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

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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 and 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



Johnny Rice

Santa Cruz County Office of Education

On behalf of the JCCASAC Board, I would like to thank you for participating in the 52nd Annual JCCASAC Conference here in Newport Beach. Each of you are part of a long lasting organization of teachers, administrators and support staff dedicated to the success and well-being of our at-promise youth. For over five decades, JCCASAC has led the way in innovating and advocating for the students of California's Court and Community Schools.

I am grateful for the JCCASAC organization, its history, and the collective knowledge of all its members that allows us to network and share best practices in serving our students. While each county office program is unique, we share a common mission. 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. We want JCCASAC to continue to be your best resource. We encourage you to stay connected and become involved by frequently visiting our website and by attending Regional and General Membership meetings in addition to this fantastic conference.

It has been an honor serving as the JCCASAC chair this year. I am grateful for having had the privilege of being on this team. There is no other organization like this! It is my hope that as new members, you too will get involved and network with peers from all over California. Here you will find creativity, passion, and commitment to excellence, and you will make long lasting friends along the way. We are excited that you are here and looking forward to seeing you throughout the conference.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR-ELECT



Rebecca Vichiquis Director III, Student Programs Contra Costa County Office of Education

Welcome!

On behalf of the JCCASAC Executive Board, I want to welcome you to the 52nd Annual JCCASAC Conference. This is a treasured event that I look forward to each year. Having the privilege of putting this conference together has been an amazing experience. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated assistance of our JCCASAC Board. If you have been attending our conferences and working in the field for several years, I encourage you to explore serving on Board. The work we do is highly specialized, and JCCASAC aims to support you in providing the very best educational services to your students. I truly appreciate those members who have gone above and beyond to share their knowledge whether that be by presenting at the conference, writing an article for the journal, or participating in our Regional and Statewide meetings. Through JCCASAC, we can share our knowledge to impact an even larger group of students.

Over the past two years, as we have dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing school disruption, we have found ever more ingenious ways to re-connect students to school and their educational pathway. In Contra Costa, we have engaged in more than five years of intentional Equity work with staff to help support a shared understanding of how systemic racism and industrialized education work together to produce inequitable outcomes for our youth. We have realized just how deep we must go ourselves to discover what is needed to meet our students' needs. We create equity in our programs by providing a personalized learning experience utilizing rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum and restorative practices. We have codified our academic and social supports using the Multi-Tiered System of Support framework to complement the individualized planning we do with each student. One of our main jobs is to help our students find or maintain hope in their future. We believe that all students want to learn and are capable of learning. So in our schools, all students engage in transformative learning according to their individual needs, to achieve their potential, and to positively participate and contribute to their community.

While you are here, please be sure to connect with your colleagues from across the state. Being in community with others engaged in this work is an important component of the conference—the absence of an in-person conference the past two years makes having this opportunity to be together in person even sweeter. I hope that you come away feeling reinvigorated with new enthusiasm for the work ahead. Together we CAN ensure that our students are able to transform their strengths into real-world outcomes to fulfill the intense potential that they each hold.

With Appreciation,

Becky



Lynn Mackey
Superintendent
Contra Costa
County Office of Education

Welcome to the 2022 JCCASAC Conference. The Contra Costa County Office of Education is excited to welcome you to this important event where we can share best practices for supporting our counties' most underserved and vulnerable students who attend our County-operated Student Programs. This year's theme — "Transforming Student Strengths into Real-world Outcomes" — captures the charge given to us as educators focused on serving this population.

Our students often come to us carrying the weight of unresolved, intergenerational trauma, structural racism, and complex involvement in the criminal punishment system-- but they also bring a wealth of lived experience, inspiration, and skills. Our work is to learn how to translate these positive attributes into real-world outcomes that can support our students' healing and promote engagement in life and learning.

This work is always hard, but our charge has become increasingly complex given the social determinants of health that continue to disproportionately impact our school communities and stretch our students' already-stressed support systems to the breaking point. We are seeing more disengaged students than ever before, and our comprehensive schools are looking to us for ideas about how to reach all students. So never has there been a more appropriate time to think about how we can transform our students' strengths into positive outcomes.

The 2022 JCCASAC Conference presents unique opportunities to share innovative strategies to serve students in a variety of settings. Moreover, there will be time to connect with colleagues who are equally passionate about preparing the next generation to be successful in school and in life.

All of our keynote speakers at this year's conference are people with lived experiences as students in the incarcerated setting. These amazing educators have successfully transformed their strengths into positive outcomes. I hope that you find inspiration in their stories that will help you guide your students toward success.

After the past two years of living in a pandemic, we are all in need of refreshment and inspiration and I feel certain you will find both at this year's conference. I want to give each one of you a personal thanks for your dedication to our students and wish you an enjoyable conference experience full of new learning!



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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 for 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, Community, and 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).



SHAKESPEARE CAN WAIT...AND SO CAN MY EGO

BY KIM COPE TAIT

I've been reading *The Body Keeps the Score* again... by Bessel van der Kolk. After a two year hiatus. That's how I read non-fiction, at intervals. And also I know that things come back into my scope of awareness again for a reason, so I try to pay attention to that...when exposure to something begins to feel like a spiral. What's been tugging at my consciousness more than anything else this go 'round with *The Body Keeps the Score* is the enormity of the issue of childhood trauma. And how it's not about not feeling safe or secure in your community or your society at large. It's about not feeling safe and secure in your *home*. Worse yet, it's about having the people who are meant to provide care for you being the very ones who threaten your safety, who hurt you and who fail to protect you. That's where childhood trauma comes from, and it affects so many more people than we ever knew.

Plus, it's cyclical. People who are the victims of child abuse, whether it's sexual, physical, emotional, or straight neglect, are much more likely to be involved with abuse as adults, either as perpetrators or as victims. Some of the statistics available in Van der Kolk's book are incredibly eye opening, but the thing that maybe stands out the most to me (so far) is the concept of ACE scores and their broad implications. These are numbers that came out of a monumental investigation of Adverse Childhood Experiences, a collaboration between the CDC and Kaiser Permanente, with Robert Anda, MD, and Vincent Felitti, MD, as co-principal investigators. It was focused on the 17,421 Kaiser patients (out of 25,000 asked) who agreed to provide information about childhood events and whose responses to 10 carefully developed questions were then compared with the detailed medical records Kaiser kept on all patients. This was in 1990.

"The ACE study revealed that traumatic life experiences during childhood and adolescence are far more common than expected. The study respondents were mostly white, middle class,

middle-aged, well educated, and financially secure enough to have good medical insurance, and yet only one-third of the respondents reported no adverse childhood experiences" (147). The questions were things like "Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you, insult you, or put you down?" (one out of ten responded yes to this one). Also, "Did an adult or person at least 5 years older ever have you touch their body in a sexual way?" and "Did an adult or person at least 5 years older ever attempt oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?" (over 25% said yes to each of these!). For each of ten questions, a positive answer equals one point. So, for example, two "yes" responses out of ten gives you an ACE score of 2. With ten questions in the study, the score is out of 10.

It was a pretty comprehensive study of a pretty homogenous group (imagine the impact of things like poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, and systemic colonisation on these numbers; based on what I have seen in my classrooms, I'm guessing it would be staggering). What was perhaps most surprising to me was that in this study group, "87 percent scored two or more. One in six people had an ACE score of four or higher." What was observed was that "when sorrows come, they come not as single spies but in battalions" (that's Shakespeare, rather than Van der Kolk). Essentially, the sorts of abuse that our youth endure don't happen in a vacuum. Most kids who experience trauma are experiencing multiple varieties of trauma at once. "And for each additional adverse experience reported, the toll in later damage increases."

And guess where the effects of this childhood trauma first become evident? At school, of course. "More than half of those with ACE scores of four or higher reported having behavioural problems [at school], compared with 3 percent of those with a score of zero" (148). Of course. It is part and parcel

of a trauma-informed approach that one does not start with the question, “What is wrong with this kid?” but rather with, “What has happened to this child?” And yet, in the classroom, where teachers are taxed with too-high rolls and not enough support, how often does this really happen? How often is it considered that the behaviours that are so disruptive to the learning of one’s class are incredibly accurate indicators of trauma? How often do teachers have the opportunity to truly consider this? And by opportunity, I mean the time, the wherewithal, the training, and the simple support of another adult to take over with the other children while s/he addresses the problematic behaviour in a compassionate, meaningful, trauma-informed way.

And then, how much opportunity is there for follow up? And how effective can that follow-up be? Our teachers are not trained therapists or clinicians. With these statistics, one teacher would be looking at having at least four kids (in a classroom of 24) who are experiencing FOUR OR MORE varieties of abuse. Take it to the middle and high school levels, where rolls are upwards of 30 to 35 kids in a classroom, we’re talking more like 5 or 6 individuals. Will she have the time and wherewithal to follow up on each one (remember, she has 5 classes, so make that 25 to 30 kids and their families)? And maybe most importantly, will she have the courage? How exactly does a teacher, trained to manage students and to teach specific curriculum, say English or Science, approach a family about the potential that their child is experiencing abuse? It’s daunting, to say the least, and at the risk of sounding repetitious, I don’t think it’s quite fair to simply relegate this responsibility to the teachers of the world. And yet, if it’s in the home that these abuses are being perpetrated, but time and again, research has shown that children do better left in their homes than taken out of them, even in cases of abuse.... Do you see what’s keeping me up at night?

And here’s what four or more varieties of abuse in childhood (an ACE score of 4 or higher) looks like in that child’s adulthood: a 66% prevalence of chronic depression for women (35% for men); a 7 times greater likelihood of becoming an alcoholic; a 33% percent likelihood of being the victim of rape (as opposed to 5 percent for those with an ACE score of zero). How about an ACE score of 6? For those with an ACE score of 6 or more, the likelihood of IV drug use was 4,600% greater than for those with an ACE score of zero; they were also 5,000% more likely to attempt suicide than those who scored zero. And the list of high-risk behaviours associated with a high ACE score—you know, ones that can actually be predicted by the experience of a high level of trauma during childhood and adolescence?—it’s shocking: smoking, obesity, unintended pregnancies, multiple sexual partners, and STDs. And there are crazy correlations between high (6 or higher) ACE scores and straight-up health problems in adulthood (things like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), ischemic heart disease, and liver disease): over 15% more than for those with an ACE score of zero. No pressure to identify and treat childhood abuse, but—PRESSURE!

It’s overwhelming, really. Dr. Anda, in presenting the results of this study, declared that “the gravest and most costly public health issue in the U.S. is child abuse. He...calculated that its overall costs exceeded those of cancer or heart disease and that eradicating child abuse in America would reduce the overall rate of depression by more than half, alcoholism by two-thirds, and suicide, IV drug use, and domestic violence by three-quarters” (150). And here’s the kicker (that’s right, we haven’t even gotten to the kicker yet): there is NO DIAGNOSIS in the DSM-V (*The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) for childhood trauma. Such a diagnosis is what allows a patient to receive effective treatment, not to mention have their condition recognised and

BY KIM COPE TAIT

paid for by their health insurance, if they are lucky enough to have it.

This is why when I look at the referrals for my students on remand (caught up in the youth justice system and in the custody of the State) I see a laundry list of diagnoses that are really more explanations for (“surface phenomena” describing) the many behaviours that scream *childhood trauma*: ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), intermittent explosive disorder, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder, and on and on and on. No child is born this way. Adults create this. And these are labels that the youth themselves have absorbed, and the language of these diagnoses punctuates the dialogue I have with them about their behaviours. Rather than address their victimisation, the best the mental health profession has been able to do (through no fault of individual practitioners but of the pervasive systems of which they are a part) is give these youth some labels that categorise their behaviours and indeed themselves. I would say these are band-aids, but it’s worse than that. They are obfuscations, veils laid over the fact of real hurt and real suffering that, if not addressed, will likely transmute itself into more violence in the world. It’s not their fault, but the risk is real.

And yet those who are not trauma-informed in their approach (which is simply a matter of a lack of training—everyone can learn this) insist that these youth are “getting away with something,” “not being held accountable for their actions,” or (and this is my favourite), “laughing at us.” I have to say, no one is laughing. And if there is laughter in this scenario, it is devoid of mirth. So I have come to realise, over my many years of working with kids in an educational setting, that what has to go is EGO. It just has no place in education, especially the education of at-risk youth. In my tiny educational space at the moment, progress is incremental. I am patient. I see some of the other adults in that space inwardly disagree and question my approach, which is one of infinite patience. It’s gentle.

Compassionate. Soft. Could it be (and will it likely at first be) perceived as weakness by my students? Yes. Probably. But I can’t care about that. My job is to provide a corrective emotional experience (let’s call it a CEE). If such an experience, one of healing, comes, at least in the short term, with the cost of “respect”—the kind that silences a child or makes them behave a certain way—then so be it. Real respect, the kind that develops out of gratitude and understanding of one’s character—that comes in time. And if it happens that I never see it, So. Be. It. That’s not why I’m here.

I can’t erase what for some of my students are years of hurt and suffering. I can’t even provide therapy or direct mental health treatment. But I can acknowledge them. I can SEE them. For the individuals that they are (ones who sometimes lash out, sure, or who sometimes have trouble focusing, but as ones who are creative and sentient beings with infinite potential, too? Absolutely). Moment by moment, I can replace those experiences that have involved an adult who didn’t see them, who punished instead of investigated, who yelled instead of soothed, with experiences that build trust and ultimately confidence in a system that has largely failed them. Am I completely overwhelmed by the task? Of course I am. I’d be a fool if I wasn’t. But I have to keep trying. And this is the thing: I am undoing damage. What if this approach were taken (and supported) across the board in schools everywhere? I don’t know that it would be possible to eradicate the need for a role like the one I currently occupy (educating kids who have committed criminal acts and are now in the custody of the State), but it seems worth trying. I’d find another job. Seriously. We should try.

And in trying, I have to be honest. I don’t even know exactly where to start. The problem with the American Psychiatric Association rejecting a clear and well-supported proposal to include “Developmental Trauma Disorder” in its manual of legitimate diagnoses is one that is well beyond my scope of influence, and yet I

SHAKESPEARE CAN WAIT...AND SO CAN MY EGO

BY KIM COPE TAIT

know that “if you pay attention only to faulty biology and defective genes as a cause of mental problems and ignore abandonment, abuse, and deprivation, you are likely to run into as many dead ends as previous generations did blaming it all on terrible mothers” (167). So I don’t have control over the fact that young people are going to continue to arrive at my little school with multiple diagnoses that amount to a limiting set of observations about their behaviours and don’t allow the larger issue of their childhood trauma to be addressed. I have to, for now, let that go. What I do have control over is the inflection in my voice.

My response to impulsive or even outrageous behaviour. My patience in moving toward more academic material. If I’m patient, we’ll get there. Shakespeare can wait. What is needed is slow progress facilitated by one corrective emotional experience at a time. What’s my rush? These are human lives we’re talking about. Someone’s babies. And quite frankly, someone’s future parents, too.

If I can help even one of them heal themselves enough to function “normally” in the world—that is, without hurting anyone else, including their own eventual offspring, who is to say how many people I can impact? Potential victims no longer potential recipients of behaviours that have grown out of abuse and neglect. Their families. The families of the youth themselves. It’s kind of endless. I always say in the classroom that we can’t know a shadow history. The strand of history that would have unfolded had one single thing (one act, one decision or word) been

different. We can only know the history that is, the one that unwinds out of our actual actions and words. And yet, those shadows exist. We have to keep dragging each other out into the light. Away from the shadows of ignominy and suffering. This is one way to do it. Midwives and doulas who help babies to be birthed peacefully...they do it. Teachers who see their students as full of infinite possibility and who address “misbehaviour” with compassion and inquiry...they do it. Bosses who seek to understand undesirable behaviours rather than punish them...even they do it.

