be aligned with assignments in the implementation process (Fixsen et al., 2005). For best results, Restorative Practice implementation requires a well trained staff, an invested student body, and an engaged and supportive external community (Pavelka, 2013). School leadership must establish, sustain, and expand restorative practices into the culture of the school (Pavelka, 2013). School staff must possess capacity and resources to successfully fund, implement, and evaluate their Restorative Practices program (Fronius et al., 2016).

Another important component of the first phase of the Quality Implementation Framework requires schools to assess innovations for organizational fit. Questions in a quality assessment tool assess the extent the innovation matches the organization’s values, mission, vision, priorities, and strategy for growth (Durlak et al., 2012). Organizations must determine the extent innovations need to be modified to best fit the host setting. The use of teachers and other stakeholders may provide insight from service-level contexts that are often hidden from organizational leadership.

The implementation of Restorative Practices has logistical requirements that challenge schools to adapt site logistics, policies, and personnel to meet implementation needs. Organizational policy shifts may include the introduction of peer mediation, peer accountability, and transitions away from zero-tolerance discipline policies (Pavelka, 2013). Anyon et al. (2016) found that variations in implementation of Restorative Practices affect-

ed outcomes. Schools implementing restorative practices with consistency found improved results, namely fewer repeated behavior incidents and reduced suspensions. Durlak et al. (2012) pose the following questions in the QIF when considering organizational fit:

(1) Should the planned innovation be modified in any way to fit the host setting and target group? (2) What feedback can the host staff offer regarding how the proposed innovation needs to be changed to make it successful in a new setting and for its intended audience? (3) How will changes to the innovation be documented and monitored during implementation? (p. 469)

Durlak et al. (2012) suggests organizations closely assess their infrastructure, capital, employees, and resources during the early stages of implementation.

Creating Structures for Implementation

Phase two of the Quality Implementation Framework calls for the creation of structures to ensure proper oversight and management of the implementation process. One approach to meet this need is the development and use of implementation teams. An implementation team is charged with designing and leading the implementation of an organization-wide change strategy (Higgins et al. (2013). Effective implementation teams mitigate the effects of staff turnover and possible staff indifference through implementation team professional development (Kahn, 1992). Two questions asked in the second phase of the framework are: “(1) Is there a clear plan for what will happen, and when it should occur; and (2) who will accomplish the different tasks related to delivering the innovation and overseeing its implementation?” (p. 471).

The implementation team should represent critical organizational and community stakeholders (Fixsen et al., 2005). The capacity within this group is essential to successful implementation. The organization must ensure entry-level capacity exists and commit to an ongoing professional development plan to support all

roles on the implementation teams. Successful implementations of innovations on school campuses involve students, parents, educators, and community members as partners in planning, implementation, and evaluation (Elias et al, 2006). The roles of the implementation team are important throughout the implementation, maintenance, and ongoing evaluation of the innovation.

Prior to adopting an innovation, implementation teams should participate in research related to the innovation. Campus climate innovations such as Restorative Practices requiring shifts in mindset along with practices necessitate research and analysis prior to adoption (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). In my experience as a school improvement coach over the past few years, implementation teams were overwhelmingly composed of organizational leadership with little representation from service level staff members.

Ongoing Structure Once Implementation Begins

Phases one and two of the Quality Implementation Framework must be completed prior to implementation (Durlak et al., 2012). Actual implementation of practice begins in phase three of the framework. The required tasks include:

“(1) providing needed ongoing technical assistance to front-line providers; (2) monitoring ongoing implementation; and (3) creating feedback mechanisms so involved parties understand how the implementation is progressing” (p. 471).

Guiding questions for this phase seek information about the technical assistance plan, ongoing participant capacity, and quality feedback for quick responses.

