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# J THE JOURNAL

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

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Education  
is a better  
safeguard  
of liberty  
than a  
standing  
army.

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Sean Morrill  
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# Message from the Chair

On behalf of the JCCASAC Board, I thank you all for the opportunity to serve the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative School Administrators of California during the 2010-11 school year. Our mission to “ensure student achievement by creating a collegial network of county office administrators...” remains the focus of all JCCASAC activities and efforts.

With an emphasis on equity in education, JCCASAC leads the way in identifying multiple pathways for academic success in alternative education. The dissemination of best practices continues to be a major goal for JCCASAC. Innovative programs in career technical education, foster youth services, online learning, special education, and meeting the needs of English learners were highlighted throughout the past year.

The 42nd Annual JCCASAC State Conference promises to be a memorable opportunity

to expand our professional network of passionate, collaborative educators. Our Chairperson-elect, Janine Cuaresma, and the conference committee have assembled an outstanding group of keynote speakers and presenters. The conference theme, *Destined for Greatness – Define Your Role*, will focus on the limitless potential of our programs, staff, and students. Thanks to Janine and the committee for their tireless efforts!

In the midst of our State’s fiscal crisis, JCCASAC continues to focus on the needs of our at-risk/high potential youth. With decreased revenues and resources it is incumbent upon all of us to stay informed on legislation and policies impacting our programs. Your continued participation in JCCASAC allows all of us to benefit from each other’s expertise. I encourage you to stay actively involved in JCCASAC by attending our General Membership Meetings. Volunteer to present a best practice at the

Annual Statewide Conference. Consider running for a board position to share your perspective and leadership. **STAY ACTIVE – STAY ENGAGED!**

It has been my sincere pleasure to serve as the JCCASAC Chairperson during the 2010-11 school year. The position has afforded me the opportunity to experience the creativity and commitment of court, community, and alternative school administrators and teachers throughout the state. We remain privileged to work with students who have been traditionally under-served in our communities. Thank you for all you do each and every day.





Janine Cuaresma  
Director  
San Joaquin County Office  
of Education

## Message from the Chair-Elect

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as Chair-Elect of the Juvenile Court Community and Alternative School Administrators of California (JCCASAC). The year has been filled with opportunities to grow and I embrace 2011-12 with enthusiasm and hope, as our organization continues to advocate for all youth. As the pendulum continues to swing in education, our mission to serve the most transient and diverse population of students remains constant.

It has been said our current state of affairs in California has placed us in a state of crisis. Students are entering alternative education classrooms with such extensive needs that traditional educational settings had little chance of making any impact. This heightens the necessity for alternative education administrators to remain ever vigilant in sharing best practices, collaborating and creating educational models which guarantee success. We are the leaders in our field and when

we take action and step out in faith, we create a positive vortex of experiences which engulf students with belief in themselves, their abilities and their capacity to impact their world.

I am heartened that our newly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, is committed to restoring and increasing the state's investment in our schools. He has been described as an optimist leading a renaissance and identified safe schools, career technical education, and 21st Century digital learning as being a few of the focuses of his administration. JCCASAC has a responsibility to avail ourselves to him and his transition team, by educating members on the unique group of students we teach, support and enjoy coming to work for everyday. Together we can continue to advocate for legislation that improves learning for our students, provides them with options and countless opportunities for a future where their dreams surely will come true.

Amidst the hurdles and obstacles educators must jump over and maneuver through,

JCCASAC's focus remains on the students. The students who enter our classrooms everyday; broken, lonely, struggling, frightened, disappointed, emotionally and academically left behind. These are students who are trying to survive in a world where hope often seems unattainable. These children are why JCCASAC exists. What we believe as an organization matters. Our beliefs will empower our students to discover their gifts and the awesome potential they possess. As we lead this coming year, our passion must be greater than our challenges. Boldly embrace each opportunity that comes your way for the coming year...together we will make a difference!



## 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 educational 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 trainings for new county office administrators
- Conduct successful conferences with statewide representation
- Publish the JCCASAC Journal that informs superintendents, administrators, teachers, and affiliated agencies of the latest research, effective teaching practices, methodologies, and showcases successful programs
- Provide scholarships to eligible graduating seniors in order to encourage lifelong 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



# Gateway

## San Bernardino County's Program for Senate Bill 81 Non-707(b) Juvenile Offenders

by Don Nute

The implementation of Senate Bill 81 changed the services for youthful offenders in California. SB 81 returned a substantial portion of wards previously served by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to County programs, significantly altering the options for placement of non-violent youthful 707(a) offenders. County programs will now be the 'placement of last resort' for youth who may previously have been sent to DJJ facilities.

SB 81 challenged the resources of counties which previously did not have programs designed to serve juveniles who had committed serious crimes. San Bernardino County, a large county with a substantial adjudicated population, was an example of this dilemma. San Bernardino had previously operated a very limited camp and ranch program. Youth were placed in external programs and DJJ was used in a very limited manner to serve those were unable to be successful in those programs. As a result, San Bernardino County had a relatively small population effected by SB 81, but that population had already been unsuccessful in all other available options. Consequently, the County was faced with the decision whether to include these minors in their high security detention program or attempt to create an innovative approach to programming for this population. Out of this challenge the Gateway Program was born.

The County Probation Department called upon all stakeholders to participate in the creation of this program. Not only were the service provid-

ers (Probation, School, Behavioral Health, etc.) included in the planning but also the agencies and interests representing the program's clients. The planning committee also included representation from the Court, the District Attorney, the Public Defender and private defense attorneys. All stakeholders gathered to identify desired outcomes, define appropriate program strategies, develop placement criteria and measures of success. The result was a two stage program serving wards for a period of up to eighteen months.

Gateway Central would be located within the walls of a secure traditional detention facility while Gateway at RYEF (Regional Youth Education Facility) would be a locked, external facility offering opportunities for community interaction and re-integration. Promotion to Gateway at RYEF, as in the case of all advancement in the program, is based upon an objective leveling system. Level advancement requires the achievement of specific benchmark activities and is dependent upon a positive behavior record. In essence, youth could enter the program in a detained secure institutional setting and progress to a residential program that afforded opportunities for productive work, education and family contact in the community.

Gateway Central is located within the walls of the San Bernardino Central Juvenile Detention and Assessment Center. On the surface it resembles one of the facility's high security living units. The program, however, is much more. The first indication is that the wards wear uniforms that are designed to instill a sense of identity and





pride in the program. The minors participate in an enriched program of rehabilitative and educational opportunities. Unit life provides intensive cognitive therapeutic rehabilitative programming designed to confront negative and criminalistic behavior and to provide pro-social alternatives. A program that includes drug and alcohol counseling, anger reduction programming and Aggression Replacement Training is supported by a comprehensive clinical therapy component.

The classroom component of Gateway Central includes a standards-based academic program offering a full spectrum of services. All high school graduation requirements are offered as well as the opportunity to earn a California High School Equivalency Certificate through the Test of General Educational Development.

The school program is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). It participates in all mandated accountability systems and administers all mandated State tests including the California High School Exit Exam and the State Testing and Reporting (STAR) tests. All special education and English learner services are available.

In addition, students begin a program of career technical education in preparation for employment. Career interest inventories are completed and employment skills are developed. As the student progresses in the program, the first Regional Occupation Program class is available in Gateway Central. Students may commence ROP programming by participating in a Residential and Commercial Painting class. This program is linked to academic skills and provides practical workplace experience both in the specifics of painting and the more general soft employment skills.

Through the leveling system, wards can earn promotion from Gateway Central into Gateway



at RYEF. This involves a move from within the wall of the detention facility to a locked external building. Gateway at RYEF is a natural evolution of the former Regional Youth Education Facility which was designed to serve older delinquent youth. The program of rehabilitative programming continues at Gateway at RYEF, but it moves more toward community interaction. Through the level system youth may earn the opportunity to re-enter the community. This is done first through supervised community activities such as ROP classes in the community, field trips and public service activities, then through independent structured activities such as post-secondary education and employment. Youth may also earn the opportunity to re-integrate into their family in a structured weekend furlough program.

The school program at Gateway at RYEF focuses upon completion of a secondary school academic program and transition to post-secondary education and employment. The academic classroom continues to offer a full standards-based curriculum including special education and ELL support. In this setting, however, the goal is clearly identified as completion and transition. The student's academic standing is thoroughly assessed and the choices are examined. For many who are

**It is well known that the multitude of transition components for youth leaving institutions can be overwhelming and is a significant factor in transition failure. By commencing some of the most important activities prior to release, that pressure is mitigated and success is facilitated.**



approaching adulthood but are significantly credit deficient, traditional graduation is not a viable option. Both the GED and the California High School Proficiency Exam are available as alternatives to attaining a diploma. For those who may reasonably earn a diploma, the school staff works with the student's home school district to assure that he meets all graduation requirements and can be awarded a diploma from his home school.

While the student is progressing toward completion, employment skills are being enhanced. Classroom activities such as resume preparation, application completion, interview skills and workplace behavior training are incorporated into the classroom routines. The academic day is also enhanced with further ROP offerings. The ROP Office Operations class allows the students to learn to use the technology skills required to function in the office workplace. This can be done on-site and is available to students who may not have earned the privilege of community access. Once community access has been earned, an ROP Landscape Maintenance and Design class is available. Instruction in this class is delivered in a setting adjacent to the locked facility and offers real-world work crew opportunities in the community. The class works as contractors to numerous entities including the United States Forest Service to provide landscape services. The students, known as the Diamondback Conservation Crew, participate in work crews with crew leader/foremen, assigned tasks and expected outcomes. The Probation Department supports ROP programs with materials and supplies as well as

additional supervisory staff for the painting and landscape classes.

The academic and career/technical education programs are available to students as stepping stones to further opportunities. Through the earned opportunities of the level system, students who complete the secondary school program may transition to paid employment, internships and/or post-secondary education. This critical element enables youth to begin the difficult transition from the detained institution to independent life in the community. It is well known that the multitude of transition components for youth leaving institutions can be overwhelming and is a significant factor in transition failure. By commencing some of the most important activities prior to release, that pressure is mitigated and success is facilitated.

Gateway planners struggled with the evaluation component of the program. The planners sought to establish clearly enunciated objectives and identify observable and measurable evaluation criteria. Through this search the planners recognized the critical role that data could play in the implementation of the program.



The Probation Department Research Division began a comprehensive data collection process in order to objectively evaluate the program rather than simply justify its existence. The goal of this evaluation model was to create data profiles of every youth in the program. Data is collected for every appropriate element of the youth's history. Demographic data, family dynamic and experience profiles, static and dynamic risk data, school achievement, mental health history, gang and drug involvement and offence history are among the data sets collected. Through this process a picture is established of each youth. Once a youth enters the program a comprehensive record of his participation and success

is maintained. Data is collected concerning each component in which the youth participates and the level of success. This includes school achievement data and disciplinary history in the program.

This prior experience data and program participation date is then correlated to post-Gateway success. Through this process the program staff will build an increasingly large data bank that describes correlations between both the youth's history before and within Gateway to the youth's post-Gateway success. Through this analysis the summative efficacy of the program can be monitored. But more importantly a formative analysis will emerge which identifies the characteristics of youth who are best served by the program, particularly those characteristics that are contradictory to success and a correlation between success and specific program components. Gateway is designed to be a dynamic program where changes are responsive to the demonstrated needs of the youth. This expanded evaluation program makes this possible.

As critical as it is to have objective data to describe the program there is also subjective evidence validating the program's success. For example, on December 19, 2010 winter rains moved into the Los Angeles basin and into southwestern San Bernardino County. As the rain increased, the streams flowing from the local mountains into the Santa Ana waterway swelled into torrents. At the foot of the mountains, next to a local waterway which served valley citrus

groves, sat the small village of East Highland. On the night of December 19th and the following days the local waterway became the enemy of the residents.



The waterway swelled, burying the village in mud and water. Several feet of mud piled against walls and filled the interiors of many houses. Garages were inundated and cars were covered. The tiny enclave was overwhelmed and their needs were dwarfed amongst the many victims of the storm.

The teacher of the Gateway ROP Landscape Class had grown up amongst the citrus groves and knew many of the residents of the village. He recognized that these people could not wait for the bureaucratic response to the disaster and that they did not have the resources to overcome the crisis on their own. He left his home and family during his holiday vacation and returned to Gateway. The students from his class volunteered to go to East Highland and lend their help to the residents. They took their landscaping equipment, their newly learned skills and, most importantly, their strong backs and work ethic to the village and began digging beside the residents. They returned on multiple days to help the families.

There are many stories of help and assistance that emerge from natural disasters. This, however, is a story about youth who are commonly seen as victimizers, not saviors. SB 81 returned the students who had been the most recalcitrant offenders. During this Christmas week they worked selflessly to help those less fortunate. This was not an opportunity to earn rewards, shorten incarceration or curry favor. This was done because the youth saw that they had something to offer those who were in need. They did the right thing just because it was the right thing.



# On the Road to Success

## Los Angeles County Office of Education

by Allison Deegan

In September 2010, as students filed into their classrooms, many things were uncertain. Would their new school be able to overcome the historical challenges of previous program formats? Would the resources they needed be available? Would they be able to live up to the new school name they had voted on as a student body, the “Road To Success Academy?” One thing was clear to all of the students, faculty, administrators and staff – the stakes were extremely high.

The Road To Success Academy (RTSA) is a Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) ([www.lacoe.edu](http://www.lacoe.edu)) Juvenile Court School. It is sited, as one school, across Camp Scott and Camp Scudder, two adjacent juvenile detention facilities for girls, located in the Santa Clarita Valley and managed by the Los Angeles County Probation Department ([www.probation.co.la.ca.us](http://www.probation.co.la.ca.us)). According to the school, on an average day, the two camps house between 50 and 100 girls, ages 12 to 19, all under sentences from the Los Angeles Juvenile Court for stays averaging four months. The population changes on nearly a daily basis, with girls completing their sentences (some earning early release) and transitioning back to the community, and other new detainees entering. A significant number have been in detention camp before.

The school was developed by a collaborative group of stakeholders called the Camps Scott/Scudder Pilot School Design Committee (Pilot Committee), organized by LACOE and comprised of teachers, administrators, counselors and staff from the school site and LACOE, as well as representatives from the Los An-

geles County Education Association (LACEA), which is LACOE’s teachers’ union, the Probation Department, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health and local community advocates and organizers. From its beginnings, the Pilot Committee has received support from LACOE leadership, including the Los Angeles County Board of Education (LACOE Board). For the past fifteen months, the Pilot Committee has been co-chaired by Dr. Ronald Randolph, a retired school district superintendent who serves as special assistant to the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, and Diana Velasquez-Campos, an English Language Learning specialist with LACOE who currently serves as RTSA’s principal.



“We knew we had to do something radically different or we were going to keep losing our kids. They reoffended, returned to camp like a revolving door, and progress in school was challenging.

We had to take bold steps,” said Dr. Randolph. “The urgency was pretty clear to everyone involved.” Velasquez-Campos reflected on one of the critical elements that the Pilot Committee decided early on had to be included in any new school format. “The girls had so many needs, and most had suffered such trauma. We knew it would be difficult to get them moving forward if we didn’t attend to their emotional as well as their academic needs,” said Velasquez-Campos. “We had to help them heal, and had to focus on the specific needs and challenges of the girls and young women who had suffered,” she added.