EVERY TIME WE TAKE A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH, WHETHER IT’S WITH A CHILD OR WITH AN ADULT, WE HEAL SOMETHING IN THE UNIVERSE. THERE IS SO MUCH PAIN OUT THERE. PEOPLE, YOUTH, ARE TAKING THEIR OWN LIVES. IT’S A CRAZY TIME. WE JUST HAVE TO DO WHAT WE CAN. FOR EACH OTHER. IN THE CLASSROOM, SHAKESPEARE CAN WAIT. AND SO CAN MY EGO.

Every time we take a trauma-informed approach, whether it’s with a child or with an adult, we heal something in the universe. There is so much pain out there. People, youth, are taking their own lives. It’s a

crazy time. We just have to do what we can. For each other. In the classroom, Shakespeare can wait. And so can my ego.

I recommend Van der Kolk’s book, for sure. I have learned so much by reading it. You could also start by checking out the Ted Talk by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris called “How Childhood Trauma Affects Health Across a Lifetime.” It’s a good one. We just have to keep sharing these things, right? As they come into our scope of awareness. Pluck the things out of the air that seem to keep circling back on you. It could be it’s time to listen.

SCOE'S JOURNEY TO WHOLE HEALTH FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF: THE LIFEGUARD INITIATIVE

By Judy Boring, Public Information Officer, Stanislaus County Office of Education

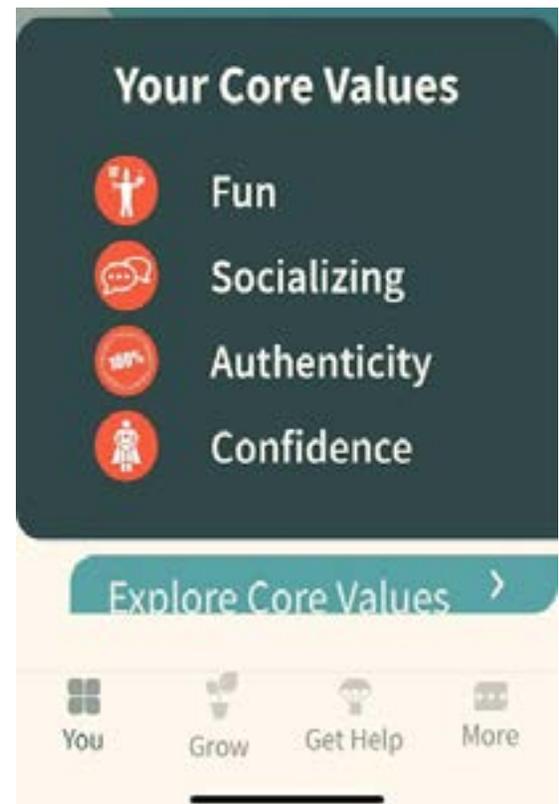


"I started my day arguing with a family member," said Christopher, a student at the Tactical Character Academy, an alternative school in Modesto, CA. "I was feeling pretty bad, but when I did my daily Seity check-in later that morning, I was reminded to work towards fixing the problem and not let the problem control me."

Supporting students' mental health has always been important, even more so during the pandemic. In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other organizations declared a national children's mental health emergency, warning COVID-19 had worsened the existing challenges children and teens face. According to research, seven out of 10 students struggle with poor mental health, and 75% of teachers are experiencing stress-related symptoms. Many schools and districts have incorporated Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and mental health supports by conducting staff training, hiring mental health clinicians, and implementing curriculum with students. Unfortunately, California only has enough mental health providers to meet 26% of the needs.

"Too often, we wait until people are in over their heads in crisis before sending them a life preserver," said Stanislaus County Superintendent Scott Kuykendall. "The Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE) partnered with Seity Health to implement a systematic approach to support staff and student wellness: The Lifeguard Initiative."

In 2019, SCOE rolled out the Seity wellness program to staff. According to the data, the program had a positive impact with staff. "When COVID-19 began and schools closed, it was imperative to support our students too," said Superintendent Scott Kuykendall. "We quickly began work with Seity founders, Dr. Sam Romeo and Dr. Chris Hawley, to create additional resources and train teachers so they could assist students even more."



SCOE'S JOURNEY TO WHOLE HEALTH FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF: THE LIFEGUARD INITIATIVE

By Judy Boring, Public Information Officer, Stanislaus County Office of Education

What exactly is Seity? Seity is a web and app-based program created by physicians, psychologists, and educators. Through a series of questions, each person takes an assessment and quickly discovers his or her unique set of four Core Values. "The program builds on what is right with everyone and then helps them live it out in everything they do," said Dr. Chris Hawley.

The program supports students and staff through daily well-being check-ins that take approximately 30 seconds. When students or staff are struggling, they immediately receive encouraging messages and are connected to 24/7 resources appropriate for them. For students, the well-being check-in scores are also available to teachers on the Student Information System attendance sheet (Aeries). This way, teachers and staff can provide extra attention to those that may need it. This reduces the teacher's burden of doing Social Emotional Learning checks-ins with each student and makes it easier for students to give authentic responses instead of simply raising their hand in a classroom to show how they are feeling.

The initiative also takes advantage of Seity's ability to support the universal Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) by automating activities and information that empowers students and staff to live their best lives according to their unique core values. "We try to put activities and information in a rhythm that makes it easy for people to discover who they are and build a life that leads to sustainable growth. We like to say that Seity is where you go to grow," said Hawley. "A person starts with daily well-being check-ins, starts getting weekly Seity Syncs, interesting facts, and a call to action for the entire learning community. Everyone can put the Syncs into play immediately, and it is fun to do. Then, we deliver inspiring articles monthly and interactive challenges quarterly."



SCOE started seeing profound results from Seity at the heart of the pandemic. "For the first time, we were also able to see the real-time impact of school closures on students, and see how interventions at a variety of schools were delivering measurable results," said Kuykendall. While this program and collaboration with Seity Health began as an experiment, the word was getting out to other districts and many wanted to join the well-being movement. Thus, the Lifeguard Initiative began in earnest.

"We expanded our collaboration with Seity to share with school districts," said Kuykendall. "We also wanted to ensure the programming was evidence-based." A research collaboration was formed with the Psychology Department at California State University Stanislaus to evaluate the methodology and ensure ethical standards for mental health research were integrated.

The next step was to develop a collaboration between SCOE's Instructional Support Services Division and the physicians and psychologists at Seity to create a comprehensive professional development program to support educational agencies in the implementation of the Lifeguard Initiative. The Lifeguard Initiative includes



SCOE'S JOURNEY TO WHOLE HEALTH FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF: THE LIFEGUARD INITIATIVE

By Judy Boring, Public Information Officer, Stanislaus County Office of Education

training on the Seity Health analytics dashboards, which provide daily, formative, well-being data that has never been available before in the educational setting. The analytics include filtering data to examine the well-being for special populations in order to provide targeted support for groups that need it the most. The resulting information makes LCAP planning and reporting much more straightforward. The Seity team is meticulous in keeping the end goal of whole-person health and well-being at the center of their work. The program serves to further a district's well-being investment in their staff and students. An added bonus - successful integration into an existing system keeps mental health and well-being from being one more thing added to an educator's full workload.

Seity staff also adapted this program to a maximum-security Juvenile Hall program where students do not have access to technology. The Seity team created an innovative card game so a student could discover his or her own core values. One student remarked, "I can't believe they cared enough to make this for us." For many, this was the first time they saw themselves as unique and valuable on the inside.

Dr. Chris Hawley and SCOE teacher Lynn Groenveld presented their work at the JCCASAC conference in the spring of 2021. Groenveld's study showed that only 2% of students had a positive attitude at the introduction of Seity, and by week three, their scores improved to 98%. "This is the most exciting thing I have seen in all of my years of education," said Kuykendall. "Seity helps reframe unhealthy behaviors while helping a student find inspiration to live in a positive way that would yield more significant rewards in life."

While the Seity Health program is designed to increase each individual's level of energy, direction, belonging, and joy in measurable ways, the Lifeguard Initiative makes well-being and joy scalable for districts. "Not only has this program done wonders for my own personal well-being, but my joy is also doubled each time our team rolls this out to a new district," said Christine Sisco, SCOE's Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Support Services. "We love seeing the amazing things districts are doing with this and we learn as much from them as they do from us. It is like a whirlwind of well-being that keeps touching more teachers, staff, and students. We can't wait to see who we get to work with next," said Sisco.



SPSSC
Student Programs and Services
Steering Committee

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

EXPRESSING EMOTIONS WITH ART:
YOUTH AT THE SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER COLLABORATE
TO CREATE MURALS IN ART THERAPY PROGRAM

Once stark and colorless, the walls of the San Joaquin County Juvenile Justice Center have been completely transformed into a beautiful display of colorful creativity inspired by its very own residents.

With the help of local artist Erin Elizabeth and in collaboration with the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) and San Joaquin County Probation Office, the Juvenile Justice Center turned its walls into a canvas for students' imaginations. The immersive art therapy program gives students an opportunity to practice interpersonal skills, exercise patience, and leave their artistic mark on the facility.

The Juvenile Justice Center offers a therapeutic environment that supports youth and helps them engage with their emotions in healthy and safe ways. Through their art therapy program,

individuals at the site can learn new ways to express themselves through art.

“By having this program and bringing in the artist to work with students, the kids have an opportunity to see what it looks like to be calm, helpful, and inspiring,” said Doug Silva, a director of SJCOE County Operated Schools and Programs (COSP). COSP works to provide educational programs and places that support all students of San Joaquin County, academically, socio-emotionally, and through career development. At the

Juvenile Justice Center, COSP operates two schools: one.Cruikshank and one.Camp.

The program at these sites is centered around a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model that teaches students about a special platform, which students know as CHILL: Calm, Helpful, Inspire, Listen, and Learn. Artist Elizabeth



EXPRESSING EMOTIONS WITH ART:
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utilized the terms of CHILL to encourage the students to illustrate what those terms looked like and how the motto resonated with them personally. Taking the artistic representations created by the students in the program, Elizabeth transformed them into a larger-than-life mural painted proudly on the walls.

The students also paint their own works of art on canvas. They are featured in the one.Gallery, a showcase for the student art lining a wall of the staircase leading to the COSP offices, on display for the public and staff to enjoy.

And they do much more than paint during the art therapy sessions, Silva said. While painting landscapes, they also love engaging in discussions about nature and the outdoors, Silva said.

"The greatest benefit that the students get from putting their work on a canvas is the satisfaction and sense of electric positivity that comes from doing something that makes one feel good --even though one might not be in a good place," he said.

Since the art therapy program began, overall suspensions have been down. "It's not just a behavioral change," Silva said, "it's a cultural change -- for students as well as staff from SJCOE

and the Probation Office."



After taking a handful of art classes and contributing to the mural projects, one student said he looks forward to joining the art sessions. Not only does it change up his normal routine, but the student said he also enjoys the process of creating something new. "I like that you're able to start off with something blank, then you can make it whatever you want," he said. "It's calming."



Throughout the program, Elizabeth encouraged the kids to break away from any nervousness and to embrace their own creative processes. In this way, students could witness each others' own unique forms of expression, support each other, and unite through the diversity of their art. "Painting gives my students the space and movement to express themselves in a healthy way," she said. "My wish for my students is that they see the beauty that they already are, to heal and to forgive."



The mural also serves as a reminder to the students and staff at the school. The beautiful artwork recognizes how unique and creative approaches can support emotional expression, collaboration, and learning. "The mural completely changed the environment at the facility," Silva said. "It opened the door to what is possible here."

TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY:
COME BACK KIDS STUDENT MOVES FORWARD WITH HS DIPLOMA
San Joaquin County Office of Education

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY REQUIRES MANY STEPS.

For Viola Dinkins, her path started with drug addiction, then taking other steps to put the pieces of her life back together so she could keep moving ahead.

One of the pieces that she put back into place was her education, which she was able to do through Come Back Kids (CBK), a free program offered by the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) for anybody 18 years and older to receive a high school diploma.

There are many reasons why some adults haven't received their high school diploma by the time they reach the age of 20, 30, or older -- and many different obstacles.

CBK provides flexibility and resources to help students reach their education goals.

One place where CBK connects to students is the Family Justice Center, a facility of the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office, designed as a one-stop-shop for victims of crime. The services don't just focus on the immediate trauma of victims or the support they might need as the wheels of justice turn. They also connect victims of crimes to services that will help them grow and thrive long after the final gavel has fallen on their case. It was the place where Dinkins -- a victim of human trafficking -- found her path to getting an education.

She received her high school diploma at the Come Back Kids graduation ceremony in 2021 at the age of 41.

"I didn't finish high school because I thought, like every

teenager, I knew what was best for me," said Dinkins, a lifelong Stockton resident.

When she started using drugs, Dinkins said she was a "functioning addict." She had a job, children, and a fiancé, but she was able to hide her drug use. Her addiction got worse.

"I quit my job. I hit the streets, and I hit the streets running," she said. The drug use continued, and she started

on a path of prostitution that eventually led to her becoming a victim of human trafficking.

During this time of addiction, she also had another child. When Child Protective Services stepped in, it provided the chief motivation for Dinkins to make a change.

She entered into a rehabilitation program to get clean and begin down the path to recovery.

As she progressed, she worked to open doors of opportunity that were closed to her because she never finished high school. She also decided to get the diploma to prove to both herself and her daughter that it could be done and to set a positive example.

"I couldn't follow my dreams because I didn't finish school," Dinkins said. "I want my daughter to be who she wants to be. She is a bright, intelligent girl, and she deserves the best in life."

Dinkins found her way to the Come Back Kids program through the Family Justice Center, where victims of crime can connect to counselling, therapy, parenting classes,



TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY:
COME BACK KIDS STUDENT MOVES FORWARD WITH HS DIPLOMA
San Joaquin County Office of Education

assistance finding jobs, and many other services to help victims overcome what can sometimes be years of trauma and abuse, said Suzanne Shultz, Family Justice Center program manager.

"We see in the victim population that we're serving [that] disempowerment is a critical component," she said. "Abusers or traffickers break down their victims in order to control them," she said. The array of services found through the center can help build victims back up, and it can take time. "Opening the doorways of opportunity for true resiliency and thriving is what all of those resources are critical for."

"The CBK program is a good fit for the Family Justice Center, not just because of the educational component, but because the educators that are part of it understand how to help those experiencing trauma and other challenges," she said.

The SJCOE launched its CBK program in 2017 with guidance from already-established programs in Riverside and Stanislaus counties.

"Beyond the academics, CBK has relationships with service providers to help students of any age overcome the barriers between themselves and their diploma," said Doug McCreath, SJCOE CBK director. "Even if they don't come to us from the Family Justice Center, they still come to us with financial assistance needs, housing needs, mental health needs, clothing needs, and more," he said. "We know if we can't help them stabilize those issues, then they can't focus on getting their high school diploma."

The CBK program was also designed to be flexible enough that adults of any age would be able to complete the program in a way that works for them, including giving students access to Chromebooks to do work at home.

The flexibility allowed Dinkins to find time around two jobs to do her schoolwork. "This was very much my own pace," she said. "So, I'm in between shifts, on my breaks, or in between everything, I will just take it out, do some homework." In situations when she couldn't do the work on the Chromebook, she could do the work on printouts. And

even though she would usually do the work on her own, the support from her teacher was always there when she needed it, she said.

On May 24, 2021, Viola Dinkins joined her CBK classmates at the drive-through ceremony to celebrate completing the program and earning her high school diploma. If receiving the diploma opens more doors for her, she knows she will use those opportunities to help people.

Today, Viola works as the assistant director of recuperative care at the Gospel Center Rescue Mission in Stockton.

In that job, she starts her morning rounds at 6:30 a.m. to check on all her clients. She wants to know if they've taken their medications or if they've taken a turn for the worse and might need medical care. But she also does it to be a friendly face in the morning to make sure they know that breakfast will be waiting for them.

She works hard to make a connection with her clients. Her experiences help her do it. "Some of them put up walls," she said. She puts them at ease, lets them know that no matter what their past is that she is there to do whatever she can to help them, right now.

Throughout her own recovery, Dinkins received help from many along the way. She feels obligated to do the same. "I give back what was freely given to me."