Phase Three of the QIF also begins the analysis of fidelity. Fidelity is the extent to which specific program components are delivered as prescribed (DuPre & Durlak, 2008). An important consideration of this definition is the absence of measurable outcomes. Educational innovations commonly prescribe guidelines and steps to

effective implementation. Because of the lack of research on Restorative Practice implementation models, effective implementation is difficult to quantify. An important finding from teacher interviews and surveys conducted for the study was the absence of clear and measureable desired outcomes from the implementation of Restorative Practices. Teachers could not determine if the initiative was effective because they didn't know how effectiveness was to be measured. Interviews with administrative staff also revealed an absence of clear and measureable intended outcomes.

A critical final consideration for phase three of the framework is the use of program evaluation. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) defines evaluation as “the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object's value, in relation to these criteria” (p. 7). The purpose of a Restorative Practices program evaluation would be to determine the program's influence on campus climate indicators, which include student behavior and stakeholder perception data. Because there are generally multiple influences on campus climate data at an urban high school, a program evaluation enables the implementation team to determine the impact of Restorative Practices on climate data. Teachers, when interviewed for the study on the implementation of Restorative Practices consistently lacked knowledge of performance metrics and outcomes related to the initiative. Because they weren't included in the research and implementation phases they weren't able to clearly define successful implementation.

Improving Future Application

Phase Four of the Quality Implementation Framework requires reflecting on the implementation process. Guiding questions during this phase of implementation involves extrapolating lessons from the implementation process to enhance future implementation efforts. Information gathered during this phase of implementation is critical for scaling implementation to larger contexts.

Conclusion

The purpose of this composition was to summarize Hunt's (2018) mixed methods study that examined teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices. The study examined relationships between agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practice implementation. Evidence of the problem of practice that drove the study was collected through classroom observations, teacher conversations, professional development sessions, and review of school site improvement plans. Teachers' views on campus climate and appropriate student behavior strategies contrasted those of site leaders. Hunt (2018) recalls classroom management professional development sessions being met with instances of individual teacher resistance because the innovation proposed alternative strategies to their preferred approach. According to Bandura (1986), when teachers possess a sense of agency, they monitor their own attitudes, actions, outcomes, and progress towards desired outcomes. Teachers in schools that created the context for the study expressed concern that the Restorative Practices initiative was implemented without their input. In the study, Restorative Practices was a district-adopted initiative. Site leadership was tasked with implementation. Teachers had no role in the adoption phase of Restorative Practices but upon implementation were tasked with implementing classroom structures. The site principal provided rapidly increasing autonomy for teachers in their classroom implementation of Restorative Practices.

When compared to Phase one of the Quality Implementation Framework, initial considerations regarding the host setting, interviews and survey responses revealed three missed opportunities when considering the host setting for Restorative Practices implementation. First, the participating school did not establish clear and measurable objectives with stakeholders, particularly teachers. Secondly, interviews demonstrated the participating school did not communicate the rationale for Restorative Practice implementation to stakeholders. Finally, the implementation lacked frequent commu-

nication of formative and summative outcomes with stakeholders. Interview and survey responses revealed an absence of clear goals and metrics for the implementation of Restorative Practices. Because of this absence, it was difficult to provide effectiveness data, thus limiting the ability to periodically and strategically adjust practices.

When employees are agents, they monitor their own actions and modify practices to achieve shared outcomes (Bandura, 1986). The lack of involvement of teachers in the adoption of Restorative Practices at the participating school made it difficult to engage the efforts of more than half of the site's teachers. Because of the existing general sense of agency amongst most teachers at the school, the initiative was not met with resistance, however teacher implementation of practices was limited and inconsistent.

The Quality Implementation Framework recommends implementers position management structures to continually monitor, support, and adjust implementation efforts ongoing. Teachers participated in the implementation process and 80% agreed to some extent the implementation was successful. However, without clear and measurable objectives and formative data sharing, success of the initiative continues to be measured by perceptions at the participating school, limiting the ability to strategically adjust practices and processes to improve outcomes.