The Pilot Committee struggled for many months to find a school model that would fit the unique population housed at Camps Scott and Scudder. Most

According to site staff, [students] are credit deficient, perform below grade level and must try to attend and focus on classes while struggling with urgent emotional and psychological issues – many have faced violence, gang activity and crime, physical and emotional abuse, drug use, poverty, homelessness and prostitution.

of the students at this site face enormous academic challenges. According to site staff, they are credit deficient, perform below grade level and must try to attend and focus on classes while struggling with urgent emotional and psychological issues – many have faced violence, gang activity and crime, physical and emotional abuse, drug use, poverty, homelessness and prostitution.

Members of the Pilot Committee studied and visited alternative school and detention sites around the area and across the country. LACOE Assistant Superintendent Gerald Riley and teacher Brian Christian traveled with a group of Los Angeles County leaders, including Probation Department staff and commissioners, as well as elected officials, to Missouri to review that state’s unique small site setting, where counselors and teachers, not probation officers, work directly with youthful offenders.

Christian, who has taught in juvenile court schools for many years, represents LACEA, LACOE’s teachers’ bargaining unit, on the Pilot Committee. He stated that the concept of forming a pilot school was supported by LACEA President Mark Lewis, a teacher who also has an extensive background teaching in juvenile court schools. Lewis observed the Enhanced School-Based Management program piloted by the Los Angeles Unified School District and believed that a “local management” approach would be a good fit for the school at Camps Scott and Scudder. Christian provided input on the Interest Based Approach, a labor-management approach to leading, and how it might fit into the new school.

Christian said that, under Lewis’s leadership, teachers at the site believed they were “experts in educating these students, and that they were willing, eager and capable of driving significant reform.” The pilot project

was viewed by all as a full partnership that would draw on as many resources as its broad coalition of supporters could provide. Teacher buy-in, necessary to embrace the new responsibilities they would all be asked to shoulder, was a critical early success of the project.

Pilot Committee community member, Belinda Walker, also traveled to observe alternative models. She visited the Maya Angelou Academy, which operates within the New Beginnings Detention Center in Laurel, Maryland. Walker is a board member of Girls & Gangs ([www.girlsandgangs.org](http://www.girlsandgangs.org)), which provides support and transition services for girls in the juvenile justice system. She has been active on the Pilot Committee from the very beginning.

Committee members reviewed curricular models at charter high schools, private schools and even some unusual public school settings, searching for a way to support robust standards and student engagement, thought to be the best formula that would help these girls get back on track. They were impressed by several school models, including the sites managed by Big Picture ([www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org)), which incorporates student-driven, project-based learning into what it describes as innovative, personalized schools that work in tandem with the real world of the greater community.

Marsha Watkins, LACOE’s Regional Director in the Division of Student Programs, which manages the Juvenile Court Schools, is also a member of the Pilot Committee. She remembers the urgency, and the mandate from stakeholders who allowed a lot of freedom but expected results.



“Our school and the camps had the keen attention of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, in their quest for comprehensive educational reform in the juvenile court schools, and their oversight role of the Probation Department. On the school front, the LACOE Board was deeply concerned about student progress. And the Juvenile Court was demanding programs that addressed recidivism,” Watkins recalled. “We thought that focusing on a discrete population, approximately 100 girls, we could develop something for them and hopefully refine it into a model that would work for other sites in the Juvenile Court Schools system,” she said.

After researching and meeting for many months, members of the Pilot Committee had yet to find a model that fully fit the Scott/Scudder site and population. Thus, they decided to fashion their own, borrowing from some curricular methodologies, such as project-based learning, and some student support practices, such as character-building protocols and healing talking circles, to form the heart of the RTSA approach. The development of the core program was sparked by the concept of respect.

The Committee used input from classroom teachers (many of whom have worked in the Juvenile Court System and at the school site for ten years or more) about what the girls’ greatest challenges were to develop an initial thematic approach titled “Respect for Self, Respect for Others.” This theme informed the development of later program elements that would align classroom curricula and culture to the overall student experience while at camp, both during school and during times when class was not in session.

One of the most critical developments in the process of creating the RTSA was a newfound and deep partnership between the school leaders and faculty of LACOE and their counterparts who lead and manage the camp sites for the Probation Department. The two agencies had not always had effective collaboration. They shared physical space on the site, and shared governmental agency challenges such as fiscal uncertainty, staffing turnover, and the challenges of working on and around a facility that was built in the 1950s

and barely had the minimum infrastructure necessary to address the needs of the girls housed there. Both agencies recognized the need for intensive cooperative programming and collaboration.

The work of the Pilot Committee and the advent of the RTSA have ushered in a new era of cooperation between LACOE and the Probation Department. Because Probation Department staff and leadership have participated regularly on the Pilot Committee, they were fully apprised of, and contributed to, the goals of the new school. Probation Department Director for Camps Scott and Scudder, Pauline Starkes, was excited when she heard about the Pilot Committee. Starkes has served as a Probation Department leader for many years. Currently, Starkes is director of both camp sites. As a veteran leader in the Department, she agreed that something different had to be done for the girls at Camps Scott and Scudder. During her participation in Pilot Committee meetings, she commented on the importance of engaging the girls so that the potential of each one of them might be realized.

To that end, Starkes had already implemented a student-centered program at the camp sites. Called “Character Counts,” the curriculum focused on six pillars of character development, one of which was respect. It was seen as a perfect fit for what her school counterparts were developing on the Pilot Committee. At one meeting, she recounted the frequency with which both the girls and the staff expressed feelings of not being respected. The new program held the promise of addressing these concerns for everyone at the site, launching a new era of cooperation.

The Pilot Committee Co-Chairs understood the importance of working in close collaboration with the Probation Department. Not only were both agencies under scrutiny from multiple stakeholders, but both had equivalent oversight for and concern about the girls at Camps Scott and Scudder. “We knew we were in it together,” said Dr. Randolph. “Our board, their board, the Board of Supervisors, the courts, everyone was asking us for a joint solution. There was no room for blame – we had to work together,” he said.



Velasquez-Campos believed that Probation Department staff cared as much about the girls as LACOE's long-serving faculty and staff. She thought if they left the past history and difficulties outside the room, they could come together as a Pilot Committee and as a two-pronged effort to make positive change for the students.

"We both want them to succeed, while at camp and when they transition back to their communities," she said. "The job is difficult enough without adding a layer of bureaucratic dysfunction. If we all work together, we can give our girls that much more."

Faculty on the Pilot Committee, both those who work at the site and others who participate as representatives of LACOE's teachers' union, felt that meeting academic standards had to be a foundational component of any new school curriculum. However, they understood that student engagement would be the key. "If they aren't interested in what teachers are presenting, we lose them in the classrooms and then behaviors start to be an issue," said teacher Brian Christian. "That being said, we also had to attend to the real concerns of faculty. They needed support as well, in terms of resources, training and the active participation of Probation staff," he said.

One of the early harbingers of success for the new RTSA program was an activity called "Opening Circles." Based on healing talking circles found in other camp, school or therapeutic settings, the Opening Circles are designed to provide students with a chance to start the day by talking through any issues that are weighing on them, particularly things that may prevent them from engaging during the school day. Teachers at the site have traditionally contended with this tension during the start of the school day which often prevented instruction from taking place. The Opening Circles were the first facet of the RTSA program to be rolled out, starting in teacher Susan Gibson-Berson's classroom.

"Opening Circle time has changed the atmosphere in the classroom," Gibson-Berson said. "We started using the themes from the Character Counts curriculum, which allowed the students and all of the adults, including those from the Probation and Mental Health departments as well as the school, to share and discuss issues impacting the students." Gibson-Berson observed that students began to look forward to the start of the day, knowing they could share and be heard.



One of the Pilot Committee's key requests was that Probation Department staff be oriented and participate in the Opening Circles activity. After all, they are the staff who have spent the afternoon, evening and early morning with the students, and they are responsible for transporting them from their dormitories to their classrooms. Committee members believed it would go a long way toward promoting cooperation between the two staffs, and provide a visceral message to students that they were aligned as a team, not two separate authorities that could be played against one another. The instinct was correct and, after some initial concerns, Probation Department staff are active and supportive participants.

Teacher Gibson-Berson recounted an experience where the collaboration came together in a significant way and provided critical support for a student. "What's happening is that the Opening Circles help us understand what issues are causing problems for the students, and both teachers and Probation staff can respond as partners. One student shared in Opening Circle that she wasn't sure if she would be able to attend her stepfather's funeral. Because Probation staff were made aware of the issue, and had the chance to understand the importance of this event for the student, they could follow through and make arrangements before it grew into a larger issue for this girl. In this way, many


Faculty on the Pilot Committee ... felt that meeting academic standards had to be a foundational component of any new school curriculum. However, they understood that student engagement would be the key.

potential problems are eliminated because of the kind and caring atmosphere,” she said.

As the site began to exhibit a new togetherness, the Pilot Committee worked diligently to develop the curricular program. They settled on a version of project-based learning that allowed students to embrace a topic across the curriculum. Centered on a common theme developed by the faculty, students would pursue individual projects (including presentations and reports) under the guidance of teachers in their new role as project advisors. Teachers and staff met multiple times, hammering out what projects would look like at the site, down to even the smallest details about what kind of materials and portfolio folders students could use and their access to technology for school work, given the constraints of their incarceration.

The goal of the project-based learning approach was to guide and challenge the students to achieve, but also to allow them to express themselves. In addition, this approach had to accommodate some of the other significant goals that the Pilot Committee had for the school, most importantly that it guide students to engage in learning so they could easily re-engage in school once they are released from camp.

Related literature, and a program that focused all students on sustained silent reading (with the support of Probation Department staff who supervise non-school hours) was considered a critical academic support to the project work.

 The new school also had to account for some of the significant academic challenges the RTSA students face, including low reading levels, English language learning, math deficits and unfamiliarity with project work and presentations. Related literature, and a program that focused all students on sustained silent reading (with the support of Probation Department staff who supervise non-school hours) was considered a critical academic support to the project work.

In September of 2010, the new school curriculum and approach was presented to students at a series of school assemblies. At these events, peer leaders who participate on the Probation Department’s Leadership

Council were selected to assist in the roll out of the new school. Several weeks later, students voted on the new name, the Road To Success Academy, from a ballot of several suggestions they had submitted in their classroom groups.

The first eight-week project module was centered on the theme “Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder.” At the conclusion of the first module, students presented their work to their classroom groups. For some, it was the first time they had participated in presentations. After the first module, the Pilot Committee evaluated the progress, developed additional trainings for staff and faculty, and planned the second module, which was focused on the theme of Power. At that point, several stakeholder groups visited the site and received feedback from students during school assemblies. Interim Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, Jon Gundry, visited the site in the Fall of 2010 and was escorted by students selected as peer leaders. He has expressed interest and support for the developments at the RTSA.

As the second eight-week module commenced around the Power theme, both LACOE staff and faculty and Probation Department staff began to notice differences in the students and the site. There were fewer behavior issues in class. Students seemed more focused and fully engaged in learning about their themes, and in personalizing their projects. They were particularly interested in their credit status, as that impacts their progress toward placement and graduation. There were fewer fights and incidents of misbehavior on the site. Several teachers reported on the speed with which the students embraced the new school and its curricular approach.

As the RTSA moved forward, refining its approach to project-based learning and a newfound sense of mutual respect and partnership among everyone at the site, the Pilot Committee began to focus on





resources. In these challenging budget times, it is not easy to find money for project supplies, professional development, additional staffing to allow for cross-participation and training by LACOE and Probation Department staff, and the computers and other equipment students need to complete their research and projects. Dr. Randolph guided the Pilot Committee to base their plans on what they really needed, and he made a commitment to do everything he could to find the resources.

“If the school and the site were to be transformed into something new, we knew it couldn’t happen without an infusion of new resources. All of the stakeholders supported that investment because we all know how much is on the line. If we don’t get them educated and back into their communities as functioning, contributing students and citizens, it will cost us all that much more in the long run. Better to make the investment now and give the Road To Success Academy what they need,” Randolph said.

Recently, a team at the RTSA received a grant through UCLA to help them expand their professional development and training, specifically to support their expertise in project-based learning. The Pilot Committee hopes it is the first of many external supports to complement the investment that LACOE and the Probation Department have made in supporting the new RTSA and the Camps Scott/Scudder site. They have already benefitted from a commitment to purchase new computers and other supporting technology, as well as provisions to bring in on-site teacher coaches.

This spring, as students at the RTSA completed their second eight-week module of a thematic project-based unit on Power, they presented their final projects to faculty and invited guests in what was called their "World War II Museum Day." Each classroom was transformed into a museum exhibit with students as curators and docents, guiding guests through their exhibits via oral presentation and facilitated activities, such as a USO room featuring Andrews Sisters songs and dances from the 1950s, as well as monologues from *The Diary of Ann Frank*.

As guests (including Camp Scott and Scudder probation and mental health staff as well as LACOE offi-

cial and others) moved through each classroom/museum exhibit, the students maintained a sense of grace and pride. The sense of ownership that the students displayed over their work, their learning, and their school was powerful. Participant reflections captured after the event referenced the impact on both students and teachers. One teacher stated that “in spite of the behaviors that could have been displayed, my students rose to the occasion and were inspired to share with pride.” Another reflected that the students were “capable, able to accept a challenge and felt proud of their work.” According to Principal Velasquez, one of the students, a teen named Stephanie, reported that working on projects has helped her to focus back on school. It has given her and the other students an opportunity to take ownership over their learning and grow hopeful about the future.

Going forward, the next planned theme focuses on Hope. This is particularly appropriate for the RTSA because it embodies everything the students, faculty, staff and partners are striving for – they aim to heal, inspire, empower and engage all students to do their best, both in class and outside of class, so that they can return to their communities. That transition, one of the most challenging for any agency working with juvenile offenders, requires that each of the students possess a sense of hopefulness about their future. Teacher Christian reiterated the importance of what is called “the transition piece,” stated that the girls of RTSA need that guidance in order to make educational progress and to pursue their future goals. He recounted that it was part of the original discussion of the Pilot Committee and he pushed the issue of transition planning and support because of its importance.



Belinda Walker, one of the Pilot Committee’s community representatives, summed up launch and future of the project this way: “RTSA is a very exciting beginning for what education in juvenile justice facilities could become. It is, however, just the beginning. There is much more learning and growth ahead for all of us. As we build this school, we are also trying to identify schools throughout Los Angeles County who will support our students’ unique educational paths

begun at RTSA. Our girls will need strong transition support in the community to build successful lives and identifying supportive schools for them is one of the most critical components of our work,” she said.

The Pilot Committee is also developing a robust assessment protocol, which will include a review of data on academic achievement, personal development and site culture. The goal is to provide stakeholders with as full a picture as possible of the students’ journey through the new RTSA. Dr. Liza Bearman, a LACOE consultant assisting RTSA in faculty professional development, pilot school design and assessment, described the importance of knowing where each student is.