It is clear that she really cares for people at the Rescue Mission, said Bert Cebrian, a veteran and former firefighter injured on the job some 27 years ago who was a client at the mission.

It's because of her that he was headed to stable housing in a Veterans Administration-funded home. He said she filled out all the paperwork during a long process and was the main point of contact with the agency providing the housing.

"She's amazing," he said. "She's a flawless diamond."

LINK TO VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EK0Xardg_Q

30 YEARS OF ONE.
SJCOE ONE.PROGRAM CELEBRATES 30 YEARS
San Joaquin County Office of Education

one.®

The history of the one.Program -- in true teacher fashion -- is written in colored marker on poster-sized sheets of paper.

Laid end-to-end, the notes and doodles that tell the year-by-year story of the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) alternative education program covers most of the length of three of the walls in the SJCOE's Burwood Auditorium.

The poster-paper tapestry was the backdrop as the educators of the one.Program gathered in early August, before the start of the new school year, to connect with one another and start working together to make sure it would be the best it could be for their students.

They were ready to welcome their students, no matter what challenges they brought with them, no matter what struggles they faced at home, no matter what issues they had that prevented them from achieving success in school before, no matter what shadow of past trauma loomed over them and obscured their vision of the bright futures that could be in front of them.

What was different for the start of the 2021-22 school year was the prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic students were facing. But helping students overcome tremendous challenges is what the one.Program does best. The program for at-risk students has been innovating, adapting, and fighting alongside students for decades.

This year also marks the one.Program's 30-year

anniversary, and the team is recognizing this milestone by getting to work to help students overcome yet one more big challenge.

"This year started at the same rapid pace to meet existing and new challenges as each new year has started for the past 30," said Elsa Gonzalez, who has been with the program since the start, from administrative assistant to director of County Operated Schools and Programs Student Services. She was part of the handful of original staff members getting ready for that first year. Now as then, serving students always meant moving forward. Fast.

"It's amazing that we have the same mindset now as we did then. We are always trying to do better for our kids," she said as she stood in front of the program's history on the Burwood Auditorium walls and told a group of one.Program veterans and first-year employees about the program's beginning.



Gonzalez passed the mic to Wendy Frink who spoke more about the program's early years, and how it shaped the experience of students today. Frink, a program director who started out as a teacher, made

sure the new staff members knew the story of Anthony, a former student who died by suicide about a year after his graduation. His death profoundly affected the one.Program team, and spurred them to create the the GBE. The Graduation By Exploration is a requirement for seniors that, among other things, calls for the student to create a post-graduation plan. "It's honoring him, knowing our students have a plan," she said.

The stories of people and the program continued as the mic was handed down through 30 years of history.

Before the creation of the one.Program, students in the county and state expelled from district schools often had nowhere else to go to continue their education. Many dropped out, never to return. In January 1991, new

30 YEARS OF ONE.
SJCOE ONE.PROGRAM CELEBRATES 30 YEARS
San Joaquin County Office of Education

San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools Rick Wentworth surveyed educational leaders in the county. They listed development of alternative programs among the top needs.

The nascent one.Program began the 1991-92 school year at two school sites, though the program wasn't yet known by the name that defines it and guides it.

The concept of "one." stands for the idea that each individual student is important and can make a difference in the world. It also stands for the idea that when individuals join together and work as "one." -- they can make miracles happen. It is as much of a concept for the students as it is for the staff that make up the one. Program.

Students in the one. Program often have needs that are not being met in traditional school settings. They include students who have been expelled, have attendance issues, come from traumatic family experiences, or face other challenges.

And those challenges change and are as unique as every individual student, said Janine Kaeslin, SJCOE associate superintendent of Student Programs and Services, who first joined the one.Program as a teacher in 1993. "One way the one.Program keeps pace with changing student needs is by fostering a culture that allows for new ideas, partnerships, and taking chances," she said. It also means not being complacent. "It is a spirit of knowing that we've never arrived, that we have to keep thinking and keep planning. The world changes as we're thinking and as we're planning, so we need to be savvy," she said. "And we also need to listen to the needs of our families and our students."

Over the years, the program has met unique needs with unique approaches -- schools for seniors; schools

for students with their own children; themed schools focused on sports, arts or other areas; and many more. It's the kind of continual innovation that has led to the creation of the Discovery ChalleNGe Academy, a residential program in partnership with the California National Guard, and the Come Back Kids (CBK), a high school diploma program for adults of all ages, which are among the more-recent arrivals to the one.Program.

"Relationships are an integral part of the program, both between adults and students and the relationships the whole staff builds with one another," said Sean Morrill, assistant superintendent of County Operated Schools and Programs.

"It's everybody pulling together as one. Our teachers, support staff, our administrators, our counselors, our mental health clinicians, and the student services folks are all in it for the same reason. And that's to make sure that every child has the support needed to move forward in a healthy lifestyle and become



caring adults, as well."

When Crystal Figeroa came to the one.Program as a sixth-grader, she carried with her a history of trauma. She acted out. She got into fights. And for years, she fought against attempts to reach her. It didn't stop the one.Program team from trying to connect with her and help her understand how successful she could be.

"I felt like it was not true because of what I had already poured into my head. So, it took a while. It took a long time for me to break out of this wall that I constructed myself," she said. "They wouldn't give up on me."

When that connection was finally made, Figeroa moved forward. She graduated high school. She went to San Joaquin Delta College. She earned a bachelor's degree at California State University, Stanislaus. Now she's a campus security technician at the one.Program,

30 YEARS OF ONE.
SJCOE ONE.PROGRAM CELEBRATES 30 YEARS
San Joaquin County Office of Education

using her own background and experiences to build connections with the next generation of students.

"It takes perseverance, patience, and resilience to be a one.Program teacher," said Kathy Tenney, a teacher at the one.Program since it began. "I have always liked working with students that maybe didn't have the best hand of cards dealt to them."

"Even though the program has grown, there are still key elements that have remained the same," she said. At the start there would be a handful of staff members meeting on Fridays to come up with ideas that they could make happen because of the support behind them. "It's amazing how big it's gotten. But there's still that collaboration and there's still that feeling of working together." The importance placed on relationships has stayed the same, too, she said. "That was always the word from the very beginning."

Building relationships will be key to success of one of the priorities of the program this year: to re-engage with students who have been disconnected from school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Each individual student has a story, and each individual student has different needs that must be met," said Dr. Troy Brown, San Joaquin County superintendent of schools. "It is so important to build relationships with these students so that they know we care about them and that we're here to serve them -- probably more than in any year in the recent past."

A newly created re-engagement team is leading the effort, continuing the one.Program's tradition of pivoting to meet changing needs of students.

Before the first day of school this year, the relationship-building began at enrolment. Each student answered survey questions to help staff understand their needs and expectations for the year.

And each one of the more than 1,400 students enrolling this year for one of 64 locations had a unique story about where they had been and where they expected to be.

"I was messing up in school. I wasn't really focused or anything. I was goofing up," said José, just one of the

returning students talking about his experience before the one.Program. "Once I got into the one.Program I started getting all my work done, started staying busy. It helped me as a person and helped me see things differently."

He also said he was looking forward to graduating high school, which was something he didn't

think could happen before he found the one.Program.

VIDEO LINK:

<https://youtu.be/CVcq0F2cMpU>

one.®



Metal Fabrication Welding 1, 2, and 3

What do you get when you have a high school junior who has struggled throughout their entire educational career, told they have a far below average IQ, and multiple diagnoses qualifying them for special education services? You guessed it! An opportunity! We, as members of the alternative education community, are all about taking advantage of every opportunity to “transform lives through education.” In fact, we have opportunities throughout our entire student population under the guise of McKinney-Vento, English language learners, historically truant, etc. Career and Technical Education provides a unique opportunity to capture the attention of these hard to engage students.

Administrators are tasked with tending to a legion of responsibilities, including building capacity in staff so they are well equipped to ensure the academic, social, and emotional growth of all students. Consequently, cultivating strong community partnerships and expanding boundaries regarding when and how students



have access to curriculum are crucial when promoting equity and access during unprecedented times.

Reignite Hope Mobile Welding Program Partnership:

Working with Reignite Hope has provided the bandwidth necessary to

add an entire class during a time when traditional teachers are struggling in various ways, and CTE teachers are difficult to secure. Reignite Hope trains students for a career in welding, gets them certified in the welding trade, and assists them with job placement (<https://www.reignitehope.com>). According to Steve Bunyard, the goal is “teaching a man to fish instead of giving him a proverbial fish.” In essence the mission of Reignite Hope is to smite out joblessness. Ensuring all students are interested, especially those in protected groups, are certified in a trade, or

equipped otherwise to pursue a career with benefits is the goal of our CTE endeavors. There are collateral benefits as well. Students are mentored by community members with whom they may never have had the opportunity to engage. Moreover, because Reignite Hope stipulates that partners must connect with other organizations to provide lunch for the class, our community partnerships are strengthened and students have another encounter with a positive, caring adult. Partnering with Reignite Hope also eliminates the management, planning, and preparation for labs, managing a CTE teaching load, marketing, etc.



Expanding boundaries: Through student surveys it became clear that a pathway leading to the exploration of welding as a career needed to be pursued. Over the course of 6 to 8 months, collaboration took place between San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools staff and Reignite hope. Reignite Hope is located 49 miles away from the nearest school site. All available Monday through Friday time slots were full at the time of planning. Neither distance nor time would serve as a deterrent. Out of numerous collaboration sessions came the idea of expanding boundaries of time and location leading to Reignite Hope's inaugural class taking place all day on Saturdays at David Stine Chaffey West County Community School in the Inland Empire.

To provide additional support San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools central office supported the purchase of zSpace machines to enhance the pre, in-process, and post session experiences for all students.

Wave NG Welding by Mimbus: Using zSpace, Wave NG Welding by MIMBUS provides students with hands-on training in both SMAW and GMAW welding techniques through a series of exercises performed with a handheld welding simulator. Students receive multisensory training, allowing them to weld from multiple angles using their eyes, ears, and hands to master the fundamentals of welding. Wave NG is just one of the two tools used for classroom implementation created by MIMBUS.

Wave NG Welding by MIMBUS: The simulator application found on the zSpace System used for training.

Vulcan: A web-based tool designed for the instructor to manage the training experience. Vulcan is the learning management tool that will assign student user codes, training paths, and exercises.

Journalist Nicholas Kristof once shared, talent is universal, but opportunity is not. This does not have to be the case for any student if we are intentional. Cultivating strong partnerships and expanding traditional school day boundaries, allowed for the removal of barriers, and provided access to historically marginalized students. Our "at promise" youth have access to industry certification giving them the ability to launch into their postsecondary life better equipped to participate fully as a contributing member of society.

At the completion of the program, students receive their AWS certification, which is quite prestigious. Upon completion of the course students will be able to: Demonstrate proficiency in many areas including the proper operation of Gas Metal Arc Welding in the Flat and Horizontal positions, the setting of proper voltage, wire feed, and gas flow rates of Gas Metal Arc Welding Equipment, and more.

Reflection: This journey has presented a splendid experience. Most impressive was the level of engagement. Students maintained high levels of authentic engagement over extended periods of time. The response from students as community members showered them with high quality breakfasts, lunches, and snacks was heartwarming. Moreover, as the host groups fellowshipped with the class after serving them, students held stimulating and engaging conversations and extended many thanks for their hospitality. In fact, most tenets of the Whole Child Framework (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/wholechildres.asp>) are addressed to one degree or another. Most notably, outside of being engaged, students were supported based on individual need, provided choice and challenged academically.

EXPANDING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN DETENTION:
YOUTH TRANSITION CAMPUS
BY: JOANNE L. FINNEY, SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

The youth Transition Campus is a residential facility for students who have been adjudicated through the Juvenile Court in San Diego. Here, a student can feel like a student. It looks like a comprehensive high school with modern facilities, upgraded technology, grass, trees, and open spaces. The facility includes a school program, called SOAR Academy. During the first weeks, Principal, Joanne L. Finney, went to each cottage on the YTC to debrief the school day with their



students. What she heard from students was:

Student 1: "Wow, I don't feel like I'm in jail anymore."

Student 2: "This would be the type of school I would go to if I went to school in the outs."

Student 1: "Dude, you need to go to school."

Student 2: "I'll go if school is like this."

On February 7, 2022, the Youth Transition Campus (YTC) opened its doors to the first group of students. The YTC is a restorative, trauma-informed, service-oriented, community-friendly, therapeutic, rehabilitative campus that reflects the national best practices that promote positive student development and staff well-being. As part of the school's vision, probation officers, education

staff, behavioral health team, and medical staff trained in collaborative cohorts in which staff members learned how a student's personal history of abuse or neglect may have contributed to their criminal behavior, as well as how the behaviors may present in different areas of the facility and during the academic day.

Beginning in 2017, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, the San Diego County Probation Department, The Children's Initiative, and the San Diego County Office of Education has worked with other justice partners and community leaders to reimagine the future juvenile detention with a specific focus on using data and research that promote positive and successful outcomes for our students. The overall design of the facility and school and the methods for the day-to-day operations follow the Youth in Custody Practice Model designed by Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the Council



of Juvenile Justice Administrators. In addition, the YTC is a LEED gold certificated campus that was built using green construction supplies and is energy-efficient.

The YTC is a complete transformation of the

EXPANDING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN DETENTION:
YOUTH TRANSITION CAMPUS
BY: JOANNE L. FINNEY, SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION



1954 juvenile facility. There are no iron bars or concertina wire. The classrooms and cottages have physical spaces that reflect natural light, and the color scheme includes warm shades of blue, yellow, green, and lilac. Across 12 acres, the eight housing units may accommodate up to 96 students. Each cottage was named by students at the East Mesa Juvenile Detention Facility. Names like Succeed, Achieve, Thrive, and Lead provide daily positive affirmations for students. In keeping with the Anne E. Casey Foundation guidelines, which advocate for at-promise children, each cottage has a therapist who works with the students assigned to that cottage. Cottages also have a dedicated space for students to cool off, meditate and do yoga, and engage in 1:1 counseling or small therapy groups.

The cottages are organized around an open courtyard, with the school at the center. The school has five regular classrooms, a science lab, and an art classroom. There are two CTE classrooms- one for building trades and the other dedicated to graphic arts. There is a teaching kitchen, and a CIF regulation gym and weight room. The facility also boasts a “black box” with stage lighting for theatrical productions, as well as a school library, and a multi-purpose room dedicated to social-emotional learning activities and group therapy.

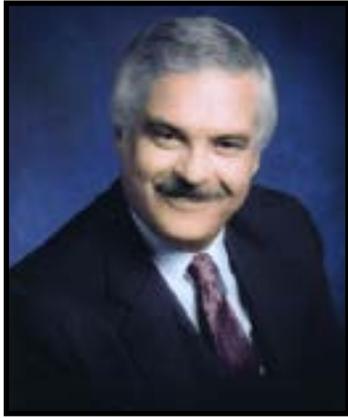
In the school courtyard, there is an amphitheater that faces a drop-down film screen and the theatre. Coming this spring, the school will add a garden. The culinary arts students will use the vegetables and fruits grown as their farm-to-table initiative. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in agriculture class in conjunction with the partnership with the San Diego 4-H. Division Chief Christiene Andrews and Principal Finney both believe that one way to help a child with trauma is to have students raise and know the love of an animal. Thus, miniature goats and chickens will be on campus by summer.



All the furniture was chosen based on modern design and the impact of flexible design, and how it affects student success and comfort and provides for COVID-19 guidelines within the classroom.

The Youth Transition Campus is the first part of two phases in redeveloping the overall justice campus. The next phase of construction began on March 21 and will include a 72-bed Temporary Residential Placement Facility, formerly known as Juvenile Hall. The school will have six dedicated classrooms and two multipurpose areas. A 440 track, soccer field, and outdoor fitness circuit will complete the SOAR Academy school facilities during this phase.