Phase two of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., (2012) calls for the creation of structures to ensure proper oversight and management of the implementation process. During interviews, teachers were asked to describe Restorative Practices on the campus. The emphasis was on building and repairing relationships. The Restorative Practices team at the school intervened in student behavior issues, student-student conflicts, and student-staff conflicts. Because over 91% of survey respondents agreed the campus is safe, a sense of need for Restorative Practices may not have been established with teachers, which ideally would've

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happened in the early stages of implementation. A lack of need for the innovation likely contributed to a lack of attention to the details of implementation. As schools and other organizations seek to address problems by implementing innovations, it is critical to apply a comprehensive framework to the process. As with the subject school in Hunt's study, gaps in implementation can significantly hinder the positive impact of quality innovations.

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A POSITIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVED ATTENDANCE: SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY'S A-SQUAD CONNECTS WITH TRUANT STUDENTS TO HELP THEM GET BACK TO CLASS AND STAY IN SCHOOL

The school day was underway when the members of the San Joaquin County Truancy Task Force mustered at the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) in September.

They came from school districts, law enforcement, and community organizations. They formed teams, grabbed binders with lists of the names and last-known addresses of some of the most-truant students in the county.

This was serious business. It doesn't take long for a chronically absent student to fall behind, and students who drop out of school don't get the education they need to prepare them to succeed in the modern world. The law allows for more-immediate consequences for parents.

But the Task Force wasn't setting out with an attend-school-or-else game plan. School officials said that kind of punitive approach isn't the best way to reach students, anyway.



The truancy teams were armed with phone numbers, flyers, expertise, and connections to services to remove obstacles that could be causing truancy. More important, the teams planned to make personal connections with families to help identify those obstacles.

This is the A-Squad. The "A" stands for "attendance." New this year, the A-Squad is designed to put more of an emphasis on providing positive services to prevent truancy while also bringing a more

countywide approach to a universal problem by uniting school districts, law-enforcement agencies, organizations, and the community at large. "All of us, the school districts and the county office, want to work to build a culture of positivity around attendance, utilizing all the resources we have at our disposal," said SJCOE's Doug Silva, coordinator of the task force. Before the morning sweep began, Silva gave a short pep talk to the group. "We need to do what we can to get these families services and help bring some consistency to their lives."

The teams headed out to Tracy, Manteca, Escalon, and Stockton. One team included District Attorney Tori Verber Salazar. "We are extremely impressed at the resources the school districts and the County Office of Education are bringing to this problem.

"This is an army of people coming together," she said. Truancy is a crime, but prosecution is not her office's goal, she said. "Our goal is success, not prosecution, because success means kids are

going to school."

"If students are not coming to school, the school needs to go the student," said Rob Pecot, Tracy Unified School District director of student services. "And the A-Squad brings more options for students," he said. "It's wonderful that the county gets the districts together and we can use all of our resources to help kids."

Throughout the day, the A-Squad did everything

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from giving on-the-spot rides to students they met to getting them in touch with nonprofits to provide social services to help them navigate whatever problems they faced, from applying for a driver's license to finding counseling.

"We know we need to look at the whole child for academics to improve," said Dolores Bronson, district director of community engagement for Lincoln Unified School District. The sweep was just one part of a multi-departmental approach within the district to focus on building stronger connections with families and meeting social-emotional needs of students, she said.

One team sweeping the Lincoln Unified area consisted of Tori Burdick, the district's child welfare and attendance liaison and Jennifer DeAngelo, SJCOE intervention and prevention specialist. They worked from a list of students from district schools and SJCOE programs. DeAngelo and Burdick both knew the neighborhoods and some of the same families. They discussed how to best approach each unique household.

Together, they knocked on doors, yelled over locked gates, and tried to find more of the story behind each truant student on the list.

At the home of three students on the list, DeAngelo received a warm welcome from their mother, who had the enrollment forms for county schools filled out and ready to be turned in. Last year DeAngelo had worked with the family to overcome transportation and other issues. "If (DeAngelo) didn't come last year, I don't think my kids would be in school," the parent said. She said she appreciated that DeAngelo was not judgmental while doing everything she could to get the kids to school. After taking the new paperwork for this year's enrollment, DeAngelo and the woman planned to meet again.