“With the notion of ‘one student at a time’ at the forefront, teachers are conducting both formative (ongoing) and summative (cumulative) assessments, rooted in project-based teaching and learning, in order to determine each individual student’s progress. Our assessment strategy includes teacher feedback on academic and interpersonal/behavioral benchmarks, as well as a good deal of student self-reflection. Both the project-process and the measures of student learning and growth are personalized in an effort to best support and serve our students,” said Bearman.

The successful launch of RTSA is a story of visionary leadership, agency cooperation, faculty dedication and students who are learning to believe in themselves. While the school is in its early days, it is clear that something positive is happening for all involved. By surveying the landscape and having the confidence to develop a unique school program, taking the time to listen to and understand their students, and forging trust in and respect among site partners, the RTSA team have demonstrated what can happen when everyone contributes their best. The Pilot Committee is certain the students at Camps Scott and Scudder are truly on the road to success.



**About this author:**

Allison Deegan, Ed.D., is an administrator with the Los Angeles County Office of Education. She has participated on the Road To Success Academy Pilot Committee.

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# The Garden Project

San Mateo County Office of Education

In 2006, under the direction of Robin Galas, Community School South (CSS) in East Palo Alto piloted a Garden Program. Two years later the program was expanded to Gateway Community School. The mission of the Garden Program is to foster in students an understanding of where their food comes from and how their food choices affect and impact their environment and their health. At both sites students have created organic gardens, which include edibles, native and drought-tolerant plants, as well as pollinator plants such as sage and lavender. Students also have access to a kitchen (at Gateway it is a portable, outdoor kitchen) that enable them to incorporate the fruits and vegetables that they are growing into healthy dishes.



Their hands-on work is supported by an interdisciplinary curriculum that explores environmental science, nutrition, and promotes environmental stewardship. Additionally the curriculum is supported by field trips to local farms and community gardens, as well as, Hidden Villa, a farm and educational preserve in Los Altos. Of his experience in the



Garden Program at Community School South, one student wrote:

“I have learned how to properly plant plants. I also learned how to cook. These things are important because it gives me experience for the future with skills that I can use.”



“My favorite part of Garden Class is learning about the earth because now I know that I have to take care of it. I decided to take another semester of Garden Class because I know it is a good experience for me.”

In 2008 the Watershed Project in Richmond, CA, and StopWaste.org included CSS’s garden in their Bay-Friendly School Garden Network as “a model for how to tie environmental practices to classroom curricula, and how school gardens can protect local watersheds and the Bay.”



# Stanislaus County Office of Education Opens CTE Labs

by Lori Figueroa

Stanislaus County Office of Education has furthered the mission and vision of Superintendent Tom Changnon by expanding Career and Technical Education onto two community school campuses. The Alternative Education Division used a combination of Perkins and ARRA monies to purchase two Paxton Patterson labs that included modules that teach life skills and provide career exploration. In addition, two teachers were sent to North Carolina to be trained by Paxton Patterson Labs. Those teachers opened CTE (Computer Technology Education) labs at both Allard (Turlock ) and PACE (Modesto ) community school campuses in November of 2009.

The CTE labs are equipped with two different levels of programs: Growing Up Ready, a program that teaches the kinds of life skills used in everyday life, and Action LAB, which is a technology education program designed to teach you how to



use and manage technology. There were many modules to choose from, but SCOE decided on 13 computer based labs and two building skills programs. The computers are each loaded with one 10-day Integrated Instructional Unit (also called modules, units or IIUs). One to three students work together on a unit. Instruction is delivered on the computer and each unit contains audio, video, text and pictures, as well as hands-on, Internet and writing activities. The program integrates state standards with program content. Students spend the first day in a group orienta-

tion where they are introduced to the program through a power point presentation and informational question and answer session. After the first session, the students choose which modules they would like to enroll in, by order of preference. The next session is a computer orientation session, in which students become familiar with program navigation. The students also participate in a measurement workshop and career exploration during the first week orientation. Then they move on to one of the modules. Students continue to rotate through the 10-day modules as they acquire new skills and competencies.

The modules currently available to all students at both Pace and Allard Community Schools in the CTE labs are:

**Banking and Credit Services:** Students become familiar with the basics of setting up and maintaining savings and checking accounts. They also gain a conceptual understanding of credit and the importance of a positive credit report, learn the importance of starting basic financial planning and goal setting at an early age, and using a software program, learn how to set up a checking account and develop a budget.

**Consumer Services.** Students show the need to become more informed consumers, distinguish between consumer rights and responsibilities, and gain a better understanding of the governmental laws and agencies designed to protect consumers.

**Information Technology:** Students learn the components of modern information processing systems. They learn how to produce a document using word processing software, spreadsheet

software including programming features, multimedia presentation demonstrating a variety of aspects of movement and animation . They also learn how to design a personal web page with multiple features.

**Video Production:** Students learn the fundamental objectives of video production from historical to contemporary practices. They learn the major components of a video editing system and demonstrate correct operation of the equipment, pre-planning and scripting. They use a formal system of organization for video production to write, plan, produce, shoot and edit a fifteen minute newscast or human interest story.

**Family & Friends:** Students learn the attributes of respectful, healthy relationships and the benefits of developing them, communication and decision making skills that contribute to positive relationships, strategies to resist and manage negative peer pressure. They learn communication and listening strategies, personality style and process of conflict resolution that contributes to positive relationships. They also learn the causes and effects of dating abuse among teens and create a pamphlet about dating abuse.



**Facility Maintenance.**

Students read and understand written instructions for minor installations, maintenance and repairs around

the home, do basic home repairs, gain an understanding of fire safety and emergency preparedness, and through hands-on use, demonstrate procedures for using correct tools and supplies to solve a variety of home repair problems.

**Robotics Technology.** Students learn to identify the characteristics of a variety of types and sizes of robots, describe how artificial intelligence is applied to robotic systems, identify, sketch and label all major parts of an industrial robot, describe

the basic components that allow an operator to program robots, compare and contrast robotic applications in medicine, industrial, and entertainment applications, and set up and program an interactive robotics station.



**Health and Fitness,** students identify the 7 major



body systems, describe the function, impact and importance of weight to height ratio, operate biomedical equipment and make predictions relative to exercise. They identify,

codify and describe measures to prevent to sport injuries and produce an exercise warm-up program. Students also identify, describe, predict and rectify factors leading to sleep disorders. They describe a system of 5 health related components of fitness and learn use them in their daily activities.

**Forensic Science:** Students explore how forensic science is used in criminal investigations, apply the principles of forensic science to a hypothetical crime, gain an understanding of fingerprint technology and the tools and equipment used in forensic investigation, use applied mathematics to solve a forensic investigation, determine through experimentation the forensic properties of fabrics and fibers, explore the careers associated with forensic science.



**Digital Music:** Students determine the relationship of computer programming theory and principles to digital music production. They develop and apply fundamental musical structure and



systematically apply these principles to digital and analog music, distinguish among different forms of digital music and identify equipment used in production. Students

explore the history of musical instruments and audio recording, appropriately use digital music terminology in the application of a variety of computer applications, arrange and produce a digital music composition.

### ***Computer Graphics and Animation:***

Students describe how communications technology developed for computer graphic and how the parts of a computer system are used to create computer graphics. The



students learn design process as it relates to creating computer graphics, different uses of computer graphics within communications systems, and complete an assigned computer graphic job using the design process while evaluating the effectiveness of examples of computer graphics. They also apply the basics of 3-D animation to create their own animations.

***Audio Communications:*** Students define the components used in audio communications, recording and radio systems. They study the history of radio and early radio pioneers, the organization and operation of a radio station, spot advertising,



and radio/recording functions. They learn about personnel, identify and distinguish among AM, FM, analog, and digital signals and the scientific principles that explain the

workings of radio. Students create and develop a series of radio “copy” such as, writing news, weather, commercials, and weather information.

### ***Alternative Energy:***

Students gain an understanding of the current use of energy and the resources now being expended. They contrast and compare the environmental effects



of non-renewable and renewable energy sources, use mathematics in application to determine the efficiency of wind powered energy sources, explore the science and chemistry of hydrogen fuel cell powered vehicles, determine through experimentation the efficiency of photo-voltaic energy sources, and explore the careers associated with alternative energy industries.

Stanislaus County is committed to providing students educational experiences which correlate to vocational options available to them as adults. By infusing the rigorous application of state standards to coursework with real life opportunities, students gain motivation, improve attendance and develop a passion for learning not before experienced.




# Acorns to Oaks

Kings County Office of Education

Students at Kings Community School---a county alternative school serving teenagers who have been expelled from their home districts---are using a portion of the campus flower and fruit garden to raise Valley Oak saplings for planting at Burris Park, located in King County, CA.



We're doing something to better the school and community," said Joey (pictured), a junior at Kings Community School. "It's something we'll leave behind. Without the garden, it's just another day indoors."

 The Acorns to Oak Trees project is part of instructor Hollie Jones' Environmental Science Course. Jones wrote two small grants to get the project started, and she and her students bake and sell cookies to keep up with the garden's maintenance costs. She infuses CA State Standards with the knowledge and skills acquired through this project. It's amazing how much reading, researching, graphing and data collection is used to germinate and grow healthy plants and trees. Every core subject, from history to algebra, can be utilized the themes encompassed in this project.

Jones and her class have been working with Burris Park Biologist, Lisa Villa, as part of the Valley Oak Regeneration Project. The goal is to get more native trees growing in the park, and if the project is a success, extend it to other community meeting grounds. The students already have 14 saplings ready for transplanting.



If we don't consciously plant the seeds of what we want in the gardens of our minds, we'll end up with weeds.

Anthony Robbins

# Rigor and Relevance through Culinary Arts

Imperial County Office of Education

Students chopping vegetables, cooking over fires and serving others is not business as usual at an alternative education setting. Neither are students from different sides of town working collaboratively to plan, prepare and produce a major project that they not only can show off, and be proud of, but they can also eat! This is what is happening with the Culinary Arts program at Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE) Alternative Education program.

The Imperial County Office of Education (ICOE) has teamed up in prior years with the Imperial County Regional Occupational Program (IVROP) to provide career technical educational courses to students. Previous offerings have included Law Enforcement and Medical Terminology classes. This year ICOE is offering a Culinary Arts class for the first time. These classes are very popular among students due to the relevance of coursework to the real world.

Many students struggle to see the purpose of school, the prospect of a career, and the need to have marketable skills. These courses help students see education as a benefit and necessary for successful futures.

The business of Court, Community and Alternative Schools is to motivate and educate students who have not found success in the traditional school settings. It is our responsibility to get these students back on track and focused on acquiring



ing the skills and coursework necessary for high school graduation.

With that goal in mind courses have been revamped to focus on key grade level standards. Teachers have been trained in direct instruction and lesson design, and interventions are in place to fill in gaps in student skills.

Teachers and counselors have been working to build healthy relationships with their students. They are working on career pathways and teaching the importance of character traits, such as responsibility and perseverance. For many of our students, solid healthy role models are rare outside of school.

In the push for rigor and relationships, many students struggle every day to see the relevance



in what we teach them. They are continuously asking, “Why do I need to know this? When am I ever going to use this?” At times teachers find it difficult to make that connection to real world relevance and we sometimes resort to saying, “Because it is on the test” or “You need it for college”, For many our students that answer is not good enough.

Hence, the opportunity to participate in a Culinary Arts program fits with the goal of providing a relevant and rigorous curriculum, while building those all important relationships. With the knowledge and passion of the instructor, Ms. Danna Romo, students have been able to meet their need to create something that has meaning to them. Ms. Romo teaches them how to plan, prepare, and produce full-scale meals. They also design and create fruit and vegetable bouquets and decorate cakes and cupcakes that are served to the public.



This program combines classroom training in food preparation and service with hands-on experience in dealing with the public. Students learn to cook, but more importantly, students improve social skills, learn teamwork, make a commitment and gain confidence.

Ms. Romo engages the students with hands-on real world scenarios where the assessments are not with pencil and paper, but meats and vegetables. They know when they taste the meal that their planning and teamwork has paid off. When asked what difference she has noticed in the students who are taking the culinary courses, Ms. Monalisa Vitela, Senior Director for ICOE Alternative Education Program, said she has noticed an increase in leadership skills, confidence levels, community awareness and overall improved academic performance.

The school principal, Patrice Larson points to their increased ability to work with others and have a more positive outlook on their education.

Ms. Dana Romo has a passion for what she teaches. She is an experienced caterer, with a passion for cooking. She admits that prior to applying for this position, she had never heard of court and community schools so she hadn't realized that the population she would be working with was considered “at risk”. She laughs when remembering a friend warning her to be careful with “those kids”. Ms. Romo says that she has had a wonderful experience with her students, and that “those kids” can do anything and everything any other kids can do. In fact when asked what her most memorable aspect of this experience has been, she said it is the transformation of her students into a focused, hard working, committed team. She says the credit must be shared with the counselors and teachers who work with her to help these young adults mature.



Decorative vegetable arrangement

# Service Learning Projects Deliver Authentic Learning Opportunities and Holistic Transformation of Students

San Joaquin County Office of Education  
by Claudia Danielsen

The quote by Margaret Mead, “A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has,” is inspiration and motivation for the teachers and students at **one.**@H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People Everywhere). This alternative education high school asks students to accept varied academic challenges, try to view the community through different lenses, and collectively strive to dispel student stereotypes. This process begins with a safe welcoming environment, immediate respect from teachers, and support from community resources to help meet students’ basic needs. **One.**@H.O.P.E. students learn to build trusting relationships, change negative behaviors, accept rigorous academic challenges, and recognize the relevancy that the curriculum has on their lives. (Bill Daggett, Ed.D)

The two-teacher site is tucked away in a non-descript small business location in Stockton and offers thematic integrated direct instruction. The sixty students in attendance are on an independent study schedule that allows flexibility for volunteering, internship opportunities, field trips, and employment opportunities. The task of engaging students is addressed by creating relevant and participatory curriculum that lends itself to serving others.

Service Learning is a teaching strategy that connects mandated curriculum objectives to high quality service. The projects incorporate standards of practice that include appreciation of diversity, community collaboration, and developing youth voice through continuous reflection. Countless individuals and organizations worldwide are using this strategy to promote peace and humanity while serving others. Websites are easily accessed and provide project ideas, lesson plans, and other resources. Veray Wickham, Community Involvement Coordina-

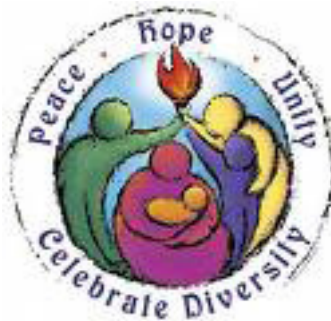
tor for San Joaquin County Office of Education, offers on-going support through professional development opportunities and access to community resources.

## **Curriculum Connects Students to the Community**

Reflection activities encourage youth voice as students define community and research current problems for possible projects. But the actual service, whether it is direct or indirect, depends upon the needs determined by the recipients, not the students. Frequent dialogue has shown that students feel disconnected from serving their community or seeing themselves as assets. Every day concerns and social networking seem to consume the majority of the students’ attention and energy.