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 2022 RECIPIENT

MONALISA VITELA

IMPERIAL COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

I am honored, humbled, and pleased to accept this award and to join past recipients who I have admired and respected my entire career. Thank you to those who nominated me and supported my journey throughout my professional career. I would like to recognize the Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School Administration of California (JCCASAC) Committee and members for your passion, dedication, and work you put into serving the students and families that need love the most! We all know that this is the most challenging yet rewarding job in the world.



JOHN PESHKOFF AWARD

My professional career began at Imperial County Office of Education in 1993 as a Probation Assistant assigned to the community school in El Centro. At the time, my goal was to be a Probation Officer. After two years as a Probation Assistant at ICOE, I realized my true passion was to serve students in the classroom. After several years in the classroom, I became the counselor and principal at ICOE. I have had the privilege to serve as the Senior Director for the Court and Community Schools and the Imperial Pathways Charter School in Imperial County since 2007.

I joined the JCCASAC Board as Member-at-Large for the Southern Section in 2009 and was the Chair during the 2014-2015 school year. I can honestly say that being part of the JCCASAC family has been extremely rewarding and has provided me with the best professional development the past 20 years.

My experience in working with JCCASAC has provided me with the opportunity to learn from the best leaders throughout the state and model best practices in my work community. I will forever be the biggest cheerleader for my peers, students, and parents. I am tremendously honored to be selected to receive this award...I am only as strong as my team! Thank you once again for motivating me to continue having the highest level of dedication in this job.

Every child deserves a champion--an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be. -Rita Pierson



SPSSC

Student Programs and Services
Steering Committee

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

HONORING JCCASAC PAST PRESIDENTS

1970-71 Don Purdy Santa Clara	1980-81 Marty Familletti Riverside	1992-93 John Stankovich Kings	2002-03 Jeanne Hughes Kern	2012-13 Deni Baughn Orange
1971-72 Chuck Lee San Diego	1981-82 Joe De Mello Contra Costa	1993-94 Bob Michels Santa Clara	2003-04 Jacqueline Flowers San Joaquin	2013-14 Gary Vincent Monterey
1972-73 Doug Booth San Mateo	1982-83 Roy Savage Riverside	1994-95 Larry Springer Los Angeles	2004-05 Jeanne Dukes San Luis Obispo	2014-15 Monalisa Vitela Imperial
1973-74 Joe De Mello Contra Costa	1983-84 Ken Kammuller Marin	1995-96 Claudette Inge Alameda	2005-06 Paula Mitchell Santa Clara	2015-16 Telka Walser Stanislaus
1974-75 Marshall Lomax Los Angeles	1985-86 Greg Almand Contra Costa	1996-97 Ken Taylor Kern	2006-07 Maruta Gardner San Diego	2016-17 Christian Shannon Kern
1975-76 John Hull Sacramento	1986-87 Hedy Kirsh Orange	1997-98 Mick Founts San Joaquin	2007-08 Peter Kostas Mendocino	2017-18 Wendy Frink San Joaquin
1976-77 Rocco Nobile San Diego	1987-88 Shirl Schmidt Shasta	1998-99 Dolores Redwine San Diego	2008-09 Mary Lou Vachet Orange	2018-219 Katy Ramenzani Orange
1977-78 John Peshkoff Santa Clara	1988-89 Chuck Lee San Diego	1999-00 Vic Trucco Sonoma	2009-10 Mary Bell Sacramento	2019-20 Pam Coronado Fresno
1978-79 Jerry Matney Orange	1989-90 William Burns San Mateo	2000-01 Janet Addo Los Angeles	2010-11 Sean Morrill San Diego	2020-21 Pam Coronado Fresno
1979-80 Miltie Couteur Butte	1990-91 John Peshkoff Orange	2001-02 Michael Watkins Santa Cruz	2011-12 Janine Cuaresma San Joaquin	2021-22 Jason Hasty Los Angeles and Johnny Rice Santa Cruz

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2021- 2022 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 2021-2022 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!

Devin Perry
Madera County

Rosario Alvarez
San Diego County

Sabrina Gonzales
Stanislaus

Isaac Jones
Contra Costa County

Jeremiah Ealey-Smith
San Joaquin County

Nicole Garcia Delgado
San Diego

Daneka Hall
Contra Costa County

Alicia Yarbery
Stanislaus

Lizette Franzette Jane
Rodriguez
Kern



SPSSC

Student Programs and Services
Steering Committee

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

JCCASAC Teacher of the Year - 2022

JCCASAC board members are excited to announce the sixth 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 BECKY RAY STANISLAUS COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Becky Ray truly embodies the character, heart and commitment the Alternative Education world must possess for student success. Dedicated, confident, passionate, and invested are just a few of the words used by students and colleagues when describing her.

Becky has worked with Stanislaus County Office of Education for over 34 years, engaging students beyond the classroom. Throughout her tenure with the Stanislaus Military Academy, she has taught all subject areas in the classroom and is currently teaching modified Independent Studies. Based on her knowledge of curriculum and her classroom environment, Becky's students feel cared for intellectually and emotionally, while becoming prepared for the 21st century global job markets. Becky uses her Independent study classroom as a vehicle to ensure that

each student leaves class a better person than when they entered. Her never-ending compassion and empathetic attitude is testimony to her sincere belief that all of her students can learn. Each student is valued for what they bring to class. Whether you are a squirrely 9th grader who has all the

answers to life, a guarded, shy 11th grader who doesn't trust the world, or a street wise young adult trying to improve his/her life, Mrs. Ray adjusts to you, building a strong positive relationship.

As a teacher, Becky Ray is not afraid to "roll up her sleeves" and jump in. She works side by side her colleagues with the same compassionate, confident

genuineness she has dedicated to her students. Becky's mentoring style is evident throughout our school community as she collaborates campus and county wide for the success of all students.



JCCASAC Teacher of the Year-Nominees

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES.



Teacher of the Year
LESLIE ADCOCK
ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Leslie Adcock, Orange County Department of Education

Leslie has worked for the OCDE for the past 31 years. Throughout, she has worked tirelessly to fulfill the mission and vision of the Access Program. Her professional journey has included time with Project Hope working with students experiencing homelessness, serving as a teacher and site liaison for teen parents, and facilitating California state testing as a program specialist. Leslie advanced as an assistant principal at ACCESS before ultimately following her passion back to the classroom, where she currently serves as the site liaison, day school, and contract learning teacher at the El Modena and Santiago Creek learning centers.



Teacher of the Year
DIASHAWN BANKS
LOS ANGELES COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Diashawn Banks, Los Angeles County Office of Education

Diashawn Banks has served as a teacher since 2008. He has worked for East Side Union School District, and throughout the Los Angeles County Office of Education programs, from Special Day classrooms to General Education Classrooms, from the prestigious Los Angeles County High School of the Arts (LACHSA) to juvenile hall and ranch camps. In all venues, he has earned the admiration of his colleagues and the respect of his students. His caring and dynamic disposition magnetizes and enlightens students' interest to learn and perform. He is culturally responsive and meets students where they are. Mr. Banks is always student ready. Many observers have expressed, "If there were more Banks in the system, we would have more successful kids."



Teacher of the Year
LINDA BRYSON
KERN COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Linda Bryson, Kern County Superintendent of Schools

Linda has worked for Kern County Superintendent of Schools since 2014. She currently works as a Special Education Teacher at Blanton Academy and Bridges Academy. Ms. Blanton is an exceptional teacher who goes above and beyond for her students. She works tirelessly at connecting with each of her students. She encourages, and challenges students at every turn, even those that are not on her caseload. Students always seem to seek her out, even long after they have graduated, simply because they know that she cares and will do anything she can to help.

JCCASAC Teacher of the Year-Nominees

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES.



Teacher of the Year
ASHLEY CHAMPEAUX
TUOLUMNE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Ashley Champeaux, Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools

Ashley Champeaux works for the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools as a teacher in the Mother Lode REgional Detention Facility, where she has served for the last five years. She takes the time to build a sense of community with her students, and this allows students to feel safe and ready to learn. Ms. Champeaux understands the impact education has on improving the life trajectories of her students and she puts her efforts there. Students report that Ms. Champeaux treats everyone with respect and communicates her belief in the success of every student. Outside of the classroom, Ms. Champeaux has been involved in the school's recent WASC self-study and has also regularly attended curriculum meetings and provided valuable input on schoolwide curriculum adoptions.



Teacher of the Year
SEAN CROSSNO
MONTEREY COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Sean Crossno, Monterey County Office of Education

Mr. Sean Crossno was raised in San Marcos, California. As a young adult, he moved to California's Central Coast where he attended and graduated from UC Santa Cruz, with a Bachelor's of Arts in Environmental Studies/Agroecology. He dedicated 2 additional years to his studies at UC Santa Cruz and earned his Masters of Education and Single Subject Teaching Credential in Social Sciences. For the past 12 years, Sean has been employed at Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) as a teacher in Juvenile Hall. Sean's exemplary service and dedication to his students and co-workers was identified early on, and he was awarded with promotion to Lead Teacher 7 years ago. In this role, Sean manages all aspects of the County Court School, including meeting with every new student and acclimating them to their new school setting. He excels at connecting with his students by creating bonds with each of them.



Teacher of the Year
DANIELLE DAVID
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Danielle David, Contra Costa County Office of Education

Ms. David has worked for the Contra Costa County Office of Education since 2019. Her background as a teacher and instructional coach have helped to define her time among administration and staff as a teacher-leader. Ms. David is said to support her colleagues in their endeavors to bring joy and guidance to the youth and can often be seen smiling and encouraging others throughout the building. When it comes to students, Ms. David, is said to be committed, caring, and compassionate and that she is constantly educating herself on how to become an even better resource to them.

JCCASAC Teacher of the Year-Nominees

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES.



Anita Miller, San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

Ms. Miller is often requested by students and teachers, as it is well-known that she is kind, compassionate, and skillful in her craft. She is a dynamic facilitator of thought and critical thinking. She is passionate about the art of learning and passes that passion along to her students. During the pandemic, Ms. Miller provided a wrap-around experience designed to meet the individual needs of each student. Ms. Miller is a reflective and innovative educator who puts her efforts toward continuous improvement of her self, her students and the school as a whole.



Cindy Stallo, San Diego County Office of Education

Ms. Stallo has worked as an educator for the San Diego County Office of Education since 2000. Currently, she is Head Teacher at the 37ECB Campus. As an education specialist, Stallo brings a unique set of skills to campus, particularly inclusion and engagement. Ms. Stallo serves on many district-level committees, and is passionate about equity, social justice, and inclusion both inside and outside of the classroom. According to one student, the school garden Ms. Stallo helped to create has resulted in a peaceful, welcoming, and nutritious place for student relaxation and growth.



Dr. Willie Charles Thomas, San Joaquin County Office of Education

In the words of one of his students, "Mr. T. is an all-around great person, and he is a perfect example of how a teacher should act toward their students." Dr. Thomas currently teaches math and science at one Lodi, and he has worked for the San Joaquin County Operated Schools and Programs for 7 years. His passion for equity, building site culture and meaningful relationships with staff and students has helped create a positive learning environment for all.

The Current Study

Situated in communities, schools have the platform and opportunity to operate as hubs or spatial community assets (Green, 2015) that respond to social and racial justice by working collaboratively to support the needs of children and families in their community. Incorporating community responsive pedagogy and social justice leadership philosophies, practices and policies, schools can create inclusive environments for students and families (Johnson, 2014) that serve to prepare, equip, and activate young people to be successful, contributing members of their communities. By engaging in a two-way relationship that positions the school as a community space rooted in equity and equipped with resources that support the needs of students, parents and the broader community, students and families can feel empowered at school and throughout their neighborhoods to advocate for themselves and each other.

Drawing from the work of Green, T. L. (2015), Johnson, L. (2014) and Sanders, M. (2009), opportunities exist for effective community engagement, and districts, principals and other identified school personnel all have positionality to encourage and facilitate community engagement in their respective roles. From their work, three themes resonate throughout for effective community engagement, 1) an appetite and willingness for change, 2) cross-boundary leadership (Green, 2015) or boundary spanning (Johnson, 2014) and 3) collaboration. Traditionally, schools and more specifically principals, would engage with communities by hosting open houses to encourage an increase in enrollment, mandating parent-teacher conferences so parents can stay aware of their students' academic progression (Green, 2015), encouraging membership in parent-teacher associations (PTA's) to support fundraising efforts, school site-councils for schools eligible for Title I funding, and required a council made up of teachers and parents to ensure transparency and accountability of school resource allocations. On the other hand, communities via community-based organizations or advocacy groups would normally only engage schools or districts to confront issues or harmful educational policies and practices (Sanders, 2009) that negatively affected or ignored

their students or community. Very rarely and almost never intentionally, do schools and communities come together for the benefit of the school/community dynamic and to prevent some of the injustices and harm seen at schools and in communities.

Community engagement depends on a leader's ability to introduce, implement, and support the efforts. Leaders uplifted in the articles could all be described as culturally responsive leaders that had a broad vision for school and community (Green, 2015), were seen as advocates for family and community engagement (Sanders, 2009), affirmed the diverse background and views of their students, and were "responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change" (Johnson, 2014). As boundary spanners, these leaders used their social capital and influence to broker relationships (Johnson, 2014) with the community and bridge divides that would normally exist to allow school and community to become intentional extensions of each other with shared goals and defined responsibilities with, leaders working both in the school and in the community (Green, 2015) to bring in and share coordinated resources (Sanders, 2009). According to Sanders, 2009, "the success of such efforts largely depends on the willingness of schools to collaborate with family and community groups to achieve common goals." "Siloed leadership is insufficient for tackling school and community challenges," (Green, 2015) and collaboration with shared influence and collective responsibility is key to effective community engagement.

The purpose of this research is to understand the motivation behind why school leaders engage with their communities and to explore if differences exist between how schools engage with their communities based on the grades of the students.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Quantitative Research Question: To what extent do K-12 leaders differ in their perception of community engagement efforts based on the grade level they teach/support?
2. Qualitative Research Question: What prompted or motivated school leaders to engage with strengthening community relations in their schools?

3. Mixed Method Research Question: What is the difference between K-12 leaders, grade level, motivation, and efforts made towards community engagement?

Method

Participants

Potential survey participants who identify as K-12 educational leaders, were recruited using a convenience sampling method based on their connection to the Loyola Marymount University School of Education. A total of 90 potential participants were contacted through email by Dr. Huchting, a university professor who maintained a listserv of K-12 educational leaders. Subjects were invited to opt into the survey and asked to participate in order to support graduate students who are learning about quantitative and qualitative measures. The age, gender, and other demographics of those who were contacted to participate in the study are unknown, though all participants were adults, who at some point, had self-identified as K-12 educational leaders. The email invited 90 participants to participate in an anonymous survey that was conducted using Qualtrics. Participants were sent two emails as a reminder to complete the survey. One reminder was via email and sent at the end of the first week and the second reminder was emailed during the mid-week of the second week of when the Qualtrics survey opened. The response rate was approximately 44%, with 40 educational leaders completing the survey. Of the respondents, 26 were female and 14 were male. Five of the participants identified as a Site Administrator in an Elementary setting, five identified as a Site Administrator in a Middle School, 13 identified as a Site Administrator in a Secondary school, and 17 identified as working in another category. Those who identified in the “other” category held positions such as “Learning Specialist,” “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator,” “Teacher,” and “Chief Academic Officer.” Of the 40 participants, 19 worked in private school settings, 12 worked in traditional public-school settings, 6 in a charter school setting, and 3 identified as “other.” Of the 3 who identified working in an “other category,” two reported working in a non-profit setting. The racial ethnic identity of the survey

participants included 16 white participants, 11 Latinx/Hispanic, 5 Black/African American, 4 Asian, 3 Multi Racial/Multiethnic, and 1 participant who declined to state.

In addition to the quantitative survey tool, four interviews were conducted to answer the qualitative research question. The interviewees were professional educators who worked in both charter and traditional public schools (see Appendix A). Of the four people surveyed, one is a Filipino male, one is an Asian female, one is a Latinx female, and one is a White female. All interviewees had 15 years or more of educational experience; two work in charter education and two work in public education. Interviewees ranged in age from 37 to 52, and all interviews were conducted via Zoom using recording to facilitate transcription.