A-Squad teams finished the day back at the SJCOE.

They exchanged stories of successes and setbacks and brainstormed to see what they could do next for students and their families. One student got a hug from a squad member and a promise of continued effort to resolve a personal issue keeping her from class. Another student was placed in a school where he and his girlfriend -- who was also truant -- could be in the same building as their one-month-old child's day care.

The visits made by the A-Squad during the sweep made all this possible, Silva said.

"It's really the human connection; it's the human touch. It's not a letter in the mail; it's not a phone call," he said. "It's making that human connection."

MORE ONLINE:

A version of this article appeared in "The Outlook," an online magazine produced by the San Joaquin County Office of Education. For this story and more, please go to <https://www.sjcoe.org/PublicInformation/outlook.aspx>.



THE GREATEST COMEBACK:

COME BACK KIDS PROGRAM GIVES STUDENTS OF ALL AGES A SECOND CHANCE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Kicking seed pods that had dropped from magnolia trees in Stockton's University Park as they walked toward the deep yellow glow of the rising sun on a recent morning, Leticia and her 3-year-old son, Jaime, were headed to daycare.

Leticia, 33, walks her son to daycare on days she has classes she needs to take to get her high school diploma. She tells her son stories about the squirrels in the trees, and they point them out as they spot them along the way.

Inside the daycare center, she pulled out a spiral notebook for Jaime's work. She wrote out the letters of his name in pencil, then drew a rectangle large enough to fit those same letters. Jaime traced the letters of his name with a marker, then tried it out, freehand in the box.

He likes doing this activity with his mother, and he likes learning, she said. "If it is something new, he'll want to try it and get it right."

He'll try to figure it out on his own, but will ask for help if he gets stuck.

She likes seeing this joy of learning in her son, it's something she is going to encourage in him as he grows older. "Even as adults, you are learning something every day," she said.

It is important that he understands the importance of learning and education -- now, when he's young, she said.

"I learned that the hard way," she said.

Leticia learned it well, though, and she is close to getting her high school diploma. She's excited about everything she is learning, and she is excited about the opportunities for jobs that weren't available to her without one. Most of all, she's excited about the example she's setting for Jaime.

Leticia is one of the hundreds of students of all ages in the San Joaquin County Office of Education's Come Back Kids program, a flexible, contracted-learning program to give anyone 18 years or older a chance to earn a high school diploma. Students can do most of their work at home or online. They text, phone, and email teachers, but they are required to come to class for at least an hour a week to meet with a teacher. However, they have the option to come more often -- and many do -- for one-on-one or group instruction with the faculty.

The program is operated by SJCOE County Operated Schools and Programs (COSP). It's the division in charge of alternative education programs designed to reach children and young adults struggling to complete their education. These students often come from families who had not received diplomas themselves. Finding another way for adults in San Joaquin County to obtain their high school diploma later in life helps both families in SJCOE programs and in the community at large.

"Having a high school diploma is essential. It is the beginning of the journey of the rest of their lives," said Heidi Reyes, the COSP director who administers the



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program. Students who didn't get their diplomas when they were 17 or 18 often have obligations to work or family that limit their options if they want to try again later in life.

The flexibility of Come Back Kids makes it easier for them, she said. "It's not a burden. It's all benefit. And in that situation, they can move ahead."

Reyes said the reasons vary as to why students enrolling in the program didn't finish high school, from pregnancy to fighting to needing to work to being drafted into the military during the Vietnam War. The program is ready for all of them.

For Leticia, the difficulties that drove her from school began when she was 7-years-old, starting when her father died. She was able to live with her grandparents, whom she loved. But as she got older, her grandparents became ill. Her grandfather had pancreatic cancer and her grandmother was diabetic. She attended class less and less to stay home and care for them. She said she had to make a choice in the mornings: stay home and take care of them or go to school and worry about them getting enough to eat or falling down or taking a turn for the worse.