However, a transformation occurs when teacher created ‘power points’ bring to light serious social and economic issues in third world countries. A shroud of silence emerges as visual images enlighten them to the plight of others less fortunate. During this pivotal point, compassion arises and passion stirs emotions that unveil the reality that others have it “worse” than they do. Instantly, students begin to understand the world is bigger than they had thought. This newfound experience places students in a position to help others rather than being the customary recipient of services and goods. The tables begin to turn as students begin to see themselves as leaders and entertain the possibility they have something to offer their community.

One of the easiest ways kids are convinced they can help others is to introduce [www.freerice.com](http://www.freerice.com), which gives rice to people all over the world. Ten grains of rice are deposited in a bowl for every correct answer to multiple-choice questions. Participants can choose different subjects and are able to review cumulative donations of rice. The continuous website is free and is a purposeful activity as students complete



assignments. During Service Learning presentations they are eager to share this indirect service approach and yearn for a “pay it forward” outcome. The holistic transformation starts as students draw meaning by connecting one experience to another and invest emotionally in projects and themselves. Not all students are confident presenters or take initiative to create projects, so participating on the website allows discrete service opportunities. Continued participation invites further inquiry and fosters enthusiasm for learning and serving others.

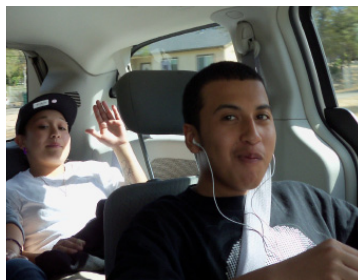
A school-wide project enables teachers to model examples of service and monitor the project while encouraging individual participation. The curriculum focus is the California Watershed as an important eco system and natural resource. Students explore overall water usage and pledge to make changes that aid in conservation efforts. Learning extends beyond the classroom during field trips to the Mokelumne River Fish Hatchery. Collaboration with grant partners from Stewardship Through Educa-



tion provides additional related curriculum and training.

*Field trips inspire dreams of far away destinations and generate memorable experiences.*

Students are trained in water monitoring and bio diversity while visiting a natural pond located behind a school in Valley Springs. Teachers can reap many personal and professional rewards from introducing students to new experiences. Students’ sincere revelations alone are reason enough to continue this innovative and holistic approach to teaching. Even though this pond is only a little over an hour from school, many students have never ventured that far from home. Service Learning projects grant exposure to new communities and resources that would otherwise remain invisible.



*Ricky asked, “Are we in another state?”*

**Right Around the Corner and In your Backyard**

Volunteers from Friends of the Lower Calaveras River share their expertise, resources, and valuable time. The close proximity of the Calaveras River to the site invites frequent river walks. Students are reminded of the dependent animal life as tracks are identified and photos taken. Observations include the changing of the river’s current in different directions, native plants, and the effects of litter on the California Watershed. Student expressions reveal concern when they note the quality of the water and are reminded it is a source for their drinking water. Relevancy hits home and personal responsibility for the community begins to grow.

Student expressions reveal concern when they note the quality of the water and are reminded it is a source for their drinking water. Relevancy hits home and personal responsibility for the community begins to grow.



*Projects can address student needs and link the school to the community.*

An example of direct service is the project, “Helping Hands”, which provides weekly tutoring and P.E. activities for the K-6 homeless students at **one.®TLC**. **One.®H.O.P.E.** students gain an understanding of the homeless community and begin to understand that education provides more options for their future. These social issues connect to state standards and have been included in student GBE (Graduation By Exhibition) presentations. A buddy field trip to The Zeum in San Francisco was the first time these high school students had been out side of Stockton. The experience thoroughly impressed a student who is enrolling at San Joaquin Delta College in the fall and now plans on transferring to San Francisco State University.



**Building H.O.P.E.- The School as a Community**

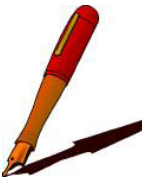
Students create various projects that focus on the school as their community and leaders begin to emerge during the hosting of trainings, attendance at workshops, discussions in student meetings, and as presenters. Students find they can work together toward a common goal, which works in conjunction with our philosophical foundation of the Concept of **one.®**

They feel empowered to make changes, ex-

press ideas, and share their talents. Students create a program-wide newsletter that describes Service Learning projects and offers resources. The workshops offer training for county staff, students in the program, and community members. An Open House showcases student achievements and honors community partnerships. The community doesn't always appreciate some of the students' artistic abilities. Their talents are redirected in classroom murals that represent the Stockton community and help to build a sense of pride in the school. Student appreciation celebrations help connect students and families, county staff, and community members. Reflective quotes from students are evidence of the transformations and a commitment to community changes.



A holistic approach includes academic objectives, but also addresses social and emotional needs. A community needs self-sufficient participatory members that work together to better themselves and the community. Many students lack the necessary skills to successfully complete documents like job applications, resumes, rental applications, or car insurance forms. Relevant curriculum helps teach the essential tools in order to transition from high school to independent living. Field trips to colleges are coordinated with the school counselor and offer new possibilities to students who usually don't see themselves as "college material".



The established school to community partnership with Work Net assists students in completing job applications while highlighting skills and experience they were unaware of. The staff compiles the information and completes professional-quality resumes for each student in addition to training for an interview. A student offers indirect service by maintaining a binder including employment opportunities obtained from Work Net. Career interest surveys and related activities invite reflection and youth voice. The students contact guest speakers by phone, through correspondence, or e-mail, to arrange presentations. Students discuss and prepare questions in advance, volunteer to speak, help set up light refreshments and decorate the tables. Afterwards, discussions reveal new information obtained and reflective written responses of appreciation

are forwarded to the guests. This is an example of identifying the school as a community and addressing important needs.



Students engaged in Service Learning projects begin to understand the need for acquisition of academic skills and also develop responsibility for their community. Important components in the program's Mission Statement include students becoming life long learners and productive citizens. Civic responsibility can be fostered through Service Learning and Project Citizen. The Center for Civic Education offers curriculum that teaches the levels of government responsible for public policy and how to research problems. The objective is to learn the process of change. Service Learning can extend the experience as students actively move forward into action to try to make public policy changes. Students at **one**.®H.O.P.E. are ready to exercise youth voice and pursue their action plans concerning improving the one.Program. The key to implementing Service Learning is to connect service to required curriculum.

### Student Transformations

**One**.®H.O.P.E. works together with **one**.®Petersen students at juvenile hall to help meet the two-credit graduation requirement for community service. Service Learning credits are synonymous with community service and can be earned without physically volunteering outside the classroom. A typical project begins with a career choice as students follow research guidelines and create two informative binders. Students practice reflection and self-awareness as they note their strengths and qualifications for their chosen profession. One binder remains with the student and the second is donated to the "Encyclopedia of Careers" collection at **one**.®H.O.P.E. Binders include careers such as construction management, becoming a firefighter, a lawyer, a chef, and a Peace Keeper. Students are motivated to make positive choices as they spend time focusing on their career goal. This is the beginning of the belief they can create a more productive future for themselves.

In addition, one teacher at juvenile hall, Ms. Voss, extends opportunities for her incarcerated students as they raise Chinook salmon in the classroom. A field trip completes their efforts with the release of the salmon into the



Mokelumne River. A student's once tough exterior melts as he stands near a very shallow shore of the river. He clings tightly to a tree sapling and sizes up the situation since it is his first trip to the wilderness. The seed that inspires curiosity and inquiry is now planted.

**One.**@H.O.P.E. students enjoy a first time experience cruising on the Delta while aboard a research vessel with marine biologists teaching interactive research techniques. They join students from the Sierra foothills and work together to gather mud samples, identify fish collected, and view microscopic plankton obtained from water samples. Nervous students now feel confident enough to ask questions and converse with the biologists. The ride home usually uncovers preconceived notions and insecurities about the day and then quickly switches to ideas for future projects. Success is measured by the willing participants' smiles, interest in the next class session, and the number of credits earned until graduation. The transformation is in motion.



- California Watershed: Stewardship Through Education, LLC website: [www.steonline.org](http://www.steonline.org)
- Career resources website: [californiacareerzone.org](http://californiacareerzone.org)
- Work Net of San Joaquin County
- Film: Pay It Forward, 2000, Directed by Mimi Leder

Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.

Marcel Proust

**About the author:**

Claudia Danielsen's 15-year teaching experiences include traditional 4th- 5th grades, 5th-6th Sheltered English, 2nd-3rd homeless students, emergency children's shelter grades K-12, and currently partners with Jennifer Heck at **one.**@H.O.P.E. grades 9-12. She has been a Service Learning Practitioner, advocate, peer mentor, and presenter for 14 years. She has been an adjunct faculty member for 9 years at CSU, Stanislaus, Teacher Credential Program. Email: [cdanielsen@sjcoe.net](mailto:cdanielsen@sjcoe.net)

**References:**

Daggett, Bill Ed.D, International Center for Leadership in Education

**For more information regarding Service Learning and Project Citizen:**

- The Center for Civic Education's website located at: [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org).
- Learn and Serve America's website: [www.learnandserve.org](http://www.learnandserve.org)
- National Service-Learning Clearinghouse website: [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)
- What is Service Learning website: [www.statefarm.com](http://www.statefarm.com)

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# Student-Centered Transitioning from Juvenile Hall to School of Residence: Managing the Early Phases

by Jeana M. Jett

In the movie “The King’s Speech,” screenplay by David Seidler, the King of England angrily bellows at his speech therapist, “I HAVE A VOICE!” This done without the slightest hint of his debilitating stutter. After a thoughtful pause the therapist quietly replies: “Yes, you do.” Thus begins the king’s methodical and well orchestrated transition from a hopeless, frustrated stutterer to a formidable leader who learns to manage his disability.

The setting of this article does not take place in a king’s palace, but rather within the walls of a California juvenile detention facility in Monterey County. The scene is a large classroom operated by the Monterey County Office of Education Alternative Education Department. This oversized classroom is used for overflow classes, individualized testing and as a staging area for school projects. In one corner, six student desk-chairs are positioned in a tight-knit circle in anticipation of an unprecedented meeting which will take place momentarily.

## BACKGROUND

A week earlier the school principal and student transition manager discussed several students who would soon be released from the detention facility and returning to their districts of residence. The focus of discussion was how these students would benefit from student-centered transition planning to ease their transition to their next educational placement. From that came a process of student centered transition planning. The selection criteria would include students who were three weeks away from release and who were performing fairly well within the classroom.

Beginning with a questionnaire, the student transition manager’s focus is to establish the student’s priorities and goals and connect those with pathways into the student’s future.

## CASE STUDY

Susana\* is a petite 14.5 year old female who initially entered juvenile hall for theft. She is now on her fourth stay at the detention center due to subsequent violations. She is academically capable at both juvenile hall and her continuation school and has the grades in all subjects to prove it, even though she is behind in credits for a freshman.

Susana readily identifies the adults who care about what happens to her: her mother and father, and their next door neighbor, Barbara\*. Susana states that she wants to go to college and become a chef. Her family supports her future plans. Susana enjoys cooking with her mother and baking with Barbara. Her continuation school requires students to complete all school work on site, so Susana does not have homework. Her asthma is under control with medication. Her glasses broke and have not been replaced; and, her jaw hurts (Susana grinds her teeth in her sleep.).

Susana responds affirmatively when the student transition manager asks if she is interested in doing some pre-release planning to help her transition from juvenile hall to her school of residence. The student transition manager then reviews Susana’s case with the probation service manager and schedules a meeting at the juvenile hall school with her probation officer, parents and school principal.

## STUDENT PREPARATORY MEETING

A few days before the meeting Susana meets with the student transition manager. Together, they review Susana’s responses to the questionnaire. The student transition manager guides Susana in verbalizing requests regarding her needs. For example:  
Susana states: “I am not busy enough at school and the work is too easy.”



Susana requests: "Mr. Teacher, may I take extra work home?"

Susana states: "I like cooking, and I would like to learn more about it."

Susana requests: "Can you help me learn more about cooking and being a chef?"

Susana states: "My glasses broke, so I threw them away. I know I need glasses."

Susana requests: "If possible, can I get contact lenses?"

Susana is instructed that the adults will not be making choices for her, but will respond to her requests. In learning how to articulate her needs, she also learns how to advocate for herself.

### THE MEETING

Susana's probation officer arrives first. He is known as an innovator who never gives up on kids, always follows through, and is open to new and experiential processes. The PO III is polite but has probably seen almost every approach to righting wayward youth. He is supportive of Susana and communicates this with her.



Susana's parents last saw their daughter the previous Saturday during regular visiting hours in the visitor's area. They are speechless as they are escorted to the classroom. This is the first time they have get to see the juvenile hall classroom and the educational environment their daughter encounters daily. After an emotional greeting with Susana, they are redirected to focus on the purpose of the meeting.

The meeting sequence is as follows:

1. Susana factually states her criminal history.
2. The student transition manager recounts responses to the questionnaire. Others contribute so the 'full picture' of Susana and her needs are conceptualized.
3. The student transition manager prompts Susana to express her needs and make requests as previously rehearsed. At times, Susana's shyness overshadows her ability to be convincing, but with prompting Susana finds her voice and states her requests.
4. The student transition manager brings the team to realistic agreements:
  - The PO will research obstacles to enrolling at a new high school.
  - The PO will arrange for Susana to meet with a chef.

- The student transition manager will research Susana's ability to volunteer with local food-related services such as Meals on Wheels.
- The parents will research Susana's ability to volunteer at a local food pantry and the Salvation Army.
- The parents will procure a family membership at the YMCA where Susana and her siblings can participate in team sports.
- The parents will formalize the relationship with the neighbor, Barbara, and ask her to be a presence in Susana's life.
- The mother will research concurrent high school and college enrollment.
- The father will invite his daughter to accompany him to his college classes to expose her to a collegiate environment.
- Susana will ask her teacher to assign more academic work.
- Susana will tell her mother when she needs mother-daughter time.
- The mother will address Susana's vision and dental issues and Susana will request contact lenses.
- The mother and transition services manager will coordinate the next transition meeting in conjunction with court hearings.

The meeting is brought to an emotional ending as Susana's parents' hearts fill with hope for their daughter. All attendees were able to contribute something positive and verbalized the power of the meeting and their ability to focus on the needs of this youth in building hope for her future. In the end, it is Susana who must learn to manage her own destiny through her own voice.



This is just an example of the power that can be created by connecting all agency personnel to a student and the adults in their life – with a caring and supportive focus which spotlights the student's goals and how to achieve them. Meeting individually with the students prior to the group meeting and helping them learn to articulate their wants and needs in an appropriate fashion is imperative.

For more information/copies of the questionnaire or additional information on the meeting process, contact Jeana Jett at (831) 775-6458.

\*Names are changed to preserve anonymity.