Design and Procedures

This mixed methods research study aimed to explore the community engagement of culturally relevant school leadership (CRSL) and school leaders at different grade levels and with varying years of experience in leadership at their school sites. The study aimed to understand the motivation behind why school leaders engage with their communities and to explore if differences exist between how schools engage with their communities based on the grades of the students. The researchers used semi-structured interviews to explore how K-12 school leaders articulate community engagement in their schools, looking to see if a notion of boundary-spanning leadership appears in their answers. The researchers aimed to use the quantitative and qualitative data in tandem to look for similarities between how community engagement is articulated by school leaders and their engagement in action. Below is a review describing how a mixed-methods approach was used.

Participants for the survey portion of the study initially volunteered to participate in a survey that aimed to further knowledge regarding educational leadership. Demographic information was in connection to the school grade spans where the participants held leadership roles (i.e. Elementary,

Charity Chandler-Cole, Kristina Martinez, Claire Ramirez, and Megan Schooler
Orange County Department of Education

Intermediate, High School). Survey participants were provided a Loyola Marymount University Informed Consent Form provided by the Principal Investigators. This outlined the purpose, potential risks, benefits, incentives, confidentiality, right to withdraw, summary of results, and voluntary consent. The survey to participants was provided through Qualtrics via email and invited participants to complete the survey. The online survey was available to participants for two weeks. All research materials and consent forms have been stored via electronic encryption and those who will have access to the data will include the four Principal Investigators as well as their two professors in the Loyola Marymount School of Education Department (Dr. Huchting and Dr. Stephenson). Due to the participants' identifying information remaining confidential and anonymous, no reward was provided directly by the investigating party. In addition to an online survey, four additional participants volunteered to participate in the study. Interviewee's identification is confidential; however, they were also identified as being working adults in the field of educational leadership. Their expertise ranged from educational leadership in elementary through high school. Similar to participants engaging in the online survey, the four interviewees were provided a Loyola Marymount University Informed Consent Form provided by the four investigators. This also outlined the purpose, potential risks, benefits, incentives, confidentiality, right to withdraw, summary of results, and voluntary consent. These four interviewees agreed to participate in a 20–30-minute recorded interview via Zoom. Prior to engaging in conversation, interviewees were asked for permission to be recorded via Zoom for later analysis via transcription. While no gifts or incentives were provided for this study, the researchers chose to mail thank you cards to each interviewing participant.

Measures

To assess the K-12 educational leaders' perceptions of community engagement efforts and the motivation behind their collaboration with outside agencies, this mixed-methods design drew from interviews, surveys, and detailed field

notes. The survey instrument included both Likert-scale questions (for perception) and numerical value questions (for efforts). To measure educational leaders' perceptions toward community engagement, survey participants were asked to respond to a survey that included 7 Likert-scale items, with responses ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree"). The questions that were included in the survey were informed by the literature that was discussed above. Items measuring an educational leader's perceptions towards community engagement, for example, included, "I feel my school is adequately partnering with local community resources to meet the needs of students in my school," "I feel my students are aware of the community resources available to them." "I feel our school partners with community stakeholders to identify the needs of students, families, and the community," and "I feel my school purposefully works with community leaders towards mutually beneficial school and community outcomes" (see Appendix B for the list of items). Responses to these items were aggregated to create a composite of the educational leader's "efforts" by calculating the mean score across all 7 items. The Cronbach coefficient alpha suggested strong internal reliability ($\alpha = .78$) when question one was omitted. The question that was omitted asked "I feel that there is a need for community engagement in my school." Therefore, a mean composite was created across the remaining 6 questions to create the variable of "efforts." This composite score was used in subsequent analysis.

To measure the educational leaders' efforts towards community engagement, survey participants were asked to use a numerical value to answer the question, "How many community resources or organizations does your school partner with to provide resources that benefit students?" The number of resources or organizations the educational leader stated that their school partnered with to benefit students was used to measure their efforts towards community engagement. If a respondent left the response blank, a value of zero was assumed. If the respondent used a range (for example, 4-5), the larger value was used.

Interview

Interview questions were developed based on a combination of the research questions, literature, and group discussion. The goal of the interview questions was to derive as much information and insight as possible to understand the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the participants' motivations and actions to engage their communities, along with the type of community engagement efforts being made. The Principle Investigators wanted, on one hand, to compare their responses with the literature, and on the other, gauge if community engagement differed or was more pronounced based on the grade level being supported. Topics in the interview included what prompted individuals to strengthen community engagement efforts, how schools purposefully worked with community leaders to improve the support and resources that are available to students, families and community members and what resources, opportunities or support were being offered and available to students, family, and community. Using a scripted interview protocol (Appendix C), we were able to standardize interviews across the four interviewers to allow for consistency and continuity of responses.

Analytical Plan

To answer the quantitative research question, we had planned to use an ANOVA to measure to what extent K-12 leaders differed in their perception of community engagement efforts. The ANOVA analysis would have been appropriate because the survey collected scaled data that was analyzed by four categories. Due to the sample sizes being too small, it was ultimately decided that an ANOVA analysis could not be used, and a comparative and descriptive analysis was used instead. The analysis examined the composite scores that were calculated to measure the educational leader's perceptions towards community engagement. The four groups measured were Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and the "Other" category.

To measure the efforts made by educational leaders, descriptive analysis was used to compare the number of

resources or organizations the educational leader stated that their school partnered with to benefit students, grouped by Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and the "Other" category. For the numerical responses, if a respondent left the response blank, a value of zero was assumed. If the respondent used a range (for example, 4-5), the larger value was used. There were no blank responses for the Likert scale questions.

Results**Survey**

A quantitative analysis of the survey results (Appendix D) did not reveal significant differences between the educational leaders' perceptions and efforts towards community engagement and the type of educational setting (elementary, middle, secondary, and other) where the participants teach or support.

Perceptions towards Community Engagement

The survey results revealed that there were no significant differences between educational leaders' perceptions of community engagement and the four different grade level categories (elementary, middle, secondary, and other). There was not a significant difference between elementary and middle school educational leaders' perceptions towards community engagement. Elementary educational leaders ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .68$) were not significantly different in their perceptions towards community engagement compared to middle school educational leaders ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .56$). Elementary educational leaders ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .68$) were not significantly different in their perceptions towards community engagement compared to secondary educational leaders ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .71$). Elementary educational leaders ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .68$) were not significantly different in their perceptions towards community engagement compared to other educational leaders ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .65$). Middle school educational leaders ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .56$) were not significantly different in their perceptions towards community engagement compared to secondary educational leaders ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .71$). Middle school educational leaders ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .56$) were not significantly different

in their perceptions towards community engagement compared to other educational leaders ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .65$). Secondary educational leaders ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .71$) were not significantly different in their perceptions towards community engagement compared to other educational leaders ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .65$).

Efforts towards Community Engagement

The reported number of community resources the survey participants partnered with revealed that there were not significant differences between educational leaders' efforts of community engagement and the 4 different grade level categories (elementary, middle, secondary, and other). Elementary educational leaders ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.34$) were not significantly different in their efforts towards community engagement compared to middle school educational leaders ($M = 6.6$, $SD = 5.68$). Elementary educational leaders ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.34$) were not significantly different in their efforts towards community engagement compared to secondary educational leaders ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 3.17$). There was not a significant difference between elementary and secondary school educational leaders efforts towards community engagement $t(18) = -1.99$, $p > .01$. Elementary educational leaders ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.34$) were not significantly different in their efforts towards community engagement compared to other educational leaders ($M = 7.29$, $SD = 9.83$). Middle school educational leaders ($M = 6.6$, $SD = 5.68$) were not significantly different in their efforts towards community engagement compared to secondary educational leaders ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 3.17$). Middle school educational leaders ($M = 6.6$, $SD = 5.68$) were not significantly different in their efforts towards community engagement compared to other educational leaders ($M = 7.29$, $SD = 9.83$). Secondary educational leaders ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 3.17$) were not significantly different in their efforts towards community engagement compared to other educational leaders ($M = 7.29$, $SD = 9.83$).

Interview

The four interviews investigated what prompted or

motivated the school leaders to engage with and to strengthen community relations in their schools. Based on the questions for the interview, we initially coded the interviews using a priori codes including the educator's motivation for engagement, the community activities and resources offered by the school, the educator's knowledge of and connection to the local community, as well as evidence of self reflective or critical awareness of the school and community contexts. Based on the initial reads we also added inductive codes to include transitions within leadership; the (mis)alignment between desires, plans, and praxis; the definition of community engagement, and the impact of COVID on community engagement. Overall, the themes and codes showed that community engagement was valued by educators regardless of setting; however, there were obstacles that prevented educators from enacting these priorities fully.

All four educators expressed a commitment to community engagement, but they also struggled to prioritize and implement community engagement work. Bryce, an assistant principal at a K-8 charter school, viewed the community engagement work as central to the ability for students to succeed. He said, "I don't want parents to have any hindrances or obstruction that prevents them from sending their kids to school, so with that in mind, I'm trying to figure out how can we work with stakeholders at providing those resources, whether it be getting our parents free food like from a food bank or getting transportation services." Nancy, an Assistant Principal at a charter middle school, said that community engagement efforts at her site were "woven into the framework, I think again it's always written in the strategic plan." However, even with the explicit focus in the school plan, they were not seeing the results they wanted. Nancy expressed, "The execution of it, the implementation of it, and I think the



progress monitoring around that goal, I think that's the direction that they are trying to move towards in hiring someone full time to own that role at the district level to be able to be the steward of the community." Mary, an administrator in a high school within the juvenile court system, also expressed dissatisfaction with the community engagement work that is taking place at her site. She noted that there is a focus on community engagement through training and development. She emphasized, "It's becoming more common that we're going to training and things like that about community engagement, so in my current position it's come up a lot more in the past three years." Still, even with the training, she has not seen impact to the work on the ground. "There's not much follow through on seeing that these initiatives are followed up on... I'm not very satisfied because I feel like our school district could do a much better job, but it takes manpower, it takes money, and actually it takes passionate people who genuinely care about students who are lost in the shadows and want to see the fruition of the movement." For Mary, there was a disconnect between the importance of the work and the resources allocated to support the work.

Another concrete challenge that impacted community engagement was the frequent transitions of leaders within schools. Tina, Nancy, and Bryce are all site administrators who have been at their sites for less than five years. Both Bryce and Tina made transitions since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 and identified the need to learn the community context as a factor that has prevented them from being as effective as they would like. Tina, an assistant principal in a middle school, reflected on her employment transitions as an obstacle for the community engagement work. Tina considered her transitions, stating that "I was at one school and then the pandemic happened, and I was just learning the ropes and now I'm at my current site and it's like, you know, it feels like I'm learning again but, but that is something that I know is important and it's going to actually make our school succeed." Without continuity of leadership, people have good intentions and commitments to social justice and community

engagement, but the transitions impact the efficacy of efforts.

Interestingly, the pandemic was identified by all four site leaders as an impetus to improved community engagement efforts. Clearly the pandemic redefined how schools, families, and community organizations work in concert to support students. Nancy reported that "COVID 19 really forced all of us as a nation to like, be more creative with how we partner with parents and community. I think it was more so that because everything shut down there needs to be updated, parents need to understand and they need to, they wanted to know." Tina also noted the increased partnerships borne out of the unique needs due to the pandemic. She mentioned the local community health agency as particularly impactful this year because of COVID. She noted, "They've actually been big partners with all these vaccine clinics and things like that so I mean, this year, they had a bigger presence, because of just the need due to the pandemic and the mental health issues. I mean they've actually been doing educational series with parents, teaching about positive parenting and things like that." While the pandemic wreaked havoc on schools and communities, it also created a new pathway for communities and schools to work in concert towards the success and health of students and local communities. It is unclear, though, how these partnerships will continue as schools shift from the current crisis response.

Overall, the interviews all demonstrated a commitment to the community and to building partnerships to support students. There was less evidence of boundary spanning leadership, though, as none of the interviewed site leaders could articulate ways in which the school was truly a community partner, listening to and responding to the needs of the community. Rather, community engagement seems to be viewed primarily as a pragmatic effort to yield better academic outcomes for students. As Mary said in her interview, "we need to have a united effort that is intentional... At the end of the day, we have to work with the community agencies and with the families of our students to make our school district successful."

Comparisons

When comparing results from the mixed method research question, the Principle Investigators found that quantitatively there were little relationship findings between K-12 leaders, grade level, motivation and efforts made towards community engagement. Results stemming from quantitative data (Appendix E) demonstrated a strong sense of desire and awareness for the use of community engagement with schools was present. Data gathered by the online survey represented that a total of 75% either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that there is a need for community engagement in their schools, while 73% of participants either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that their school is adequately partnering with local community resources to meet the needs of students in their school. Additionally, 60% reported that they somewhat agreed or strongly agreed students that their school were aware of the community resources available to them, 50% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that the local community members were aware of the school resources available to students at their schools, and 65% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed parents of students within their schools were aware of community resources available to their children and families. Lastly, 70% of participants somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that their school partnered with community stakeholders to identify the needs of students, families, and the community while 70% of participants somewhat agreed or strongly agreed their schools purposefully worked with community leaders towards mutually beneficial school and community outcomes. Results stemming from qualitative data demonstrated the importance of community engagement; however, when comparing the data, there's a disconnect when it comes to implementing action.

Discussion

Findings suggest that there was not a significant difference between elementary and secondary school educational leaders' perceptions towards community engagement or significant differences between

educational leaders' efforts of community engagement. All four educators interviewed expressed a commitment to community engagement, but they also struggled to prioritize and implement community engagement work. One concrete challenge that impacted community engagement was the frequent transitions of leaders within schools and the inability to identify and sustain key individuals within the schools and throughout the community that had the influence, desire, and positionality to advocate for continuing the work. When comparing quantitative and qualitative findings, there is a strong sense of desire for community engagement and awareness of the importance of community engagement; however, compared to how the literature defines and interprets community engagement, there is a clear disconnect on what efforts count towards true community engagement that emphasize a two-way relationship that positions the school as a community space rooted in equity and equipped with resources that support the needs of students, parents and the broader community.

Limitations

One limitation that should be considered is that the survey responses had a limited sample size. This may have affected the reliability of the survey results as a smaller sample size may have led to higher variability in responses. The survey also had limited responses when disaggregated by school setting (elementary, middle, secondary, and other school leaders). There were 5 participants that identified as elementary, 5 identified as middle school, 13 identified as secondary, and 17 identified as other school leaders. It is important to note that the largest sample was identified as educational leaders in the "other" category. It was decided to include the "other" educational leaders in the analysis because removing the category would have limited the sample size to 23 total participants.

One potential threat to external validity that should be considered based on the design of this study is experimenter effects. There is a threat of experimenter effects when the participants' responses may be influenced based on behaviors or traits of

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the experimenter. Since Dr. Huchting is a professor associated with social justice educational leadership and based on the surveys relying on self-reported data, there is potential that participants may have been trying to please the professor. This leads to the consideration of experimenter effects where there is the power dynamic of faculty/student. Lastly, it is possible that bias leaning towards a social justice lens may have existed amongst participants as they are affiliated with Loyola Marymount University's School of Education, whose mission aims to prepare leaders to foster educational equity and social justice.

Conclusion

Overall, this study set out to explore educational settings that foster meaningful community engagement. While the quantitative data did not reveal a clear relationship between any specific school level and corresponding attitudes or behaviors in connection to community engagement, the interviews provided insights into the challenges that face educators who have a genuine commitment to social justice work and community-based partnerships. Our work revealed that people felt that community engagement work was important; yet there was very little consistently happening across sites. People clearly expressed that while it was a priority, leaders were often unable to enact changes to the extent that they desired.

Finally, using the insights of Khalifa and others in the field as a springboard for continued reflection and research, there is potential for future studies to further examine how community engagement can truly be embedded into the culture of a school. Future research can further explore the obstacles that prevent meaningful community engagement to better equip leaders to change the praxis in their school buildings and localized contexts. This insight may act to bridge the gap so that the intentions of educators can be affected in the sites they lead.