"So, most days, I stayed home to help my grandparents out," she said. The event that pushed her over the edge was when three friends died in a car accident, she said, adding that it was too much for her to see their empty seats in the classes they had shared. "I stopped caring." She stopped going to school completely during her junior year.

She went back to school her senior year, even though she knew she wouldn't be able to earn enough credits

to graduate. A counselor told her she had potential, but not passion. Leticia agreed with the counselor.

She said she got that fire back in her life when she had her son, and it is what really focused her on bettering her life. Eventually it led her to Come Back Kids.

"This is my second chance," she said, adding that she didn't expect to find someplace that would help a 33-year-old trying to get a diploma to get a good job.

Finding that job has been elusive without the diploma. She wants to put her culinary training to work in a

professional kitchen. But the last time there was a position available, it required a diploma that she didn't have.

When she saw a poster for the Come Back Kids program, she thought she'd give it a shot. "I said: You know what? I'm going to try," she said. "The first day, at orientation, it just blew my mind."

She spends more than the required classroom time, working in group workshops or on her own to complete her assignments.

She tries to figure it out on her own, but she will ask for help if she gets stuck. And there is always plenty of help, she says, to teach her what she is meant to learn.

Reyes said the teachers and support staff have the skills and passion to reach their students. "It's a team," she said. "It's a team that's in the Super Bowl and wants to win."

The demand has been growing fast since the program first started accepting students in mid 2017. The site on Georgetown Place in Stockton has expanded from one



THE GREATEST COMEBACK: COME BACK KIDS PROGRAM GIVES STUDENTS OF ALL AGES A SECOND CHANCE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

shared room for students and teachers at its Stockton site to the expanded site next door. It has opened a second Stockton location in the new Family Justice Center in the old Stockton courthouse. There is another site in Manteca. The number of teachers to handle the demand has grown from three to 13 in just over a year.

Students complete assignments online and can checkout Chromebooks to help them complete their work. Some also pick up and drop off assignments on paper. As the program has grown, it has looked at how to offer more to its students.

This includes instruction so students can fulfill visual and performing arts requirements -- one faculty member teaches guitar at the Georgetown Place site, which will soon have a science lab.

Dozens of new students packed into an SJCOE meeting room for the monthly orientation for new students in November.

Jouwell, 23, split his focus between the orientation and his 2-year-old daughter, who was in his lap demanding his attention. A family emergency took him out of the state before he got his diploma. Now he's ready to get back on track. "So I can get into college," he said. "I'm trying to get my Ph.D. as a nurse practitioner."

Assistant Superintendent of County Operated Schools and Programs, Janine Kaeslin fielded one question from a student about the hours of community services required for graduation. She said the community service and other resources available through the program -- along with the high school diploma, itself -- was going to help students get the jobs they want to have. "You're building your resumé and your employability," she said.

In addition to the diploma, all students who complete the program walk out with a portfolio that includes a resumé, a sample application, a letter of introduction they've written, and a letter of reference from someone who has seen them work.



Leticia is fulfilling her community-service hours at the Northeast Community Center, a San Joaquin County Human Services Agency center in Stockton. One of her duties is to serve meals to seniors who come to the center. Compared to the culinary training Leticia has received, it's pretty simple kitchen work.

She wheels a cart with her when she travels by bus and foot around Stockton between class, the community center, and Jaime's daycare center.

Compared to her childhood, she's happy now -- and she wants to stay that way for Jaime.



"I can't dwell on the past," she said. "I want him to feel my happiness. I want my son to feel his happiness, his enjoyment of life."

And she says she knows Come Back Kids has put her on the right path for both of them. "I'm so excited that I could just stand up and reach the sky."



More Online

To watch a video feature about Leticia's journey at the Come Back Kids, please go to <https://youtu.be/r7srPEGzALo>

A version of this article appeared in "The Outlook," and online magazine produced by the San Joaquin County Office of Education. For this story and more, please go to <https://www.sjcoe.org/PublicInformation/outlook.aspx>.