# Effects of ACCESS Truancy Response Program on Decreasing Truancy Rates in an Alternative Education Setting

by Julie A. Burkett, Joanne Puszert, Sommer Pruitt,  
Lorena Cortez, and Marisa Mendoza,

## Abstract:

The hypothesis for the ACCESS Truancy Response Program (ATRP) was that truancy rates of truant offenders would decrease by 15% in the first 6 months of implementation. To test this hypothesis, the ATRP study measured the decrease in truancies of a random sample of students enrolled in Alternative Community and Correctional Education and Support Services (ACCESS) North PAR schools. These students received four progressive levels of interventions over a six month period. If they were non-responsive to one intervention, they advanced to the next progressive level. Interventions included: 1) District Attorney (D.A.) Letter mandating attendance at a D.A. Meeting; 2) attendance at a D.A. Meeting; 3) Outreach Intervention for students who continued to be truant; and 4) Student Attendance Review Team (SART) hearing for students who remained habitually truant after all previous interventions. A Quasi-Experimental Repeated Measures design allowed ATRP to analyze the effects of each intervention. Pre- and post-intervention data measured the rate of decrease in truancies between a comparison and experimental subgroup. ATRP found an overall 58% decrease in the average number of truancies between the two groups over the course of the study, equaling a sample estimated potential projected \$1,923,293 in recovered revenue for ACCESS North PAR over a one year period.

Decades ago, skipping school for most students was an act of rebellion or curiosity. Many of these students were detoured from habitually missing classes due to the intervention of community members, neighbors, and local store owners reporting them to school officials or their parents. Today, truancy has become an issue of great concern for both education and society, yet evidenced based intervention methods in alternative and community schools continue to be scarce. Current literature primarily focuses on why adolescents are truant and how truancy negatively impacts society (Lamdin, 2001), but few studies related to the alternative

and community day school settings discuss methodology for decreasing truancy rates. Those that do, often lack evidence necessary to support their interventions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). In fact, research has not been able to find a method that 1) combats truancy rates, and 2) can be generalized enough to be applicable in a specific school setting. This project hypothesized that a series of interventions could be implemented to address truancy issues and decrease truancy rates, with a possible additional benefit of decreasing juvenile crime.

To start, it is important to operationally define the term truancy. Truancy is “the ha-



bitual engagement in unexcused absences from school” (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barret, & Williams, 2007). The California Compulsory Education Laws (Chapter 465, Statutes of 2000 (SB 1913, McPherson)) state that “children between the ages of six and eighteen must attend school with a limited number of specified exceptions.” In addition, students who “fail to obtain a valid excuse and are absent for more than three days in a standard year” are considered truant offenders. Furthermore, California Compulsory Education Laws confirm that students can be considered truant for “missing more than 30 minutes of class time on three separate occasions in a given school year” (Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2004).

The San Francisco School District went one step further in defining truancy in their recent truancy reduction study published in the San Francisco Chronicle (Tucker, 2009). They provided the following additional definitions that refer to students with truancy issues:

- Non-truant: Students with less than 3 truanies in one school year
- Truant: Students with 3 to 9 truanies in one school year
- Habitually Truant: Students with 10 to 19 truanies in one school year
- Chronically Truant: Students with 20 or more truanies in one school year

In addition to defining truancy, it is important to understand the factors that lead to absenteeism, as well as its effects on students and society. In their “How to Combat Truancy” manual, the United States Departments of Education and Justice confirmed that truancy not only leads to an increased rate of high school drop-outs, but also eventually leads to greater economic and social difficulties for the student and community (US Department of Education, 2007). In fact, the authors estimate that students who drop out of high school are two and a half times

more likely to be on welfare compared to students who graduate from high school. A number of other studies have concluded a link between school-aged truancy and later life delinquency (Zhang, Katsiyannis, Barrett, & Wilson, 2007). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) website reports that truant offenders who lack commitment in school may be at-risk for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, among other negative consequences (OJJDP, 2004). Henry (2007) descriptively evaluated certain predictive issues that result from truant behaviors. These negative implications include: maladjustment, poor school performance, school drop out, and juvenile delinquency. Henry also predicted long-term consequences such as violence, marital instability, job instability, and incarceration as an adult as common outcomes for truant adolescents (Henry, 2007). The Department of Justice (OJJDP, 2006) released a report stating the following:



- 78% of prison inmates have truancy as their first arrest
- 57% of violent juvenile crimes are committed when youth should have been in school
- 82% of prisoners are high school drop outs
- 67% of truants test positive for drugs when they are detained

Another facet to understanding a student’s truant behavior is their inherent beliefs and level of school engagement. According to Adelman and Taylor (2003) natural temperaments, ability to problem solve, innate intelligence, and hope for the future are all protective factors that may reduce truancy. Additional protective factors include: having financial resources to live above the poverty line; primary care-givers who are nurturing and loving; living in a safe and stable neighborhood; and being reared by individuals



that have achieved at least a high school diploma. These factors alone are not an exact predictor of attendance, but without them truant behaviors appear

to be more prevalent (Adelman & Taylor, 2003).

During a methodical review of available research, Durlak (1995) found the best indicator of whether or not a child will be successful before entering the educational system is the level of household economics (Durlak, 1995). He also found that children at the low end of the socioeconomic spectrum are at the highest risk for underachievement in an educational setting. Although this is convincing evidence, the family can not be taken out of context from the community, as research shows, communities with increased police involvement correlate to higher levels of truancy (Kao & Thompson, 2003) among students. Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson (2000) found that children of color or minority descent appear to have a higher rate of dropping out due to community stressors such as police interaction, drug availability, low school funding, and reduced motivation from educators (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000). When reviewing the community, schools must also be held accountable for creating an environment where youth become truant. In schools that show low levels of truancy, it was found that truancy interventions increased a child's protective factors and reduced truancy (Knoff, 2000). In order to understand the origins of truancy, we need to consider the student, family, community, and school systems as a whole.

There are many escalating consequential responses to truancy in California. They include parental notification and appropriate legal interventions as prescribed by the school district (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2004). These district level responses are typically in the form of School Attendance and Review Board (SARBs) hearings. SARB hearings are a collaborative attempt to avoid further truancy. It is not uncommon for law enforcement to attend these hearings or for

the justice system to become involved with the student and their family. During the SARB hearing, the student and parents are given very clear information on the consequences of continued absenteeism (California Department of Education, 2008), including the possible removal of the youth from their home and placement in a correctional facility. The parents may also be incarcerated for up to 180 days and fined up to \$1,000 dollars plus related cost if the truancy issue is not resolved (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2004). To avoid such punitive consequences, the educational system continues to search for new and efficient ways to reduce absenteeism in their districts. This study will examine a new intervention program implemented by the Orange County Department of Education, known as the ACCESS Truancy Response Program (ATRP).

The Orange County Department of Education operates the largest alternative education school system in the State, known as the Alternative Community and Correctional Education and Support Services (ACCESS) Division. ACCESS serves nearly 8,500 students at 140 school sites throughout the county and was recently recognized as one of the Top 3 Alternative Education Programs in the Nation (American Institute for Research, 2006). Since its inception in the 1950's, ACCESS has been highly successful at providing flexibility, quality education, and an opportunity for at-risk youth to achieve their academic potential. ACCESS is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). For many students, ACCESS schools are the first instructional setting where they have found success.



Research has found that even when a child is removed from a traditional school setting and placed in alternative education, the student's self-esteem and participation in their education can remain high, if the alternative educational system forms a bond with the student (Gold & Mann, 1984). For this reason, it is the mission of ACCESS to inspire students to discover their potential and maximize their learning so they may success-

ACCESS teachers not only have the responsibility of working with a student, but also to adapt the environment to facilitate the child's growth in competence, independence, self-respect, and responsibility. The low teacher-student ratios in ACCESS schools are considered integral to successful outcomes.

fully contribute to society. In accordance with this mission, ACCESS offers a variety of learning modalities to meet student needs. In order to assist students to meet their educational goals, ACCESS schools provide the following characteristics, often suggested as essential to program success by experts or administrators in the field of education. They include:

- Small class size and small student body
- Flexibility and collaborative culture
- Special teacher training
- High expectations for students
- Effective classroom management
- Parent involvement

ACCESS teachers not only have the responsibility of working with a student, but also to adapt the environment to facilitate the child's growth in competence, independence, self-respect, and responsibility. The low teacher-student ratios in ACCESS schools are considered integral to successful outcomes.

In general, ACCESS students are defined as "at-greater-risk" by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention due to violence, alcohol/drug use, interpersonal difficulties, and/or criminal acts (OJJDP, 2001). Students are referred to ACCESS by local traditional school districts, juvenile courts, Probation, Social Services, or parent request. Reasons for referral tend to be severe behavioral issues, substance abuse, expulsion, excessive truancy, teen pregnancy, learning disabilities, homelessness, residency in group homes, juvenile delinquency, and/or gang participation. According to the ACCESS Attendance and Records Office, upon entry, 80% of ACCESS students are deficient in academic

credits, often behind 3 to 5 grade levels in reading and math. Excessive truancy accounts for 40% of student referrals to ACCESS, 25% come from Probation, 15% from Social Services, 10% for credit deficiency, and 10% for district expulsions (ACCESS Attendance and Records, 2008). ACCESS students face multiple educational barriers not limited to being a highly transient student population, having very low basic skills/test scores, and high number of English Language Learners. On average, 65% of ACCESS students failed one or both portions of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) on their first attempt, and 40% failed on their second (ACCESS Attendance and Records, 2008).

ACCESS students are among the most vulnerable youth in Orange County. They and their families tend to live in unstable, high-risk situations with histories of violence, criminal involvement, substance abuse, and extreme poverty. Many are or have been victims of abuse and/or severe neglect. They deal with critical issues such as addiction, depression, and personal safety concerns making it difficult to focus on school. They tend to come from single parent households with little supervision, as parents often work multiple jobs to make ends meet. Parents often struggle with personal addiction, domestic violence, or incarceration, at times, enabling poor behavior by their children. ACCESS students also face many personal barriers that interfere with their consistent school attendance, which include being teen parents, family financial issues, personal/family criminal history, and mental health issues. A high percentage of majority of these programs focused on



these youth have multiple risk factors that predict life-course juvenile delinquency and academic failure including: economic/social deprivation, alienation, high levels of transience, residence in neighborhood with high crime rates, severe depression, access to alcohol/drugs, association with delinquent friends, and significant life stressors (Loeber & Hay, 1997).

The targeted geographic area for this study is Orange County, California, which includes a diverse range of residents. Orange County was declared a "Minority-Majority" county in 2003, meaning minority groups have become more than half of the County's population. The cost of living in Orange County is fourth highest among 300 comparable metropolitan areas in the country (CFCOC, 2006). In December of 2005, the median home price reached \$621,000. For this reason, families are finding it increasingly difficult to become homeowners. The 2004 Orange County Health Needs Assessment report estimated that roughly five to ten percent of youth in the County are without health insurance. Approximately 50% of these children qualify for public insurance programs including Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, and Access for Infants and Mothers, (OCHCA, 2006). Although Orange County is known as one of the wealthiest counties in the state, a disproportionate number of incarcerated youth come from lower income communities. For example, United States Census Bureau statistics report that 14% of the population of Anaheim lives below the poverty line (U.S. Census, 2000), while 96% of the youth attending ACCESS schools in Anaheim (included in the studied ACCESS North PAR area) are identified as living below the poverty line (ACCESS Attendance & Records, 2008).

Each of these risk factors and severity

of the truancy issues experienced by ACCESS students allowed researchers to truly measure the effectiveness of ATRP interventions with at-risk populations. Unlike previous research, this study demonstrated the validity and applicability of ATRP interventions with hard to reach students in large, urban settings.

### **Literature Review:**

As pervasive as truancy is in our public education system the research to date on actual interventions to reduce or prevent it are surprisingly few. Even when most educators list truancy as a top priority, there is little evidence available on methods proven to decrease truancy (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

During the 1970's, under the leadership of President Johnson, there was a social movement to reduce truancy. Research conducted during this time suggested that maladaptive behaviors accounted for student absenteeism (Tennent, 1971). These studies also argued that maladaptive behaviors in adolescence stemmed from problems in the child's home (Campbell, 1973). However, these conclusions lacked evidence to support their argument.

Jeremy Finn is often regarded as the pioneer in truancy theoretical perspectives. In 1989, Finn published a study on the most current truancy data available with the assistance of computerized records (Finn, 1989). Before this time period, researchers spent countless hours searching through handwritten attendance charts filed within index card catalogs, making compiling data time consuming and extremely difficult. In his study, Finn was able to address both truancy, pathology and environmental reactions to truancy (Finn, 1989).

**A high percentage of these youth have multiple risk factors that predict life-course juvenile delinquency and academic failure including: economic/social deprivation, alienation, high levels of transience, residence in neighborhood with high crime rates, severe depression, access to alcohol/drugs, association with delinquent friends, and significant life stressors (Loeber & Hay, 1997).**



The first theory constructed by Finn is known as the “frustration-self-esteem model” (Finn, 1989). Finn argued that in any school system, students will act out, or exhibit maladaptive behaviors, causing school officials to react with punitive consequences. This theory notes that students’ negative behavior in the classroom arose as a result of their inability to understand the material being taught. As a result, school officials tended to punish the student without being aware that the consequence led to decreased self-esteem and an increase in poor behavior. One consequence to negative behavior was the removal from mainstream classrooms and placement in alternative education settings. This only led to a larger decrease in self-esteem and an increase in truancy (Finn, 1989). Finn believed that as a student begins to feel “less than”, the likelihood of increased negative behavior, continued truancy, and/or eventual dropout would likely follow.

The second theory that Finn argued is called the “participation-identification model”, which refers to the bond created between the student and school. Finn argued that if the student was unable to connect to school, they would act out in class and/or eventually dropout (Finn, 1989). In order for an attachment to be formed between the student and the school, it is critical that the youth is socialized to believe in the positive benefits of investing in the educational process. Without this commitment to learning, a student will be unwilling to conform to school rules as necessary for remaining in a traditional school setting (Finn, 1989).

Understanding the motivations of today’s student requires new and inventive methods. One of the few successful interventions regarding truancy reduction involved the use of an incentive to facilitate positive outcomes. Sturgeon and Beer (1990) performed a detailed data analysis spanning 14 years worth of attendance data from a rural high school in the Midwest (Sturgeon & Beer, 1990). In this study, students who attended school regularly and maintained a set grade point

average would be exempt from taking an end of the semester test. The data results from 1976 to 1979 were compared to those from 1980 to 1989. They revealed a significant difference in the total number of days absent. The average number of days missed in a year was reduced from 1,750 per school year for the entire student body in the years prior to 1980, to 570 days absent in the period up to 1989. There was a correlated reduction in the amount of students who took semester end test, as predicted (Sturgeon & Beer, 1990). Although successful outcomes were attained, the study was limited in its universal implications as it was performed in a small urban city in Kansas where demographics, economy, and environmental setting differs from larger urban cities and densely populated counties/states. The study also failed to account for any outside ecological/ environmental stressors such as gangs, drugs, family dysfunction, and economic factors.

Another rare, but positive, non-punitive measure to reduce truancy involved a study using student participation in a therapeutic program. In 2002, Miller conducted a study using students who were found to be truant and randomly assigned them to either a therapeutic or control group. The intervention process required the participants to complete therapeutic learning packets under the guidance of a therapist. The control group was exposed to the standard treatment consisting of threats of home suspension, in-school suspension, additional course work, detention, and janitorial work on school grounds. The experiment also required both groups to complete a written exercise exploring their personal insight into how they could change their truant behaviors. The results were positive with the intervention group displaying greater insight into resolving their truancy issues and substantially increasing their class attendance (Miller, 2002).