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Appendix A**Table 1. Participants' Profiles**

Name	Leadership Position	School Setting	Demographics
Tina	Assistant Principal	Tradition Public, 6-8	Asian Female
Bryce	Assistant Principal	Public Charter, K-5	Filipino Male
Nancy	Assistant Principal	Public Charter, 6-8	Latina Female
Mary	Program Specialist	Juvenile Court Alternative Education, 9-12	Caucasian Female

Appendix B

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Elementary School (PK-5 or PK6)	0.00% 0
2	Middle School (6-8 or 7-8)	0.00% 0
3	High School (9-12)	0.00% 0
4	Elementary Span (K-8)	0.00% 0
5	Secondary Span (6-12)	0.00% 0
6	K-12 Span	0.00% 0
		0

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#	Field	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
1	I feel that there is a need for community engagement in my school.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
2	I feel my school is adequately partnering with local community resources to meet the needs of students in my school.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
3	I feel my students are aware of the community resources available to them.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
4	I feel the local community members are aware of the school resources available to students at my school.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
5	I feel parents of students within my school are aware of community resources available to their child/family.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
6	I feel our school partners with community stakeholders to identify the needs of students, families, and the community.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0
7	I feel my school purposefully works with community leaders towards mutually beneficial school and community outcomes.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0

Q8 - How many community resources or organizations does your school partner with to provide resources that benefit students? Please enter in numeric format (example: 1)

Appendix C
Interview Protocol

Community Engagement Group (Charity Chandler-Cole, Claire Ramirez, Kristina Martinez, Meghan Schooler)

Interview Information	
Date:	Time:
Location:	Interviewee (pseudonym):

I. INTRODUCTION	NOTES
<p>Hello, my name is [YOUR NAME]. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my class activity. These interviews are intended to explore community engagement efforts within public schools.</p> <p>During the interview, I'll ask you to tell me about your experience and understanding of community engagement at your school. These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, please just tell me that you do not want to answer and we will move on to the next question.</p> <p>I anticipate the interview will take approximately 20- 30 minutes. With your permission, I will record video and audio via Zoom so that I can transcribe the conversation and use the transcript for analysis. <i>[IF PARTICIPANT DOES NOT AGREE TO BE RECORDED, YOU CAN CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW JUST TAKING NOTES OR YOU CAN CHOOSE TO DISCONTINUE INTERVIEW.]</i></p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin? <i>[ANSWER QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. IF YOU CAN'T ANSWER OFF HAND ASK IF THEY'D BE COMFORTABLE WITH YOU GETTING BACK TO THEM WITH THE ANSWER AFTER THE INTERVIEW]</i></p>	

II. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	NOTES
<p>1. To begin, please describe the type of school you work in and your role (For example, public elementary school, school counselor and community liaison).</p> <p>a. How did you get involved in your community engagement role/responsibilities ?</p> <p><i>[LISTEN ACTIVELY AND NOTE THE QUALITIES YOUR INTERVIEWEE DISCUSSES. THEN RESTATE THEM IN THE NEXT QUESTION.]</i></p> <p>2. Do you recall, or are aware of what/who prompted your school to strengthen community engagement efforts?</p> <p>a. For example, was there a particular event or issue that prompted your school to engage with strengthening community relations and involvement?</p> <p>3. How has your school purposefully worked with community leaders to improve the support and resources that are available to students, families, and community members?</p> <p>a. Was the community involved in the planning or was this course of action decided by the school alone?</p> <p>b. If only by the school, do you feel the community should have been a part of developing the broad vision for your school and community partnerships?</p> <p>i. Why do you feel they were not?</p> <p>4. In what ways is your school currently engaging with the local community.</p> <p>a. Do you feel the way in which you interact is mutually beneficial to school and community goals?</p>	

<p>5. What resources, opportunities or support are currently available to students, parents and the community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are the resources/services available communicated? If so, how are they communicated and how often? b. Are they accessible and easy to find? How so? <p>6. How have you worked with community leaders to identify how responsibilities and resources will be shared to mutually benefit the school and community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the school's role? b. What is the community's role? <p>7. How satisfied are you with your school's community engagement efforts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What would you change, add or take away? 	
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<p>III. CLOSING</p>	
<p>We need to start wrapping up our interview now, but before we do, is there anything you would like to add that I didn't ask about?</p> <p><i>[STOP RECORDING.]</i></p> <p>Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis. Is it ok if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?</p> <p><i>[BE SURE TO MAKE A NOTE OF THEIR ANSWER.]</i></p> <p>Thanks again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.</p>	

Appendix D Survey Results

Perception of Community Engagement, Composite Score

	Number of Survey Responses (N)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Elementary	5	3.67	0.68
Middle	5	3.23	0.56
High School	13	3.64	0.71
Other	17	3.68	0.65

Number of Community Resources

	Number of Survey Responses (N)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Elementary	5	2.40	1.34
Middle	5	6.60	5.68
High School	13	4.08	3.17
Other	17	7.29	9.82

Appendix E Survey Response

- Strongly Disagree (1)
Somewhat Disagree (2)
Neither Agree nor disagree (3)
Somewhat Agree (4)
Strongly Agree (5)

Q1: I feel that there is a need for community engagement in my school.

Q2: I feel my school is adequately partnering with local community resources to meet the needs of students in my school.

Q3: I feel my students are aware of the community resources available to them.

Q4: I feel the local community members are aware of the school resources available to students at my school.

Q5: I feel parents of students within my school are aware of community resources available to their child/family.

Q6: I feel our school partners with community stakeholders to identify the needs of students, families, and the community.

Q7: The following questions ask about community engagement. - I feel my school purposefully works with community leaders towards mutually beneficial school and community outcomes.

By: Brian Murtagh, Special Education Administrator – Court and Community Schools
Contra Costa County Office of Education

As the realities of the Covid-19 pandemic and distance learning set in during the Spring of 2020, staff within the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) looked for innovative ways to engage students through our remote learning platforms. CCCOE Curriculum and Instruction Director Hanna Ma thought to connect one of their community connections with Court and Community School Director Rebecca Vichiquis. Through this initial connection, a collaboration was born that has opened new worlds for our Court and Community School students.

For the past decade, the OASIS Center International has focused on bringing art “back into the lives of our youth, with an emphasis on under-resourced

youth in low-to-moderate income communities.” Founder and Executive Director Jin Sun states that their digital arts program is not just about “Photoshop but including other entrepreneurial ideas such as e-commerce...” and providing these resources and curriculum in under-served communities.

In the spring of the 2020-21 school year, students across the CCCOE's Community School programs began a 12-week long course in Digital Arts, provided by the team at OASIS Center International. Through their then recently launched online, synchronous

instruction video platform, students engaged in weekly lessons included Photoshop tutorials, web commerce, product design, and marketing. Though students at this time were still engaging in school through distance learning, school staff coordinated with the CCCOE technology team to ensure that all students had sufficient laptops, Wi-Fi access, and individual Wacom tablets which allowed the Golden Gate students to engage in the digital arts curriculum

independently, and with equity, at home. Through this curriculum, the Golden Gate Community School (GGCS) students were able to peer into the window of product design and marketing and saw how Art can empower all these facets of the digital world to come together.

In addition to learning about all parts of the digital product and design world, OASIS leveraged their corporate connections to have a St. Mary's College professor speak with the students about product pricing and marketing considerations when designing a product. OASIS also provided this cohort with a “Fireside Chat” led by Ingrid Otero-Smart (CEO/President), Elias Weinstock (EVP/Chief Creative Officer), and Will Pierce (EVP/Chief Strategy Officer) from the esteemed advertising agency Casanova//McCann. These high-quality opportunities for engagement with industry leaders brought the OASIS project to a different level. This



Golden Gate Community School Principal Doug Corbin discussing the impact of the OASIS Digital Arts curriculum on the students, staff, and families.

By: Brian Murtagh, Special Education Administrator – Court and Community Schools
Contra Costa County Office of Education

project was not the traditional “students following the instructor to recreate a pre-determined piece of art.” OASIS designed and presented a curriculum that used art to discuss empowerment with our student population.

Upon the completion of the twelve-week course, student artwork and t-shirt designs were posted to an e-commerce website that was shared publicly. Students quickly had the chance to experience a product of their own being posted for sale, purchased, and worn by their peers and the adults in their school-setting, as well as those within their community.

The webpage went live just before the winter holiday break in 2020, and students saw their work in product design, retail marketing, and e-commerce services come together into one portal, eventually providing students with the experience of making profit on a product.

Court and Community School

Director Rebecca Vichiquis noted that OASIS’ ability to “provide a high quality, professional product” is what helped the OASIS curriculum stand out from so many others. Anyone familiar with teaching in the Court and Community School settings understands that success depends on more than just having a general plan and a few general ideas for curriculum. More than providing a one-off art lesson, OASIS’ “...dedication to figuring out what needs to happen in order to make it a high-quality experience for the

students” transformed this project into something that can really grow roots and become sustainable in our school setting. GGCS Principal Doug Corbin adds that “...all of the feedback from students and parents has been overwhelmingly positive.”

Building on the success of the first GGCS cohort, Director Vichiquis then helped connect OASIS to our Mt. McKinley Court School programs. Because OASIS had a robust online, synchronous curriculum, it was able to be ported to our court schools with a few significant changes. Once connected, Principal Robert Bowers chose to align the student artwork



Golden Gate Community School student Alayah discussing her participation in the OASIS Digital Arts curriculum.

parameters with the current English Language Arts novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie. In addition to aligning the artwork and curriculum to the current ELA novel, the art medium changed from digital to creative art journaling, which has a natural therapeutic element to it. The OASIS

instructor for the Mt. McKinley cohort had a therapy background, which helped create a Social Emotional embedded environment for this curriculum.

As with the Golden Gate students (who continued the digital arts curriculum again this school year), student artwork and products were made available online for purchase (see images below). OASIS arranged a 2nd Fireside Chat, this time with John Fleshhood (Chief Operating Officer) of Tri-Counties Bank, followed by

By: Brian Murtagh, Special Education Administrator – Court and Community Schools
Contra Costa County Office of Education

a financial literacy workshop presented to the students by Tri-Counties Bank representatives. Lessons about budgeting and credit awareness were embedded into this course with the focus on engaging students in practical financial literacy, a needed skill for students to live independently as young adults.

In the words of Golden Gate Community School student Alayah, "...it wasn't just like here you do this, and here's how to do it, they actually walked us through it step by step." The success of this partnership with the CCCOE and OASIS is rooted in student empowerment. Many outside providers come into our classrooms with pre-determined lessons and clear visions of the resulting projects. OASIS, living up to the definition of the word, provided a refuge for our students and created an environment during distance learning and Covid that was conducive to student growth and empowerment, and it created a pathway to a world not previously discussed in our classroom.

Ensuring that a program like this was developed and implemented successfully required a lot of support, patience, and imagination from several community partners within the OASIS and school world. At both Golden Gate and Mt. McKinley, we collaborated with our technology department to ensure that our students had access to the Wacom tablets, laptops, and Wi-Fi resources. At Mt. McKinley school there is an

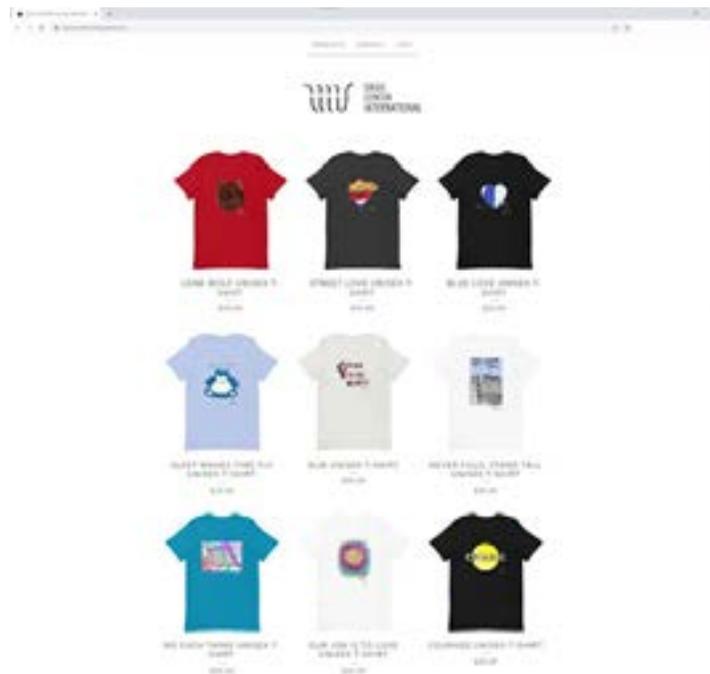
extra layer of making sure this technology all works within the confines of our closely monitored internet connection. Principal Bowers leveraged his strong relationship with our county's Probation department to create the space where this program was allowed to thrive. Students across both Mt. McKinley sites were able to engage in the OASIS curriculum seamlessly. The CCCOE utilized Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) to help fund this

program. Great care was taken, at each step, to ensure the privacy of our students participating in this program. No student names were listed on the website and any photos of students were from the back only or had blurred faces. All these steps helped ensure that this program was provided a space to thrive with the support it needed to be successful. The Contra Costa County Office of Education looks forward to continued collaboration with OASIS.

Information for this article was provided by Jin Sung, Executive

Director for OASIS Center International and Kathy Chung, Program Coordinator for OASIS Center International. Images, videos, and quotes were provided by Kathy Chung. Additional information related to the implementation of the OASIS Digital Arts curriculum provided by Rebecca Vichiquis.

Please view this linked video for more info <https://youtu.be/aXR9SbDqLg>



Student Artwork displayed on t-shirts, as viewed from the Mt. McKinley School E-commerce website

By Elizabeth Shaw, TOSA

For many young people, high school is a time of growth and expectation, mixed with both excitement and uncertainty. It is a time when everyone seems to be moving toward a goal, and four short years are often all that is available to prepare a young person to face a future with adult responsibilities. And for many of our underserved youth, those responsibilities and uncertainties have been a reality far longer than that.

At the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, our Alternative Education department works with students facing these challenges. Our programs cover a variety of underserved students who have experienced challenging life circumstances. The challenge for educators who work with underserved populations in California's Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative Schools is to connect with youth who already face significant barriers to education services, and assist them in completing high school. The transition period beyond high school is "a critical developmental period for adolescents as they formulate their identities and plan for their future selves" (Valencia, 2012). For underserved youth, the transition period is even more important, as many underserved adolescents are "often marginalized due to longstanding deficit views of their promise and potential" (Valencia, 2012). Each of our schools addresses those needs differently, including our College and Career initiative.

College and Career Readiness programs in CA and the United States have historically been varied and unstructured. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards, "prompted educational leaders to focus on preparing students to be 'college and career ready'" (Green et al., 2021). However, "definitions, perceptions, and efforts to improve college and career readiness vary widely" (Green et al., 2021). For underserved youth, or "adolescents who experience

inequitable access to educational resources" (Lindstrom et al., 2022), this can be even more daunting.

Educators and students alike have shared that limited options for career preparation are a barrier for them (Lindstrom, et al 2022). Educators have further cited instances where "challenging life circumstances deter youth from fully realizing their college and career potential" (Lindstrom, et al 2022). So how do educators provide students opportunities to succeed in high school as well as prepare them for success beyond graduation? One way is to define "readiness" for college and career. A definition that students and educators identified is knowing about specific careers and skills that would

allow them to make plans for post-graduation (Lindstrom, et al 2022). Additionally, they wanted to be given a variety of career-focused activities, along with mentors to facilitate their career journeys.

Alternative Education at the Santa Cruz County Office of Education has always placed

a priority on providing college and career options. Our staff includes dedicated Work Experience specialists who have a close connection to available Career Technical Education course options. We have an excellent relationship with Cabrillo College, and have enrolled students in dual-enrollment courses while still in high school. Students are able to self-select taking courses through the continuum to earning an Associate's Degree while in high school. The Alternative Education program continues to develop additional pathways to college and career readiness.