FOUNDATIONS FOR PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS:

LESSONS TAUGHT BY OVER 3,000 FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

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Abundant research on family engagement in education shows that schools that reach out to families and the community and build strong parent-school relationships have a positive impact on students. Overall, it increases test scores, grades and graduation rates; it improves student behavior, and makes schools more accountable. Parental involvement in schools, defined as participation in a school event at least once a year, varies by student grade, family's race and origin, parental educational attainment, poverty levels, and language in traditional schools. In alternative educational settings, additional factors affect a family's ability to engage in their students' academic achievement. For example, a parent's priorities regarding their incarcerated student will likely relate primarily to their student's juvenile court case and proceedings, and not to school performance.

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) implemented in 2016-2017 the Title I Parent Education and Consultation Program (PECP). The program has yielded exceptionally impressive results: 339% increase in parent attendance to school workshops in 2016-17 over the prior year; and another 137% increase in 2017-18 over 2016-17. These gains are achieved despite a dramatic decline of 40% in student enrollment, and with a third of the funding spent before establishing PECP. Overall, more than three thousand participants have taken advantage of the multiple learning opportunities available.

An analysis of the feedback received by participants and practitioners provide indicators and guiding principles of quality programming and practices that can be replicated at all traditional and alternative education sites. This paper intends to describe the lessons taught by more than three thousand families attending parent workshops in juvenile court schools, camp detention schools and county community schools; and to provide a framework for establishing effective parent involvement practices.

Positive Relationships

The goal for school and family engagement is to nurture effective partnerships with families so students thrive academically. These relationships must be positive and encouraging, particularly in alternative educational environments where families may already be facing numerous challenging factors.

While technology offers quick and comprehensive ways of communicating with families via electronic mail and automated calls, very few of the participants of PECP's parent events responded to such communication. Overwhelmingly, families attended the events because of a personal phone call from a teacher, counselor or other school staff. In some cases, to more than one:

Superintendent Duardo: "So, what made you come to our first annual parent conference?"

Mom: "Well, like ten people from the school called me over and over until I said 'ok, ok, I'll go to your thing!'"

Building relationships is a key element of PECP. Parent Liaisons (teachers, counselors and other school staff) participate in professional development that helps them to be strategic and deliberate in establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the families they serve.

Quality & Responsive Programing

Title I parent and family involvement mandates call for "schools [to] provide parents and families of Title I students with the information they need to make well-informed choices for their children including more effectively sharing responsibility for their child's success, and helping their children's schools develop effective and successful programs."

FOUNDATIONS FOR PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS: LESSONS TAUGHT BY OVER 3,000 FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

For PECP, this statement translates to offering workshop topics that respond to a family's stated needs and interests. For example, when asked what information they would like to receive, parents, for two years, have consistently responded: "Improving Family Communication" first, and "Supporting Students' Success" second. Other popular topics have included "Understanding the Juvenile Court System" and "Parenting Teens."

PECP strives to avoid disconnect between workshop offerings and participants' interests, and to offer research-based workshop topics that address those needs. Often, school systems presume to know what families need to learn to support effectively their student's academic achievement, undermining the value of thorough, constant needs assessments, and rigorous selection of workshop providers or professional development of facilitators.

Community Partnerships

Collaborative strategies to engage parents and families are more effective than practices in which a sole entity leads the work. PECP staff reached out to local colleges and universities in an effort to bring in expertise to their practice. The response was positive in all cases. For example, California State University, Dominguez Hills, assigned a professor to work with PECP. As a result, Dr. Jen Stacy modified her class syllabus to include activities that require her students to work with PECP Parent Liaisons in outreaching to families, conducting workshops, and volunteering at the Second Annual Parent Conference.

Other collaborations have been effective in bringing expert speakers, motivators and professionals to communicate with families and guide them as they find resources and support for their students.

Partnering with Probation and Detention Officers in LACOE's Juvenile Court Schools has been particularly effective in increasing attendance to the learning opportunities offered to parents. These individuals support the outreach efforts, help in the informing of parents.