In 2001, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) conducted an extensive review of truancy reduction programs from across the country. Unfortunately, the

*continued on page 44*

# HONORING JCCASAC'S PAST PRESIDENTS

1970-71  
Don Purdy  
Santa Clara

1971-72  
Chuck Lee  
San Diego

1972-73  
Doug Booth  
San Mateo

1973-74  
Joe De Mello  
Contra Costa

1974-75  
Marshall Lomax  
Los Angeles

1975-76  
John Hull  
Sacramento

1976-77  
Rocco Nobile  
San Diego

1977-78  
John Peshkoff  
Santa Clara

1978-79  
Jerry Matney  
Orange

1979-80  
Miltie Couteur  
Butte

1980-81  
Marty Familletti  
Riverside

1981-82  
Joe De Mello  
Contra Costa

1982-83  
Roy Savage  
Riverside

1983-84  
Ken Kammuller  
Marin

1984-85  
Wayne Toscas  
Santa Barbara

1985-86  
Greg Almand  
Contra Costa

1986-87  
Hedy Kirsh  
Orange

1987-88  
Shirl Schmidt  
Shasta

1988-89  
Chuck Lee  
San Diego

1989-90  
William Burns  
San Mateo

1990-91  
John Peshkoff  
Orange

1991-92  
Orene Hopkins  
Contra Costa

1992-93  
John Stankovich  
Kings

1993-94  
Bob Michels  
Santa Clara

1994-95  
Larry Springer  
Los Angeles

1995-96  
Claudette Inge  
Alameda

1996-97  
Ken Taylor  
Kern

1997-98  
Mick Founts  
San Joaquin

1998-99  
Dolores Redwine  
San Diego

1999-00  
Vic Trucco  
Sonoma

2000-01  
Janet Addo  
Los Angeles

2001-02  
Michael Watkins  
Santa Cruz

2002-03  
Jeanne Hughes  
Kern



2003-04  
Jacqueline Flowers  
San Joaquin

2004-05  
Jeanne Dukes  
San Luis Obispo

2005-06  
Paula Mitchell  
Santa Clara

2006-2007  
Maruta Gardner  
San Diego

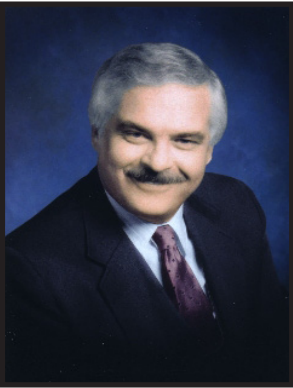
2007-2008  
Peter Kostas  
Mendocino

2008-2009  
Mary Lou Vachet  
Orange

2009-2010  
Mary Bell  
Sacramento

# John Peshkoff Award

Congratulations to the 2011 award recipient



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



**Bianca Bloom**  
JCCASAC's Secretary  
and Board member  
1990-2008

**Bianca Bloom, Ed.D.**, worked for the Contra Costa County Office of Education for over thirty years in a variety of positions – instructional assistant, teacher of the severely handicapped, principal of a K-12 school for seriously emotionally disturbed students,

and finally as the Director of Alternative Education Programs in the juvenile hall, ranch, jails, state parole offices, and various local community settings. She completed her Doctorate in the International and Multicultural Program at the University of San Francisco, with a dissertation on the backgrounds and characteristics of successful correctional educators. In addition, she served for many **many** years

on the Juvenile Court, Community & Alternative School Administrators of California (JCCASAC) Executive Board as secretary where she tirelessly typed, edited and posted minutes and notes for Board meetings. The list of committees she has sat on at the State and local levels is endless. Through all her years dedicated to the education of students, she has always advocated for what she felt was in the best interest of students. In her retirement, Bianca enjoys hiking, yoga and traveling around the world. Bianca, the Board appreciates your tireless efforts advocating for the students we serve. We are happy for you and will always wish you the best.



# Congratulations to the 1st JCCASAC Teacher of the Year



Stephanie Omste  
San Joaquin County

Stephanie Omste is a native Stocktonian. Her success as a teacher stems from her family background, where all of her siblings have gone through the San Joaquin

County Office of Education's **one.Program®**.

Ms. Omste graduated from Edison High School in 1994, went on to San Joaquin Delta Community College, and then graduated from the University of the Pacific in 1999 with a degree in Communicative Disorders. She later received her Multiple Subject Teaching Credential through the Project Impact program.

In 1999, Ms. Omste began employment with SJCOE, working with "at risk" students in the **one.Program®**. As a teacher, Stephanie has demonstrated leadership in the development of strong teaching methodologies and innovation specifically in the arena of developing curriculum for students and teachers in grades 7-12. In addition to serving our program as an energetic and motivated teacher, she has willingly extended assistance to other colleagues and administrators.

Stephanie consistently represents the leadership qualities of an educator that firmly understands the needs of the student population she is serving. Ms. Omste has been an integral

piece in developing the Business Leadership Academy at the Federal Building in downtown Stockton. Her expertise has been essential in working with the City of Stockton regarding the implementation of the VISTAS program, which allows students to intern within the various departments of the city.

Through her passion of teaching and caring of students, Ms. Omste has created a site culture of high expectations and respect, often pushing students beyond their comfort zone.

Her tenure with the **one.®Program®** includes serving as an Academic Decathlon Coach, Assistant Coordinator for **one.Chiapas®** (an international trip for students studying the economics and culture of indigenous people), Peer Coach, Project Leader for California On My Honors Civics Institute, PAR Committee Member, Program Curriculum Writer and Site Coordinator for the Business Leadership Academy. Ms. Omste has also served as the summer school administrator for the **one. Program's®** extended session, and as part of that assignment, created an administrators handbook for future administrators working extended session.

Stephanie has been an invaluable resource to alternative education students who are at risk with regards to the social, emotional, and academic challenges of both school and life. Her level of professionalism and decorum are above and beyond reproach.

She is an inspiration to all students and very deserving of the title: JCCASAC Teacher of the Year.





## Celebrating JCCASAC Nominees for Teacher of the Year



# Congratulations to the Nominees for JCCASAC Teacher of the Year



**Anne Hoover**  
Kings County

Anne has the knack of working with some of the most difficult students and finding the “key” that sparks them to be polite, cooperative, and successful for the very first time. She fosters a learning environment that promotes academic and social growth. She forms life-long relationships with her students, and her

dedication to these kids extends well beyond the confines of the school. Anne holds certificates in teaching, special education, counseling, and psychology---and she uses all of this experience, everyday, in the classroom. She doesn't teach a class; she teaches individuals---each with his/her own set of problems and issues. She spends much of her time being a counselor, nurse, and mother---as well as teacher. Anne fully understands that kids need love most, when they deserve it the least.



**Theresa Gonzalez**  
Los Angeles County

Theresa exemplifies all the standards of the teaching profession on a daily basis. She works collaboratively with parents, students, community members, and agencies to deliver the California content standards to students who have been thought by many to be "unreachable". Students take their understanding of the standards and work on projects in

their classroom and in the community to bridge "real life" into their daily "bookwork". One example includes a student funded trip to Washington DC to see the government in action. Students create objects of art, such as earrings and other jewelry, and sell them to raise money for this trip. Her colleagues can count on her to provide insight into the use of technology in the classroom, take minutes at their shared decision team meetings and jump in to offer assistance anytime.



**Rachael Simas Henderson**  
Placer County

Rachael Simas Henderson earned a BA in History from Sonoma State University and went on to earn a MA in Teaching from Western Oregon University. She began her teaching career in 2005 in Stockton, where she taught social science and was the head coach for the Girl's Varsity soccer team. In 2006, Rachel was selected to teach in the Placer County Office of Education/Alternative Education Program. It was immediately apparent she was a perfect fit for the program. Rachel's first 3 years were spent at the Sundown Education Center/Youth Resource Center, after which she was asked to take over as the sole teacher at the community/court school in Auburn; both assignments involved dealing with students with extreme academic and behavioral challenges. Rachel did a stellar job, as expected. So in August, 2010, she was again asked to transfer to a new PCOE Alternative Education program for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders on the campus of Cooley Middle School. Again, with her strong classroom management and high academic expectations, students in her nearly self-contained classroom are thriving.

# Celebrating JCCASAC Nominees for Teacher of the Year



**Stephen Kelley**  
San Diego County

Stephen Kelley didn't always know he was destined to become an educator. He worked for the airline industry for 20 years, taking him to four continents and over 50 countries. Although he thoroughly enjoyed his travels, Stephen was determined to return to school to pursue teaching. He graduated from National University with honors and now serves as Monarch's 4-5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at San Diego County Office of Education. He has also served as a member on district committees and assumes leadership roles as necessary. As

a technology teacher leader, Stephen's lessons are infused with technology that includes the SMART Board and the Senteo interactive response systems. To ensure a quality elementary mathematics curriculum for JCCS, Stephen led the elementary review process. He ensured that the curriculum adopted had a balanced math approach, a strong technology component, including a variety of assessments, and incorporated appropriate scaffold lessons to meet the needs of English Learners and students with disabilities. Students hold Stephen in great reverence and are eager to work towards the high expectations he has for them.



**Maria Magana**  
Santa Clara County

Maria Magana has been teaching for 15 years, most recently with the Santa Clara Office of Education at View Side Academy Community School. She has introduced structure and high expectations while creating a sense of community among the students and staff. Maria's passion for learning is evident both inside and outside of the classroom. She has been a teacher leader in monthly PLCs in English Language Arts and English Language Development. She collaborates with her colleagues and has helped to develop Courses of Study for ELA as well as been a key contributor in the development of the EL Master Plan. Her natural ability to lead her peers is evident in all she does. Maria demonstrates a high level of compassion for her students and their families and communities. She is a part of every intake into the program and is available before and after school to meet with families. Maria Magana is one of those special teachers who is full of compassion, patience and a true belief that all students can be successful.



**Fatima Chavez**  
Ventura County

Fatima was born to farm workers in Ventura County. Ever since she was a young girl, she wanted to be able to teach and reach students who, like her, were from low income families and struggled to get the one thing that could improve their futures; an education. She attended San Diego State straight out of high school, then transferred to finish her Bachelor of Arts and earn her teaching credential from Cal State Channel Islands. She

started working at the JJC (Juvenile Justice Center) in 2006, then moved to the community school where she teaches female minors math and science. Within the classroom she watches students blossom as they reach outside their comfort zones to change destructive actions into instructive attitudes and behaviors.



**Kathleen Wheeler**  
Sacramento County

Kathleen Wheeler started teaching in 1973 in Susanville, northern California. Over the next 15 years she taught elementary school and special education while freezing in the cold winters. During 1991, she began teaching SH for the Sacramento County Office of Education, moving to the Juvenile Day Reporting Center (DRC) 10 years ago. Kathleen approached her job at the DRC with a balance of compassion and authority. Connecting student interests and the world of work is a difficult task

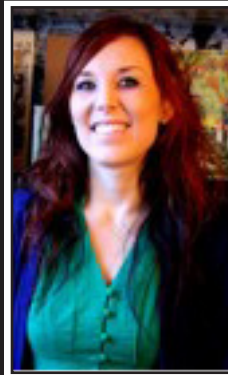
when teaching in court and community school settings; however Kathleen has a unique ability and seemingly endless amount of energy for doing just that. She enrolled her court school students into afternoon Regional Occupational Program (ROP) in automotive and auto body repair, arranged for transportation and followed each student's progress closely. Kathleen's ability to tie the students' hands-on experiences in ROP to her daily lessons provided students with the connection they needed to succeed. Kathleen Wheeler is both a team player and a leader. She not only steps up, but leaps outside the box to provide each student with the personal connection they need to find their way. Kathleen will be retiring this year. She will be missed by staff and students alike.

# Celebrating JCCASAC Nominees for Teacher of the Year



**Michelle Trevino**  
Fresno County

Michelle Trevino has been a teacher with the Fresno County Office of Education since 1999. She has shown exceptional dedication to providing students pathways toward academic success and leading healthy lifestyles. She willingly accepts the challenge to acquire the resources, strategies, and tools necessary to reach every student. Michelle has experienced a great deal of success with students enrolled in Court Schools programs, working with short-term, long-term, and substance abuse students. Her superior teaching and technological skills allow Michelle to juggle and perform a myriad of tasks to perfection. She is a master at working collaboratively with her school and professional community and is highly valued and respected by all. Her eagerness to learn entices her students to endeavor to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers. She is quick to grasp the intricacies of a situation and moves to provide a solution thereby providing a model of creative thinking for her students. As a teacher on special assignment since 2005, her role has expanded to serve as literacy coach and library/media resource specialist, test site coordinator, and an active participant in Title I and Title III district-wide programs. She is also co-chairing the school's accreditation. In the spring of 2011, Michelle earned her Teacher Librarian Services Credential.



**Jessica Vargas**  
Santa Cruz County

Jessica Vargas began her teaching career in Alternative Education in 2005. A graduate of the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts, she fell in love with the idea of teaching as both an art form and an agent for inspiration and creative change. Inspired by her own unique experience, she found passion in developing a strengths-based approach to learning; a strategy that she feels is imperative to fostering student empowerment. Jessica's love for teenagers, particularly at risk youth, emerged from her own set of challenges growing up. After devoting her life to recovery, she found comfort in books and in challenging herself academically. Her experience in 12-Step Programs in conjunction with residing in Santa Cruz has taught her the importance of community, a value she has succeeded in incorporating into the classroom. She is currently the sole teacher at Y.E.S. (Youth Experiencing Success) Recovery High School. Y.E.S. is a one-room schoolhouse that serves students in grades 9-12 who suffer from severe drug and alcohol addictions. At Y.E.S., students are taught how to be honest, accountable, and kind. In addition to implementing an innovative standards-based education, Jessica's mission is to teach students how to live their lives with integrity, and discover what it means to have self esteem.



**Mark Case**  
Orange County

Mark Case is the lead teacher at the Mesa Verde Site in Costa Mesa which focuses on minors who have been placed on probation. Mark has created a classroom environment with high academic and social standards. Students come to class daily dressed as though they are going to a job interview. This practice helps probation students succeed by aligning their personal appearance with their attitudes and sets the tone for classroom success.

Mark provides trainings for teachers which focus on how best to establish classroom standards and appropriate student behavior. Mark plays an active role in the community and invites Probation Officers to the class to meet with students and to reiterate the expectations. For twenty years, Mark has taught OCDE's award winning juvenile crime diversion program, SHORTS-TOP. This program is a unique diversion program developed in 1980 for juvenile offenders and their families.



**Jamie Johnson**  
Stanislaus County

Jaime Johnson works in one of the most challenging community schools at Stanislaus County Office of Education. Within her one room schoolhouse, she uses her creativity to connect art and literature with students' lives and generates enthusiasm for learning among students. Through her high expectations and kindness towards students and their families, the students begin to believe in themselves and their value. Her energetic and nurturing personality resonates into her teaching techniques and classroom culture. Her kindness, professionalism and willingness to assist students and their families has created everlasting friendships and the utmost respect for her in the community.