In the 2021-22 academic year, our teaching staff has taken further steps to provide a pathway to success beyond graduation. Working directly with Cabrillo College, several of our programs have embedded dual-enrollment courses directly into their school programs.

Working directly with Cabrillo College, several of our programs have embedded dual-enrollment courses directly into their school programs. In this model, the college professor and course come to our campuses.

By Elizabeth Shaw, TOSA

In this model, the college professor and course come to our campuses. Michele Delibert, a long-term Alternative Education teacher, has provided this opportunity at El Nido High School in Watsonville, CA. El Nido serves students in grades 10 - 12, and her program offers a robust academic learning environment combined with hands-on opportunities for students to interact with community partnerships. Delibert, Lori Davenport, Maria Rojas and her team at El Nido worked closely with Cabrillo College to build a co-located program specifically for college and career readiness. In the fall, Cabrillo taught El Nido students CG51: Planning for Success and CG54: Careers and Lifestyles. Students were

taught valuable skills for success in college, and introduced to resources and strategies that would help them after graduation. Additionally, the courses showed students how to understand and assess their own skills and interests, and match them

to potential career and vocational opportunities. Delibert expressed her appreciation for the team at Cabrillo who tailored the curriculum delivery for high school students, and allocated resources to build a program for her students. This semester, her students are taking ETHN-8/SOC-8 Introduction to Latino/a Studies. El Nido plans to offer the CG-51 and CG-54 courses again in the fall 2022 semester, along with another Cabrillo course in spring 2023.

Other Alternative Education programs have offered a course section designated for our students through Cabrillo this year. A primary driver was responses to our LCAP Local Control Accountability Plan survey. Our families had indicated a desire to see more college and career readiness opportunities. Embedding Cabrillo college courses into our high school programs has had a profound impact on being able to provide a wide variety of experiences. Dave Spencer teaches community school

students in Watsonville at La Manzana High School. His students have been taking ETHN-8/SOC-8 Introduction to Latino/a Studies through Cabrillo College. Spencer has embedded the course into his Social Studies and English curriculum. He reports that the experience has been instrumental in building critical thinking skills, and that students work collaboratively during group discussion. His students find the course covers relevant and relatable topics, and they are very interested in studying important historical and social movement events. Through personal introspection, students have built many “Aha!” moments of connection to the material, which motivates them to continue learning and exploring.

I really love how dual enrollment allows me to get real world experience through taking college courses while also allowing me to finish high school at my own pace.

-- Jaedyn, Grade 12

Jack Michael is one of our Community Organizers who also works with students as a Work Experience Specialist. Jack has been instrumental in bringing dual enrollment programs to our juvenile detentions students at

Hartman High School. In addition to CG-51 Planning For Success and CG-54 Careers and Lifestyles, students at Hartman are taking ENGL 1A Introductory College English. Providing juvenile detention students the opportunity to experience success in college courses is another step on building a pathway to future success.

Our partnership with Cabrillo College has been an instrumental part of bridging students to their futures. At El Nido High School, three students who are graduating in May have already been accepted into the Cabrillo Bridge Program. It starts in the summer, and students will work with a cohort that continues to their first full semester in Fall 2022. Additionally, students at Oasis High School in Watsonville have experienced this success, and are well on their way toward connecting to their future. Veteran teachers Dr. Kelly Schwirzke and Ann Brooke have worked tirelessly to ensure their students have access to educational experiences to

By Elizabeth Shaw, TOSA

support them both in high school and beyond. Victoria, an 11th grader, shared that it has been hard work being the first in her family to graduate from high school. She knows her parents have high hopes for her future. Victoria says,

“Attending a college class during my high school years seemed impossible to me. However, help from my mentors and support from my family, especially my parents, has been more than enough for me to succeed. College to me is more important than ever. I have made a path for myself and one thing I have learned is changes will be made, but as long as I look forward and stay within my path things won’t be as bumpy. Just taking one college class this semester showed me that your mindset with school has so much to do with what your plan for your future looks like.”

Jaedyn, a 12th grader at Oasis High School in Watsonville, said, “I really love how dual enrollment allows me to get real world experience through taking college courses while also allowing me to finish high school at my own pace.”

Jaedyn, who will graduate from Oasis this May, has been accepted for Fall 2022 to the Cabrillo 2+2 CSUMB program, a new program that provides clear roadmaps for students to spend two years at Cabrillo and two years at CSUMB to complete their bachelor's degree in four years.

Also graduating in May, Araceli, an Oasis High School Watsonville dual-enrolled senior, was recently accepted into the Cabrillo College Guardian Scholars program for students who are or have ever been in Foster Care. The program has designated space on campus for highly motivated students who want to earn a degree, certificate, or prepare to transfer and are currently or have been in foster care at any point in their life.

High school students who are beginning to explore their lives beyond graduation can feel both anticipation and uncertainty. Students need support, guidance

and connection to college and career learning and experiences that help them feel prepared and ready for their future. Building the bridge to a successful and rewarding life after graduation has been a key focus for the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, and we look forward to building more community partnerships and school programs for our students and community.

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The graphic features the title "Reading with Relevance" at the top. Below it is a row of colorful book covers. Underneath the books are three icons: a starburst for "Culturally Affirming, Diverse Books", a heart for "Social & Emotional Learning", and a person reading for "Effective Literacy Instruction". A central text box states: "We pair diverse books full of relevant social & emotional topics with easy-to-facilitate lesson plans, allowing students to experience identity, agency, and belonging as they build their reading, writing, and critical thinking skills." Below this is an "EXTERNAL VALIDATION" section with two logos: "Certified by CASEL for Exemplary SEL & Literacy Outcomes" and "Approved by CDE for Meeting the Social Content Framework". At the bottom, there is a "LEARN MORE:" section with the website readingwithrelevance.org, a QR code, and a call to action: "CHECK OUT OUR SAMPLE LESSON PLANS!".

Computer Science and Technology are words that have been inextricably linked with careers in the 21st century. It is estimated that 8.7 million Americans currently work in tech-related jobs, with an additional 178,000 new tech jobs added in 2022 (CompTIA). Schools and colleges across the country have invested in infrastructure and teaching programs geared toward teaching fundamental digital literacy concepts, as well as advanced programming and coding courses and certifications.

In addition to digital literacy, teaching about technology is also a way to provide additional important skills and enhance learning. Integrating computer technology in the classroom “is a way of transferring better skills as a means for knowledge acquisition, discovery and distribution, as well as creating knowledge” (Egemen, 2018). In classrooms where learning styles are widely varied, “integrating online learning and teaching activities plays a crucial role in accommodating student’s diverse learning styles, before or after school” (Egemen, 2018). Additionally, research has shown that “greater the extent of their computer literacy in word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, and general computing, the higher their academic performance.”

The Santa Cruz County Office of Education has focused considerable effort in improving digital literacy skills and integrating technology into the classroom. In Alternative Education, high school students are in a 1:1 Chromebook environment, with access to online learning systems and technology. In addition, the [SCCOE K-12 Computer Science and Information Technology Initiative](#) has made extensive inroads toward providing students an accessible, equitable, and robust experience in the Computer Science and Information Technology field.

The first major program milestone was reached with a new [Information Support and Services Pathway](#) program. This is a multi-district partnership between Cabrillo College and high schools across Santa Cruz County. This pathway is a two-year program that begins with a foundational course in IT Essentials, followed by choices of dual-enrollment courses in related Computer Science areas. The 2021-22 school year marked the first program of this magnitude in Santa Cruz county, with the IT Essentials course being offered as a magnet program to all Santa Cruz High Schools. The IT Essentials course is fully articulated through Cabrillo College, with Cisco certified curriculum, and students

Learning to assemble/disassemble a computer is an extremely useful skill to have in my own life and for job opportunities. I’m excited to take more advanced classes in IT.

--Marcus, Coast Redwood Alternative

can earn 4 Cabrillo College credits for the year. The South County cohort is co-located at the [DigitalNEST](#), a community non-profit high-tech training and collaboration space for young people on the Cabrillo College Watsonville campus. DigitalNEST has been an integral partner in connecting young people in the community to technology training

and education. The North County cohort is offered at Star Community High School. There are two cohorts due to the geography of the schools served through the consortium.

This year’s IT Essentials course attracted students from comprehensive high schools Pajaro Valley High School, Watsonville High School, Aptos High School, Soquel High School, Pacific Collegiate High School, San Lorenzo Valley High School, and Scotts Valley High School. Additionally, students from Alternative Schools at Coast Redwood, Delta High School, La Manzanita High School and Oasis High School were served. Working with students from so many different schools and diverse backgrounds, and seeing them work collaboratively and support each other was a highlight for instructor Elizabeth Shaw. In the year-

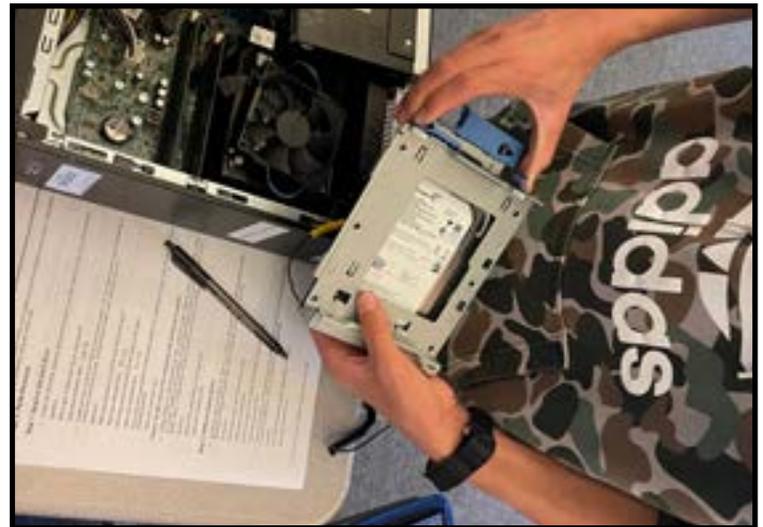
long course, students learn about computer networking design and architecture, cybersecurity, and hardware/software of desktops, laptops, and other mobile devices. They've completed a digital student portfolio including a resume, and also disassembled and reassembled a



computer down to the motherboard. Students have been thrilled with the experience and how much they've learned in the course. Marcus, an 11th grader at Coast Redwood Alternative High School, said, "Learning to assemble/disassemble a computer is an extremely useful skill to have in my own life and for job opportunities. I'm excited to take more advanced classes in IT. I can even make a job of this skill after perfecting it." Ash, at Delta High School, shared "This semester was a wonderful learning experience for me and my peers. I learned how to build a computer and how to troubleshoot, which later helped with personal technological issues. I learned a lot about myself." Angelina, a 12th grader at Watsonville High, described the experience in IT Essentials as "super interesting! I enjoy learning about different aspects of technology. I really want to succeed in this course since I'll study computer science in college." This initial pathway offering was so successful that it will be offered again in fall 2022, with an increased capacity to serve twice the amount of students. They are also offering a second pathway in [CyberSecurity](#).

Another Alternative Education program milestone is the continued partnership with BayCyber.net and Cabrillo College with their ongoing [Summer CyberCamp](#) programs. BayCyber.net has worked with Bay Area community colleges for over six years to provide free summer camps to promote technology and CyberSecurity in schools and colleges. In 2020 and 2021, the Santa Cruz County Office of Education worked with Cabrillo and local high schools to create a virtual Summer CyberCamp specifically for Santa Cruz students. For SY 21-22, the CyberCamps will be in person at Cabrillo College. During these CyberCamps, CyberCampers will learn about online hygiene and safety, technology ethics, infrastructure administration, security audits, cryptography, digital and network forensics, and web application exploitation. High school students throughout Santa Cruz are invited to attend these two week-long camps in June.

Along with the Summer CyberCamps, Cabrillo and Santa Cruz County Office of Education piloted a new program in 2021, Spring CyberClub. To address



a need for students to connect virtually during the pandemic lockdown, COE created a 10-week after-school virtual CyberClub for high school students across the county. Students from multiple high schools,

both comprehensive and alternative, participated in the CyberClub activities, which are similar to the Summer CyberCamps. Several students decided to join the IT Essentials course as a result of the CyberClub, and are also continuing on to Year 2 in the ICT Pathway Program.

Another partnership serving Santa Cruz students is with Community Television of Santa Cruz and their PadCaster Pilot. K-12 teachers in Santa Cruz joined a cohort to use advanced videography equipment in their classrooms. The cohort included training and curriculum development, and all equipment was provided through a CTV education grant. Supporting teachers and providing technology and curriculum to students in multiple grades across multiple districts provides additional ways to integrate technological skills and increase student engagement.

From 1:1 Chromebooks and an expanded online course offerings, to CyberClubs and Summer CyberCamps, bridging to an ICT Pathway to Cabrillo College, students, including those from Court and Community Schools in Santa Cruz are benefitting from integrated technology education. Digital literacy is a critical component of skills needed to successfully navigate life in the 21st century, and the educational community in Santa Cruz will continue providing learning opportunities to support and promote students in their life-long journey of digital and technological mastery.

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BY KIM COPE TAIT

As an educator, my personal challenge in swinging between comprehensive public schools and elite, independent college prep schools for 25 years of my career was always in my commitment to giving every student, no matter the academic setting, the same thing: a quality education. To me that means meaningful learning experiences and the opportunity to practice and become adept at being an individual--like Kierkegaard's kind of individual, where "the individual must always be prepared to defy the norms of society for the sake of the higher authority of a personally valid way of life." It means teaching my students how to think, not what to think (which takes a lot longer and is a lot harder). It means providing real tools and opening real avenues for success...not only for success "in the real world" but in higher education should they choose to pursue it. None of these things should be the exclusive domain of the privileged, even though they are perhaps easier to deliver in settings that serve them.

Teaching my "low performing" students at a local comprehensive high school, for example, how to write a subordinating thesis statement or format according to MLA standards was not idealistic. It wasn't even hopeful. It was an act of respect, and it was my duty. To help students open every door for themselves and to cultivate in them the confidence to actually walk through them one day--that was my charge. I knew that I needed to be compassionate, flexible, and accommodating to students who had been given a raw deal--been traumatized even--but my compassion needed to take the shape of tireless work, endless energy given to scaffolding, reframing, explaining, indeed cheerleading as they ran the gauntlet of recovering credits and, more importantly, skills they had missed along the path that landed them in my remedial classroom. But arguably most important of

all, I needed to hold them accountable. In the same way that children and teens need, actually want, boundaries (know intuitively that these are tantamount to love and signify care), my students needed (and wanted) me to ask something of them. If I didn't--If I don't--ask something of my students, if I don't ask them to strive, to work, to produce--it is a clear expression of a lack of hope. Of some sort of collusion with a system that deems them deficient. Of a corroboration of their own belief that they don't have what it takes.

I was at SOS, which stood for Second Opportunity for Students, in Watsonville, California, for precisely six months before I felt that we had made "the shift." I had come on at SOS in August of 2018. There I had the opportunity to create and run my own program and was put in charge of the academic life of 20 students who were critically credit deficient. In those first three

THOUGH I'D LOVE TO BE YOUR FAVORITE PERSON RIGHT NOW, I CARE MORE ABOUT GIVING YOU SOMETHING OF VALUE, AND SO I WILL NOT LOWER MY STANDARDS, WON'T GIVE UP ON TEACHING YOU THIS SOPHISTICATED CONCEPT, WON'T CONCEDE THAT THIS TEXT IS OUT OF YOUR REACH — THAT KIND OF LOVE—IT WINS OUT IN THE END.

weeks, ten of my students were from the old guard under their previous teacher. We managed to graduate five who were fifth-year seniors by December, and five of them were still with me after Christmas. The other 15 at that point had made their circuitous ways to me by referral, by knowing or being related to former students, and, as time passed, because they had heard about our program from current students who were

beginning to appreciate (if not love) their little school. Some of that success was largely a function of size. Yes, being in charge of all academic subjects for students in grades 9-12 representing a wide range of academic backgrounds can be messy, but there were only 20 of them. This is a manageable number. It was also a function of the support and funding we had through the COE (County Office of Education). My administrators at the county level were committed, inasmuch as it was possible, to saying yes to the things I asked for (a class set of a particular book, supplies for bookmaking,

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access to specific software, etc.). They seemed to trust my gut, and this made all the difference.