Welcoming Environments

Cultural, personal and experiential beliefs and behaviors may deter some families from attending school events. This is highlighted in alternative educational settings, where families may not know that there is a public school functioning within the detention facility. PECP Parent Liaisons participate in training that helps them understand how to create physical environments that are welcoming of all participants. This environment accommodates for the participant's physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

Parent Liaisons lay out refreshments in a tasteful manner. There is a grievance process. Facilitators are knowledgeable and can guide the participants. They speak the families' language and offer multiple learning opportunities at different times and locations for the parents' convenience.

PECP Foundational Program Framework is research-based, and designed to assist school systems in deliberately integrating activities across its principles, to ensure that their family engagement practices are goal oriented.

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NEW OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDE NEW CAREERS

By JUDY BORING, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, STANISLAUS COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Nathan Allan and his wife were self-employed and had been getting by financially, but then circumstances outside of their control changed. They celebrated the birth of their son, but he required extra medical care, which left them with unexpected medical expenses. They both spent more time taking care of their son and less time tending to their business. This led to financial difficulty, and the couple knew they needed to make a change. According to Nathan, "I needed to make a swift transition into a meaningful, substantial opportunity that could help us financially." This is when the newly formed partnership between the Stanislaus County Office of Education and Opportunity Stanislaus came into the picture, and their VOLT Institute came to the rescue.

Allan learned about the machine mechanics classes offered at the VOLT Institute and the first cohort which began in October of 2017. "I didn't know there was such a need for the skills being taught and how good the employment opportunities, higher compensation and benefits were," said Allan. The decision was made; Allan took the leap and changed his career direction to better provide for his family.

Everything was new to Allan. "Besides the fundamental math and science behind the machines, the most prominent things I learned were installing motors, power drive systems for various applications, pump systems, and general electrical systems. It was all new," said Allan. "Even just the practice with hand tools and fasteners was a helpful learning experience. I most enjoyed coming to understand the higher levels of how all this works, allowing for more critical thinking and analysis when faced with troubleshooting problems in the field."

On June 27, 2018, eight months after beginning the Industrial Maintenance Mechanic program at the VOLT Institute, Allan graduated, earning all the certifications required. And, because of his new skill set, he was hired by Doctors Medical Center (DMC) in Modesto two weeks prior to his graduation.

Dan Martin, Director of Facilities Services at DMC became involved as an advisor for the VOLT Institute at Opportunity Stanislaus. As an industry leader, he provided valuable input and direction during the planning phase for the program. "I was able to share the skills gap in our community and the difficulty finding skilled maintenance mechanics with the Stanislaus County Office of Education and Opportunity Stanislaus," said Martin. During the class sessions members of the advisory committee, including Martin, share their expertise with students and also have an opportunity to observe their skills and assess them as potential employees. "As a Director, I look for a person with a desire to learn and someone who can carry himself or herself well. Nathan Allan definitely had that so we offered him a position at Doctors Medical Center."



Pictured: Dan Martin, Director of Facilities Services at DMC and VOLT Institute advisor.

Over the next year, Martin shared that Allan will continue to receive specific instruction about DMC's facilities. "Our department maintains the operation of the medical center including taking care of the air-conditioning, heating, plumbing, electrical, etc.," said Martin. "We keep the center operable so doctors and nurses can care for patients."

As a graduate of the VOLT Institute, Allan recommends the program to anyone seeking an opportunity or who

NEW OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDE NEW CAREERS

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might not have the direction, education, or skills to find better employment. "If you're going to work a full-time job anyway, you might as well get paid more in a trade that is in demand," said Allan. "I sensed the greater chance of finding better employment in maintenance and I brought my passion with me."



Pictured is Nathan Allan, VOLT Institute Graduate, and employee at Doctors Medical Center. Note: 90% of the graduating students received job placement.

For more information about the VOLT Institute contact Deb Rowe, Director II for Stanislaus County Office of Education at (209) 238-1506 or (209) 566-9102.



Pictured: The VOLT Institute's inaugural graduation class with their instructors (black shirts).





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