*continued from page 37*

providing outside resources for the student (OJJDP, 2001), but did not follow through to determine if the resources were effective. Information regarding the methodological approaches on some interventions was often limited. The most closely related research was conducted by the Orange County Probation Department from 2001-2008. The project was titled the Truancy Response Program (TRP) and served as a cooperative partnership between the Probation Department, Department of Education, District Attorney's and Public Defenders offices, Social Services and Health Care agencies, and the community-based Parent Empowerment Program in Orange County, California. TRP worked with local school districts to provide a progressive response to serious, chronic truancy. A primary goal of TRP was to reduce school truancies, thereby increasing the chances of future success (Orange County Probation Department, 2008). There were three components to TRP which included:

**Understanding the motivations of today's student requires new and inventive methods.**

- **District Attorney/School District Meetings:** When students had been identified as truant by their school districts, they and their parents were requested to attend a mandatory group meeting conducted by a District Attorney staff member.
- **Referral to Probation:** When students and parents did not correct the truancy issue in response to school level interventions, the school district forwarded a truancy referral to the Probation Department and the student became a formal TRP probationer.
- **Formal Court Action:** TRP probationers who did not comply with their probation terms were then referred to Truancy Court for prosecution, along with parents of students younger than 12 years old. This step was the most serious intervention response to chronic truancy.

Students who were placed on formal TRP

under Probation Supervision were directed to attend school daily and provide proof of attendance to their assigned Deputy Probation Officer. In addition, parents were required to attend the court-endorsed Parent Empowerment Program (PEP). The court ensured that a comprehensive range of services were provided to support the health, safety, well-being, and quality of life of the child and family. For example, students and/or their parents would be referred to counseling (drug & alcohol counseling) depending on their issues. Unless the family moved out of the county or there was a subsequent criminal charge, TRP participants remained active until the truancy and other issues contributing to the chronic absenteeism were remedied to the satisfaction of the Court. TRP participants were under Court supervision for as short a time period as two months to upwards of one year or longer.

The results from formal pre-post evaluations of several meetings in two of the most active school districts suggest that this intervention had a significant, short-term (up to three months) positive impact in reducing truancy among the targeted students. With truancy often considered a factor that places a youth at-risk for future criminal activity, the TRP evaluation also looked at new arrests. Only 7% of the 570 TRP participants who satisfactorily completed the program had an arrest for a new law violation in the six months following their exit, in comparison to 22% of the 309 participants who did not exit satisfactorily ( $p = <.001$ ). While a closer examination was needed to look at possible differences between these two groups, these findings suggested that when the formal justice system intervened with this population of serious, chronic truants, and the youth and his/her parents were ultimately able to resolve the truancy problem satisfactorily, it significantly reduced the likelihood of future criminal behavior.



In order to expand the research discussing whether intervention programs are effective tools to assist truant youth, this study used the following research question: Does participation in the ACCESS Truancy Response Program (ATRP) decrease the truancy rates of truant offenders enrolled in alternative education schools?

**Methods:**

The hypothesis for this study was that ATRP interventions would reduce truancy by implementing consistent follow through procedures with truant offenders, or students with 3 or more truanancies in one school year, by 15% in the first 6 months of implementation, as determined by ACCESS student attendance records. To test this hypothesis, the ATRP study measured the decrease in the number of truanancies experienced by ACCESS alternative education students following the implementation of truancy reduction interventions. The study also used pre- and post-intervention data to measure the difference in change between an experimental and similar comparison group. There were four progressive levels of interventions included in this study. If students were non-responsive to one intervention, they were advanced to the next escalated level of intervention. These interventions were:

- Level 1: District Attorney (D.A.) Letter mandating attendance at a D.A. Meeting
- Level 2: Attendance at a mandated D.A. Meeting
- Level 3: Outreach Referral for students who continued to have truancy issues
- Level 4: Student Attendance Review Team (SART) hearing for students who remain habitually truant after all previous interventions

**Research Design:**

In order to efficiently claim that ATRP helped combat truancy rates for truant offenders, a Quasi-Experimental, Repeated Measures design was used to determine whether the ATRP

interventions were effective. A Quasi-Experimental design contains an experimental group and a comparison group, rather than a control group. The Repeated Measures design was chosen as it allowed researchers to measure an experimental group over several data points before and after each intervention and afforded greater internal validity (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). Three different threats to internal validity were present during this study including: history, maturation, and mortality. This last factor was controlled for during the initial sampling process and monitored through out the ATRP study.

The comparison group was comprised of truant offenders enrolled in the ACCESS North Principal Administrative Region (PAR) from August 1, 2007 - January 31, 2008. None of these students received any ATRP interventions, as progressive truancy interventions had not yet been implemented within the region. The experimental group consisted of truant offenders who were enrolled in an ACCESS North PAR school sometime during the August 1, 2008 - January 31, 2009 timeframe and received at least one ATRP intervention during that period.



**ATRP Intervention Process:**

The ATRP intervention design consisted of four progressive levels of intervention. The first intervention was sending a letter from the District Attorney (D.A.) to students identified as truants, meaning they had three or more truanancies in one school year. Truant students initially come to the attention of ACCESS through a variety of sources. Ideally, when the student first enrolled, the interviewing Probation Officer or Enrollment Technician would have identified the student's history of excessive truancy at a previous school district. Once the student was identified as truant at enrollment, a D.A. Letter was given to them immediately. After enrollment, the teacher, school administrator, or Dropout Prevention Team (DPT) Coordinator were responsible for noting students with truancy issues on their ACCESS attendance records. If after several communications with the



student, parent and other stakeholders there was no success in returning the student to school, then the student's information was provided to the DPT Coordinator to mail out a D.A. Letter to the student's residence. Each student who received a D.A. Letter was assigned a D.A. Meeting date, including the time, when the students and their parents/legal guardian had to be in attendance. During the D.A. Meeting, a group of students and their parents/guardians were informed of the legal consequences that would result if the student continued to be truant. Translators were also made available to parents/guardians so that critical information could be provided in their native language. When a D.A. Letter was mailed out to a student, their name was recorded on a D.A. Meeting attendance log. When the student attended the D.A. Meeting, they had to sign-in on the attendance log. The D.A. attendance log/sign-in sheet served as the official record of which students attended or did not attend the D.A. Meeting as required. The official D.A. attendance log was provided to the DPT Coordinator for notation on students' official records following each D.A. Meeting held. For the purpose of this study, the first data point, or intervention, refers to all students who received a D.A. Letter. The D.A. attendance logs were provided by the DPT Coordinator indicating all students who received the Level 1 intervention. The Level 2 intervention is, whether or not, the student attended a D.A. Meeting as demonstrated by their signature on the D.A. attendance logs.



When students accumulated an additional truancy day after the receipt of a D.A. Letter or after attending a D.A. Meeting, they were advanced to the Level 3 ATRP intervention, which was an Outreach Referral to the Dropout Prevention Team (DPT). DPT consisted of a group of four Outreach Teachers who provided a face-to-face connection between school and home. During

this level of intervention, students were advised of their educational rights and responsibilities. Outreach Teachers assessed risk and protective factors, as well as, advised students to return to school. Outreach interventions aimed to uncover and address external factors that may have interfered with the student's ability to attend school regularly. These factors may not have been previously revealed during parent/teacher or Student Consultation Team (SCT) Meetings, if these meetings were provided. Students who continue to be non-responsive to the Outreach intervention were referred to the final level of ATRP.



The Level 4 ATRP intervention was reserved for the most severe truancy cases. The final intervention was a referral to a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) hearing. SART hearings are a collaborative attempt by various officials including: a School Administrator, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Probation Representative, School Nurse, Teacher, and DPT member. The role of

SART officials was to reinforce information previously explained to students and parents during the D.A. Meeting and Outreach interventions that emphasized the consequences of continued absenteeism. SART officials were also responsible to analyze the student's home situation and refer them to appropriate resources for support, such as alcohol and/or drug treatment, health/mental health services, shelters, and ACCESS New Beginnings parenting classes specifically designed for parents of truant offenders, etc.. A decision was made by SART as to whether or not to file the case directly with the D.A.'s Office or to enter into a contract with the student and their parents to remediate the truancy issues at a district level .

Following the SART hearing, students who complied with the mandates would eventually have their case dismissed. In cases where the family did not comply with the mandates, the student and their parents would be filed against with the D.A.'s Office. This began the TRP

process at the District Attorney/Probation level, which is the next progressive step beyond the school district level of intervention. This action may result in one year in jail for all parties and/or up to a \$2,000.00 dollar fine, plus related cost (Legislative Analyst’s Office, 2004).

**Sampling:**

To identify potential participants for the study, researchers first acquired a roster of truant offenders from ACCESS North Par for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. Of the list of truant offenders from the 2007-08 school year, researchers obtained a random sample of students from the ACCESS Attendance and Records Office. There were a total of 1,517 students enrolled during the study time frame (August 1, 2007 – January 31, 2008). Of these, 1,057 were identified as truant. This equates to 70% of the student population. Of the 1,057 truant students, ACCESS Attendance and Records randomly selected a total of 277 truant offenders. Once the random sample was selected, researchers then used a comprehensive selective sampling method to identify the maximum number of students who met the criteria for inclusion in the comparison group for the ATRP study. The primary criteria for inclusion in the comparison group was that the student had continuous enrollment in an ACCESS North PAR school from August 1, 2007 through January 31, 2008. As a result of the comprehensive



selection process, 112 of the original 277 randomly selected students met the criteria for inclusion in the comparison group.

For the 2008-09 school year, researchers obtained a list of 315 truant offenders from ACCESS North PAR who all received a D.A. Letter (Level 1 intervention). This sample of 315 students eventually formed the experimental group. For the experimental group, researchers used two additional criteria during the comprehensive selective sampling process to screen the 315 students who had received a D.A. Letter (Level 1 intervention) for inclusion in the study. The criteria were: 1) the truant offender had to have enrolled in an ACCESS North PAR school during the study time frame (August 1, 2008 through January 31, 2009), and 2) the student received the D.A. Letter (Level 1 intervention) during the six months of the study period. There were 192 (see table below) of the original 315 truant offenders on the D.A. Letter roster who met the criteria for inclusion in the experimental group.



There are two important notes to remember in regards to the ATRP study. Although there were comprehensive selective criteria applied to qualify students for the study, these additional requirements did not bias the random sampling of the population as it did not differentiate students with higher truancy rates from those with

		Number	Percentage			Number	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	122	64%	<b>Home Language</b>	English	83	43%
	Female	70	36%		Spanish	105	55%
<b>Age</b>	19 yrs	7	4%		Other	4	2%
	18 yrs	61	32%	<b>Funding Category</b>	300	1	.5%
	17 yrs	61	32%		601	109	57%
	16 yrs	35	18%		602	46	24%
	15 yrs	25	13%		654	2	1%
	14 yrs	3	1%		A	1	.5%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Hispanic	152	79%		B	30	16%
	White	25	13%	E	3	1%	
	Black	5	3%				
	Asian/Other	10	5%				

less severity. Whether truant offenders have three unexcused absences or ten, if they were included on the ACCESS North Par roster, they were equally considered as potential participants for the study. Although the ATRP study covers six months of data, there are only five months of results available, as students who received an intervention in August do not have results available until September. Furthermore, students who received interventions in January did not have results during the study time frame.



In order to complete the Repeated Measures design, students in the experimental group were also categorized into subgroups to further analyze the effectiveness of each ATRP intervention. The criteria for inclusion in each subgroup was that there needed to be available data for the number of trancies accrued by each student during the two months pre- and post-intervention. The subgroup compositions were as follows:

- The first subgroup consisted of all students who had continuous enrollment in an ACCESS North PAR school from August 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009. There were 92 students who met the criteria for inclusion in this subgroup. This subgroup was used to compare the change in truancy rates between the 2007-08 school year (comparison group) when truancy reduction interventions were not yet available and the 2008-09 school year (experimental group) when ATRP interventions were implemented.
- The second subgroup consisted of students who received a Level 1 & Level 2 ATRP intervention (D.A. Letter & D.A. Meeting attendance) who had available attendance data for two months pre- and post-intervention. There were 45 students who met the criteria for inclusion in the second subgroup. This subgroup was used to measure the change in truancy rates of students pre- and post-intervention. Students who remained truant after Level 1 & 2 interventions progressed to Level 3.
- There were a total of 40 students that received the Level 3 Outreach Referral. Of those,

14 students had available data to be included in the subgroup. This subgroup was used to measure the change in truancy rates of students pre- and post-intervention. Students who remained truant after the Level 3 intervention were advanced to Level 4.

- Four students received Level 1-3 interventions and reached the Level 4 SART hearing. Of these, 3 students had available data for inclusion in the subgroup. This subgroup was used to measure the change in truancy rates of students pre- and post-intervention. Level 4 was the final stage of the ATRP study.

**Data collection:**

To collect any research data regarding ACCESS students, prior approval from the Orange County Department of Education Board of Directors and ACCESS Cabinet Members is required. In addition, at the time of enrollment, all ACCESS students and their parents sign an agreement allowing the youth to participate in surveys. These signed agreements permitted researchers to collect the necessary truancy data for all truant offenders included in the ATRP study. To maintain confidentiality, all student names were codified by using their permanent identification numbers (perm numbers) assigned to them at enrollment. This process was repeated for both the experimental and comparison groups. Only ACCESS personnel had access to data containing students' personal information. Original student data was retained by ACCESS Administration.



Researchers in this study included two Masters of Social Work (MSW) Interns under the supervision of the Clinical Program Specialist. The two MSW Interns were employed and trained regarding the ATRP study and data collection procedures. This included training in working with ACCESS personnel, completing required paperwork for the ATRP study, student confidentiality, and how to access/protect student attendance records. Permission to begin the ATRP study



was obtained from ACCESS Cabinet members during several meetings with the Administrator who leads the SART hearings and the Clinical Program Specialist.

As previously stated, data for participants was obtained through random sampling for both the comparison (2007-08 school year) and experimental groups (2008-09 school year). This data was provided to researchers by the ACCESS Attendance and Records Office, DPT Truancy Response Lead, and DPT Coordinator. The data included attendance records for 277 students for the comparison group and a D.A. roster for 315 students for the experimental group.

There were two phases to data collection: 1) data collection for the comparison group, and 2) data collection for the experimental group. Researchers then evaluated each attendance record for the comparison group using a comprehensive selective sampling method to screen out students who did not meet

the criteria for inclusion in the ATRP study, which included: 1) being continuously enrolled in an ACCESS North PAR school from August 1, 2007–January 31, 2008, and 2) being identified as a truant offender (3 or more trancies in one school year). Following the selective screening, there were 112 students who met the criteria for inclusion in the comparison group. For the second phase of data collection (experimental group), researchers evaluated the initial D.A. roster consisting of 315 truant offenders and requested codified attendance records for each student included on the roster. Researchers then evaluated each attendance record to screen out students who did not meet the criteria for the ATRP study. With the initial roster consisting of truant offenders who had received a D.A. Letter (Level 1 intervention),

the only other criteria applied to the screening process was: enrollment in an ACCESS North PAR school some-

time during the study period of August 1, 2008 – January 31, 2009. Of the initial 315 perm numbers, 192 students met the criteria to be included in the experimental group.