Still, it was not easy. The kids resisted me at first... hard. Fearful and distrustful, they were, in the simplest terms, cruel, and the progress we made in our first months came at great cost to me personally (10 extra pounds, lost sleep, many tears, to name a few). I kept going back to the drawing board, desperately searching for a way in. I thought I needed to do something different than what I was doing. But it turns out that steadfast love (the tough kind that says, Though I'd love to be your favorite person right now, I care more about giving you something of value, and so I will not lower my standards, won't give up on teaching you this sophisticated concept, won't concede that this text is out of your reach)—that kind of love—it wins out in the end.

If you keep giving it. Keep showing up to the challenge every day. Our student Mathew comes to mind—how many times did I say a bright good morning to him before he ever even acknowledged me? We're talking weeks here. How many times did I call on him, gently coax, stand my ground as all 6'2" of him postured and resisted, angry at me for even looking at him? This is the same Mathew who eventually became a leader among our students, began offering his ideas and responses willingly. Tested into the "higher English class" at Cabrillo College and came back to campus last week to tell me that in that class they're learning about something we talked about in ours: Joseph Campbell's concept of the hero's journey. It was so hard. But there we were.

And once that atmosphere was established, once everyone had learned once and for all that Maria, our senior instructional aide, and I (and the myriad other individuals who came in and out of their weeks at SOS) were here, really here, for them, then I knew that space had been created for a dramatic shift: from a room full of kids who believed themselves somehow defective, academically and otherwise, to a room full of young

people who were confident that they could learn, grow, comprehend, and communicate both persuasively and creatively. Of course, at the six-month mark we were still in the middle of that process. It was slow going if I'm being completely frank, but I saw evidence of it every day.

And what did it look like in real life? In December our students participated in what I called the first annual SOS Academic Symposium. It was just us (me, the students, Maria, and Takako, who was mostly in charge of lunches). It was low key in that way (I wasn't ready to invite anyone from outside our school, and neither were the kids), but it was meaningful. There were nine readers in the symposium, with thirteen of us rotating among the five tables to hear their papers. They were sharing their formal research assignments on environmental science topics that ranged from climate change to the use of fossil fuels versus renewable energy. Mathew shared his research paper on the self-selected landmark Supreme Court case "Mapp v. Ohio." It was the culminating project for his Government coursework. All of the papers were, in fact, formatted and cited according to MLA standards, and the rest of the students participated diligently by listening intently and writing down observations on the work of their peers. There was an air of formality, seriousness, and accomplishment around the entire event, and it felt like a turning point.

Other things we did that fall? We read Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, we researched and presented Google slide presentations of candidates, propositions, and measures for the 2018 mid-term elections and then held mock voting. Afterwards we compared our results to those of the actual election and, having learned about the differences between liberal and conservative positions on a range of issues, were able to identify the import of some of the changes happening in Congress in particular. Many of my students reported that they were able to help older siblings and parents understand the issues and vote effectively. There was great pride around that. "You learned this at your school?" one of

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the siblings asked incredulously. The response from my student was a resounding and happy yes.

We read *House on Mango Street*, created hand-made books with our own narratives taken through multiple drafts, and moved through a unit built around the film *Reel Injun*, which talks about the devastating impact of racial stereotypes in American film on the relationships between Native American and non-Native people in the United States. They wrote persuasive essays, employing the subordinating thesis statement and embedding relevant quotes from two Native sources presenting opposing views on the question: Should Native Americans and their symbols be used as sports team mascots?

This led to the introduction of a unit on race relations in the U.S., starting with Martin Luther King Jr., whom we honored that year with a day of service in the community; one group went to the local children's cancer support center and one to the food bank. Then we researched and basically demystified the Black Lives Matter Movement as a way in to understanding Ava DuVernay's acclaimed documentary film *13th*. The film chronicles the history of African Americans in the United States from the introduction of the 13th Amendment to the present day and suggests that the mass incarceration of minorities in the U.S. is simply an extension of slavery...the most recent in a long line of such iterations. It was intense, and the scaffolding was intense.

We prepared, framed, and researched for weeks before we watched a single minute of the film (which we did in 20-minute increments over the course of three weeks). But that's the thing. We were modeling how to gain access to content from which we would otherwise be excluded. Content around which we can't yet, by

ourselves, effectively engage in dialogue or take civic action. I emphasize the yet. I wrote a film study guide for *13th*. In opening the text for that handout, I pulled three paragraphs from the website of the Influence Film Club, a non-profit organization that promotes the use of documentary films in the classroom. These paragraphs are incredibly dense, difficult to read—for anyone. I could have watered it down, abridged it in some way—I've certainly done that before. But I didn't here. I refused to. On the handout with the film study guide, just beneath those three paragraphs from the Influence Film Club, was an inserted and emboldened message from me to my students:

So this is pretty dense academic language. We probably don't understand it 100% the first time around. So do we give up having a handle on it?

Just keep on going? No. Let's look up some of this challenging language and see what kind of light we can shed on the content.

**ARE WE GOING TO LIE
HERE AND WAVE OUR
LITTLE LEGS AROUND, OR
ARE WE GOING TO FLIP
OURSELVES OVER AND
FIND A WAY TO GET IN?**

It was the approach I always took with them. They'd seen me do this a lot: I would lean back and hold arms tucked in at my sides, wriggling my hands in a helpless gesture. It was my impression of a turtle on its back. It represented the learned helplessness I've

observed in so many of my students. "Are we going to lie here and wave our little legs around, or are we going to flip ourselves over and find a way to get IN?" I asked them. "Let's get at it!" They were starting to catch on at this point. They didn't think I was cool or anything; in fact, this was kind of the height of my dorkiness, but they'd come to count on that, and they had become willing to let me guide them. When we started reading a text, they would now automatically pull out a highlighter or a pen, so that they could read actively. They no longer rolled their eyes when I paused every few sentences to comment or check for understanding. They rolled up their

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sleeves and expected to work.

In those three paragraphs introducing the film, I had underlined all of the terms and vocabulary I thought would challenge my students. In groups, they had broken down each of these terms...into their multiple words (if applicable) and into their linguistic roots (to the extent that this was possible), and they took that work and looked back at the original sentences that contained the terms and began again to tap away at the barriers to their 'access.' Together, we secured our comprehension of each of these terms to ultimately make sense of the text as a whole. In those same small groups, the students completed the "Pundit Mini-Research Assignment" for their assigned pundits. And we didn't shy away from these words. "We might as well learn now: a pundit is a fancy word for expert," I told them, "and we're going to own it."

There are many pundits interviewed in *13th*. I wanted my students to recognize theirs and the ones reported on by their classmates when they saw them speaking on screen. I wanted them to know in advance what angle each pundit could be expected to take, what expertise they were bringing to the table. It was a loooooong process. It took forever. But what's the rush? It was SO worth it. Timelines become irrelevant when we're talking about actual results. When we're talking about what I will send my students into the world with. When we went back and reread those three paragraphs, when we finally watched that film, they had ACCESS to it. And they had gained that access on their own and in conjunction with their peers.

There are few (if any) more valuable tools I can give my students than this: not only the belief in their own ability to access elevated, challenging content, whether it's in an article, a newscast, or a tweet, but the tools with which to open that access for themselves. How otherwise can they impact the worlds in which they move? I cannot send them into the world empty handed. I won't.

At SOS I had eyes on 20 kids, not just my own eyes but those of my little team, and we SAW our students. We saw who they were, what they had to offer, what challenged them, and what lit them up. We saw when they were struggling and needed a moment, an attentive ear, a breath of fresh air. The structure was such that we could support them all. We didn't have 150 kids in and out through a revolving door (that was the number on my rosters at my last comprehensive school—150 students who could potentially hide in the slipstream and be lost and not discovered until it was too late). At SOS we could care for our students, really care for them, and make sure that their individual academic needs were met. So again, a manageable number is a seminal part of the equation.

SOS had become a pretty great place to be, and in the spring of 2019, the end of my second year there, I organized an "Expo" for the community (I invited administrators and anyone who was connected to our school in any way, and I invited my students' families). I remember thinking, Someone (beyond those of us who spend our days here) should know about these kids. The program included the exposition of a range of my students' creative and critical work (everything from essays and research papers to acrylic paintings and handmade books offering personal narratives) and the 'unveiling' of a mural designed and painted by the students. It also included the announcement of our school's new name (chosen by the students to reflect their sense of our community: El Nido, meaning "The Nest") and a play directed by our theater teacher Adrian Torres. I was able to bring Adrian in under a Teacher Artist Partnership grant through the Arts Council of Santa Cruz County, and his transformational work with our little group of students culminated in a live performance on the day of the Expo. It was a big day. Families came in droves, pushing strollers, holding the elbows of abuelas and the hands of little sisters and brothers. An incredible number of adults from the community also came, including our County Superintendent of Schools, Farris Sabbah, and the Director of Alternative Education, Johnny Rice. The

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kids were nervous but also thrilled that so many people, many of them their own loved ones, had come to see them perform.

We had set up the art room almost like a theatre in the round, with the stage area in the center of the space and the audience seated at round tables placed around the room (and standing in every other conceivable space). “Off stage” was out one of two doors into the hallway, so that actor entrances and exits were through these doors.

Every single one of the students was involved, whether as actors or as stage crew in charge of lighting or sound; two were designated as stage managers. When it was finally time for the “action,” the students gave an incredible performance. The best they’d ever given. It was only six minutes long, but it was perfect. There were many moments in which members of the audience were drying tears... caught up in the emotion, both of the story and of the enormity of this moment for our kids. At

the very end, the actors filed into the room, the “lighting specialists” shining flashlights on them to create tall, dramatic shadows on the white wall behind them. As the finale, each of the actors delivered a single line as they entered and took their place. “Life is a Challenge. Take it.”

“Life is Sorrow. Accept it.”

“Life is...” There were seven of them, and then it was our lead. His eyes flashed to mine just before he took his place and from memory delivered these lines with perfect intonation:

In life, there is no Rewind. We have choices to make every day. All we can do is our best. If we try, even if we fail, it is enough. WE are enough. With the love of our family, we CAN.

The next day, after a full day of refocused and re-energized academic work, I gathered the students together

in the classroom, where the desks are always arranged in a big circle. “So...yesterday, huh?” And I couldn’t help but break into a huge grin. “I can’t tell you how proud I am of you all. I mean it. I want us to just have a minute to share out some highs from the day. We’ll just go around and each person can say their favorite part of the day, okay?” It was a little corny, but they were used to me asking them to reflect like this, so they fell in without resistance.

They said things like “just performing,” and “having my family there” and “just the whole thing,” but there was a theme. Something that got repeated several times, and it was this: what stood out most to these guys was the way that people kept coming up to them during the reception and asking them questions...about their process in making their books. About how they prepared to give such a performance. Had they acted before, it was so good! About the research involved in writing such

FOR THE FIRST TIME, PROBABLY EVER, MY STUDENTS WERE SEEN AND RECOGNIZED AS SCHOLARS. LEGITIMATE ACADÉMIANS AND ARTISTS. THEY WERE FULL OF PRIDE...A LITTLE EMBARRASSED, YES, BUT PLEASED AS COULD BE THAT SO MANY PEOPLE, FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, WERE SO INTERESTED IN WHAT THEY HAD PRODUCED...AT SCHOOL!

effective essays. This meant so much to them, and I saw it reinforced again: one cannot place too much value on the importance of being seen.

For the first time, probably ever, my students were seen and recognized as scholars. Legitimate académians and artists. They were full of pride...a little embarrassed, yes, but pleased as could be that so many people, from all walks of life, were so interested in what they had produced...at school! And it happened to me, too. Everyone wanted to know how I did it. Our superintendent even asked if I had a name for my method in raising the academic bar. He asked this with a student research paper in hand, kind of shaking it up and down. Where could I begin?

It’s just such a monumental task to make that shift on a large scale. It often happens that in working with students who have suffered a trauma or who have been let down by

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their family or by the system, we just want to give them a break. As a result, alternative education can be filled with packets of busy work and boxes to check with very little meaningful learning going on. Not always. But sometimes. It comes from a good place. Someone should give these kids a break, right? But that's just it. Compromising on their education, that's not the break they need. More time? Sure. Fewer hoops to jump through? Absolutely. But not teaching them to think for themselves or to know themselves as effective participants in a community of learners? No. That's not how we do it. It's hard work, but it can be done. The students of El Nido are proof of that.

On that day after the Expo, I knew for certain. The students at El Nido (formerly SOS) were officially turtles no more. Once you have left that way of being, that way of orienting yourself to the challenges that you face, there's no going back. What it amounts to is access, and access equals power. Power to move in one's world with vision, understanding, and the confidence to engage in civic activities to effect change. It is possible to empower all of our youth in this way. What it takes is tenacity...and honoring. Honoring of the humans that they are and of the potential that is theirs—not just to be the recipients of a well-deserved “break,” but to rise to a high standard set gently and patiently by one who sees them as the competent and intelligent beings that they undoubtedly are. For me, I believe the pendulum has stopped swinging. The alternative education classroom is where I belong. For me, there is no greater reward in education than seeing young people awoken to their own potential. When we have kids who have become convinced, for whatever reason—discouraging or abusive families, negative/traumatic past experiences in school, barriers to staying focused in and out of the classroom (like hunger, homelessness, or crippling fear)—when they have become convinced that they are not capable learners, not smart or clever or effective, that is when we have to roll up our sleeves and work even harder. We have to be gentler and more patient than we've ever been, we have to be more creative and more inventive than we've ever been, and we have to shed our egos...entirely.

I'm willing to do this work, and I believe there are many who are willing to do this work. We might need some more training around trauma-informed practice—after all it's a habit of mind to be cultivated, not a quick fix—but

I believe that people who become educators want to take care of kids. Full stop. We want to lift them up. We have a long road ahead of us, but the change that will precipitate this shift toward empowering our underserved students involves raising the bar, not lowering it. It involves a lot of patience—a willingness to move in tiny increments and at what sometimes feels like a snail's pace. And it involves insisting on the value of what we are sharing with our students—a willingness to keep showing up with the offering of education held out lovingly like a gift in our arms, for all the times that they reject it...until finally, they don't. It's exhausting, I know. But so worth it. May we merit the trust that is placed in us to steer our young people in a direction that will serve them and in so doing, may we serve their families and communities and the world beyond. May we give them all of ourselves for the time that they are in our care—every child deserves that. It's some of the most important work on the planet.



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Call For Papers

Due: February 14, 2023

JCCASAC Journal

We invite you to submit original articles, research papers, and student/program success stories related to: Legislation, Goals, Programs, Best Practice, Instruction, Management, Professional Development, Information Technology Solutions.

Criteria:

- Write with administrators in mind as your audience.
- Combine research based management, instructional theory, along with field practice.
- Write in clear, straight forward prose.
- Submission is result, not proposal oriented.
- Use active voice.
- Use third person when possible; some use of first person is acceptable when related to the readers' experience.
- If the submission was previously printed, include permission to reprint.
- Include short biographical sketch of twenty-five words or less about the author.

Article Format:

- We only require a WORD of Google document of the article, single spaced and Times New Roman 12 point Font. If you have charts, figures, pictures and/or tables, please embed them as a PDF at the appropriate point within the text, rather than being placed at the end of the article.
- There is no page limit or minimum to the length of the article.
- The title should be directly related to the essence of the article. Please also include a running title for subsequent pages.
- Please ensure the author's name is written how it is to appear in the journal. If there are several authors, please list all names. Please include proper academic nomenclature as desired before or after the author's name.
- Please make sure you give proper recognition to the works of others if you plan to use them in your article.
- If you plan on using photos in your article, please ensure you have the proper permissions and releases to use the image.



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