Once the two groups were finalized, researchers then followed a prescribed method of calculating the number of trancies for each group. For the comparison group, researchers used the individual attendance records to tally the total number of trancies experienced by the 112 students for each month during the study time period. The tallying process was more intricate for the experimental group as the data was analyzed at four distinct data points, each

referring to a specific level of ATRP intervention.

The first data point referred to Level 1 ATRP intervention, which was the receipt of a D.A. Letter mandating students to attend a D.A. Meeting. The second data point referred to Level 2 ATRP intervention, which was attendance

at a D.A. Meeting. In order to determine which students participated in each intervention level, researchers requested two sets of rosters. The first roster was of all students who had received a D.A. Letter during the 2008-09 school year (Level 1) and the second set of records were the D.A. Meeting sign-in attendance sheets for all D.A. Meetings held during the study period of the 2008-09 school year (Level 2). Both sets of records were provided by the DPT Coordinator. Once researchers received the D.A. Letter roster and D.A. Meeting sign-in sheets, they cross-referenced the perm numbers for the students included in the experimental group to determine which students received letters and which students actually attended a D.A. Meeting. The total number of students included in each level was tallied and recorded for further data analysis.

The next level of data collection was for the Level 3 Outreach Intervention. To calculate the number of students who reached the Level 3 intervention, researchers requested all individual



One estimated projection is that there would have been \$961,647 in recovered revenue for all 822 truants in ACCESS North PAR over a six month period, or \$1,923,293 over a one year period.

outreach data forms for the 2008-09 school year from the four DPT Outreach Teachers. The outreach data forms serve as proof that an outreach intervention was performed. Researchers then cross-referenced the outreach referral forms with the perm numbers included in the experimental group. Only students who received a D.A. Letter and attended a D.A. Meeting prior to an Outreach intervention were included.

For the final level of intervention, researchers requested a list of all students who were referred for a Student Attendance Review Team (SART) hearing during the 2008-09 school year from the DPT Truancy Response Lead, who also serves as the liaison to the Orange County Truancy Court.

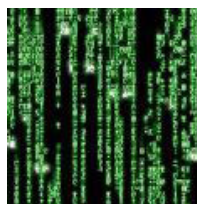


Researchers then cross-referenced the list of all students who were referred for a SART hearing with the perm numbers included in the experimental group. Only students who received a D.A. Letter, attended a D.A. Meeting, and received an Outreach intervention prior to the SART hearing were included in the study.

**Data Analysis:**

Data collected for the experimental group was analyzed to determine if 1) overall truancy for students involved in the ATRP study decreased as a result of ATRP interventions, and 2) whether or not truanies decreased for an individual student receiving ATRP interventions.

The data collected was entered into SPSS, a statistical analysis software system, and interpreted by the Senior Statistical Analyst at the University of Southern California Information Technology Services Division at the Los Angeles Campus to pro-



vide statistical results of this study. The use of a Quasi-Experimental, Repeated Measures design allowed researchers to derive descriptive statistics that not only provided frequencies, means, and standard deviations for the entire study, but also results at monthly intervals. Furthermore, descriptive analysis provided data regarding error and statistical significance (Babbie & Rubin, 2008).

This study used inferential statistics to analyze the data beyond the immediate descriptive data. Inferential statistics allowed researchers to analyze the data using Paired Sample T-Tests to assess whether the means of the two groups were statistically different from each other. The t-tests also allowed researchers to compare the means of both the experimental and comparison groups (Babbie & Rubin, 2008), or measure the range of change in truancy between similar students from two different school years. As a result, a Paired Sample T-Test was performed to determine the extent of the effect that ATRP interventions had on truanies, ensuring that the interventions were valid and reliable.

**Measurement:**

This study used the participation or non-participation of students in the ATRP study as the independent variable, and truancy rates of truant offenders as the dependent variable. The two attributes for the independent variable were receiving any ATRP interventions or no ATRP interventions. The dependent variable attributes were increasing or decreasing truancy rates.

In the case of the ATRP study, because truants in the experimental group consistently experienced a decrease in truancy rates, it is correct to claim that ATRP is reliable. This will be evident during the data analysis portion of the research. By analyzing truancy rates two month

pre- and post-intervention, data would reflect the extent of reliability of each ATRP intervention. Furthermore, if participants in the study benefited from ATRP interventions and demonstrated a decrease in truancy rates, it is viable to state the ATRP study had a significant level of validity.

**Results:**

Comparison between 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years:



Bi-variate data analysis was run to determine the correlation between each ATRP level and number of trancies. Each independent variable (ATRP intervention levels 1-4) showed a negative relationship to the dependent variable (number of trancies), indicating that it caused a decrease in truancy. In order to compare the decrease in trancies in the 07-08 and 08-09 school years during the same six month period, researchers formed a subgroup of students who were enrolled in an ACCESS North PAR school for the entire six months of the study. Of the 192 students in the experimental group, 92 students met this criteria. When comparing the average number of trancies for the subgroup (n = 92) to the comparison group (n = 112), there was an overall 58% decrease in the average number of trancies by ACCESS students in the experimental group. In other words, when ATRP interventions were made available, there was a total average of 25 more school days attended, during the same six month period, per student in the experimental group than those in the comparison group. This decrease can be equated to a sample projections of ap-

proximately \$105,781 in recovered revenue for the 92 students included in the subgroup over a six month period. The 92 students are a representative sample of 11% of all truant students from ACCESS North PAR schools. One estimated projection is that there would have been \$961,647 in recovered revenue for all 822 truants in ACCESS North PAR over a six month period, or \$1,923,293 over a one year period. This estimate is based on the funding formula used by ACCESS Attendance and Records Office to calculate revenue for students from different funding classifications.

Breakdown of results at each level of intervention:

ATRP used Cross Tabulation T-Tests to derive descriptive statistics. Chi Square Tests measured the difference between two groups and the amount of change that occurred by chance.



**Level 1: D.A. Letter**

The experimental group consisted of a total of 192 students. In order to further analyze the effects of each intervention and control for any external factors that may have affected truancy rates, researchers formed subgroups of students at each intervention level. In order to be included in the subgroup, students had to have available data for two months pre- and post-intervention for an accurate comparative analysis of the decrease in trancies.

There were 45 students who had available data to be included in the D.A. Letter subgroup.

	2007-08 School Year	2007-08 School Year	2008-09 School Year	2008-09 School Year	Comparison 07-08 & 08/09
<b>Month Measured</b>	Number of Trancies pre-ATRP intervention. (112 students studied)	Average Trancies* per month for comparison group	Number of Trancies post-ATRP interventio (92 students studied)	Average Trancies* per month for experimental group	Avg. decrease per month between two school Years
September	799 trancies	7.13 days	493 trancies	5.36 days	25% decrease
October	1,051 trancies	9.38 days	423 trancies	4.6 days	51% decrease
November	1,028 trancies	9.17 days	265 trancies	2.88 days	69% decrease
December	868 trancies	7.75 days	257 trancies	2.79 days	64% decrease
January	1,017 trancies	9.08 days	217 trancies	2.36 days	74% decrease
<b>Totals</b>	4,763 trancies	42.53 days	1,655 trancies	17.99 days	<b>58% overall decrease</b>

\* Average is calculated by taking the total number of truancy per month and dividing it by the total number of students studied in each group

The subgroup data was analyzed to determine the change in truancy behavior after receiving a D.A. Letter. Research data revealed that receipt of a D.A. Letter lead to an overall 55% decrease in truancy when comparing two months pre- and post-intervention attendance. These students went from an average of 10.5 truan- cies per month to 4.5 truan- cies per month. In other words, each student attended an average of 6 more days of school per month post-intervention. The results were found to be statistically signifi- cant ( $p = .034$ ).

**Level 2: D.A. Meeting Attendance**

A subgroup of 45 students with available data for two months pre- and post-intervention were analyzed to determine the change in truancy behavior after attending or not attending the D.A. Meeting. For those students who did attend a D.A. Meeting, they had an average 76% decrease in truancy two months post-intervention, decreasing from 10.5 truan- cies per month to 2.5 tru- ancies per month. Each student at- tended an average of 8 more school days per month post-intervention. (For those who did not attend the D.A. Meeting, there was a 55% decrease in truancy.)



Additionally, it should be noted that of those who received a D.A. Letter mandating them to attend a D.A. Meeting, 46% of the original 192 students actually attended. Among the 192 stu- dents in the experimental group, the total number of truan- cies was considerably lower for the 46% who attended the D.A. Meeting. When comparing the average days truant for the group of students who did attend the D.A. Meeting, which was 3.6 truan- cies per month, to those who did not attend, who averaged 7.3 truan- cies per month, the at- tending group missed an average of 3 days less of school. In other words, when comparing the two groups D.A. Meeting attendees had on aver- age 50% less truan- cies than non-attendees.

**Level 3: Outreach Referral**

In order to compare the effects of the Level 3 Outreach intervention, a subgroup was formed.

There were 14 students who had available data for two months pre- and post-intervention in- cluded in the subgroup. A Paired Sample T-Test was computed for participants in the subgroup in order to find the difference in the average number of truan- cies pre- and post-intervention. The aver- age number of truan- cies for the students in the subgroup two months pre-intervention was 10.2; their post-intervention average was 3.7. This equated to a 64% decrease in truan- cies, or an average of 7 days of recovered revenue per stu- dent post-intervention. This difference is statisti- cally significant ( $p = < .01$ ). Outreach data noted that as the program progressed, the average number of truan- cies declined from 4.0 in August 2008 to 2.6 in January 2009. In August of 2008, none of the 192 students in the experimental group had been referred to Out- reach. By January 2009, 87% of the participants in the ATRP study had received a Level 3 Outreach intervention further decreasing their truancy behavior.

**Level 4: Student Attendance Re- view Team (SART) Hearing**

In order to analyze the effects of the SART intervention, researchers used a Single Subject design. Of the four students who reached the Level 4 SART intervention, three students had available data to be included in the subgroup. Students in the subgroup averaged 15 truan- cies per month pre-intervention and 0 truan- cies per month for up to four months post-intervention, or the end of the studied period.

**Discussion:**

**Level 1 & 2: District Attorney (D.A.) Letter and D.A. Meeting Attendance**

Although there was a greater decrease in truan- cies by students who did attend a D.A. Meeting (76% decrease) as compared to those who did not attend (55% decrease), data results revealed that, regardless of whether the student attended the meeting, receipt of the Level 1 D.A. Letter was successful in decreasing truan- cies for the months post-intervention.

To further analyze the results, researchers used a subgroup of 45 students with two months pre- and post-intervention attendance data. Researchers used a Chi Square Test to measure the difference between the two different variables 1) students who attended and did not attend a D.A. Meeting, and 2) those who continued to be chronically truant (20 or more truanancies) following the intervention and those who were no longer classified as truant (less than 3 truanancies). The Chi Square Test revealed that receipt of the D.A. Letter was highly successful at reducing truancy. For those who did attend the D.A. Meeting, they had a larger decrease in truanancies than students who did not attend the D.A. Meeting. These results were apparent immediately following the intervention and continued for each month through the end of the study period. Furthermore, 67.1% of students who did attend the D.A. Meeting were no longer chronically truant (20 or more truanancies) two months post-intervention.

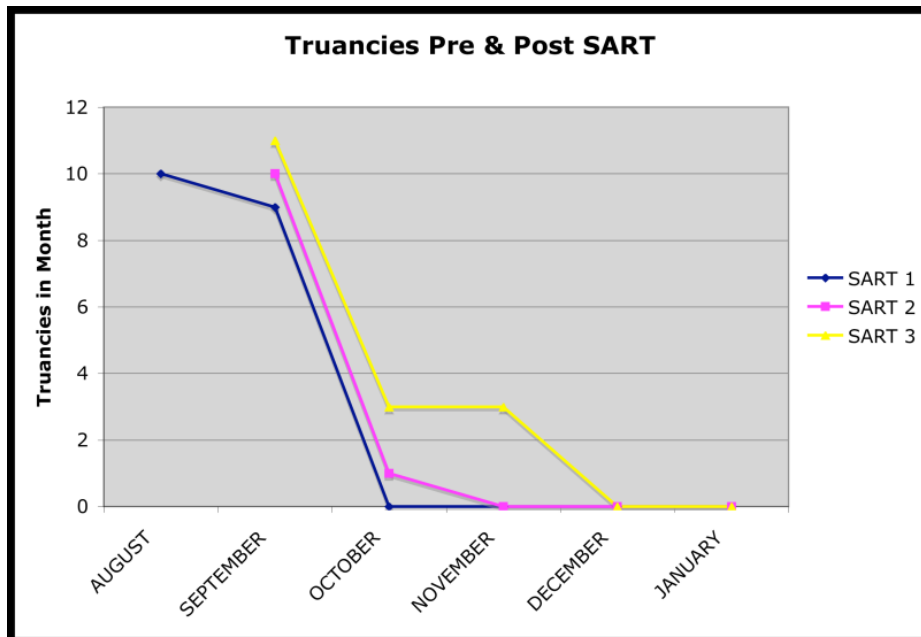
However, the intervention was not successful at converting chronically truant students into non-truants. Many students still did not meet the state standard of less than 3 truanancies to be classified as non-truant. The test also revealed that the intervention did not work immediately (within the two month studied time period), but was successful by the end of the six month study

period. This intervention needed more time to take effect. This is important for administrators to note, so that the expectations are aligned with the potential of ATRP interventions. It was also interesting to note that if the determiner for being classified as a non-truant was changed to 4 days absent instead of the legal 3 day definition, the majority of the participants would have met the definition of no longer being truant.



**Level 3: Outreach Referral Intervention**

Results showed that students in the subgroup (N = 14) averaged 10.2 truanancies per month during the two months prior to an Outreach intervention. During the two months post-intervention, there was a 64% decrease in the average number of truanancies, with students in the subgroup averaging 3.7 truanancies per month. When considering revenue limit for schools, this change as a result of the intervention, equated to an average of 7 days of recovered revenue per student, per month. This intervention had an additional benefit over the Level 1 & 2 D.A. Letter and D.A. Meeting interventions, as truanancies were found to reduce immediately following the



Level 3 Outreach intervention.

Level 4: Student Attendance Review Team (SART) Hearing Intervention

Some of the students who reached the SART level of intervention had experienced over 100 trancies in a school year.



The three students in the subgroup averaged 15 trancies per month prior to a SART intervention. That is even after receiving all three previous interventions. The same three students averaged 0 trancies per month for up to four months following the intervention. The following are results by student:

- Student #1: (SART hearing October 28, 2008) had 0 trancies in October, November, December, and January.
- Student #2: (SART hearing November 25, 2008) had 0 trancies in November, December, and January.
- Student #3: (SART hearing November 25, 2008) had 3 trancies in November (prior to SART hearing) and 0 trancies in December and January.

**Extraneous variables:**

When considering the study results, it is also important to point out extraneous variables that might influence the data that could not be controlled for. These variables include: student's home life, family responsibility, and attrition. Attrition was the most impacting variable on this study, as many ACCESS students transfer between ACCESS schools, move out of the area with their families, are incarcerated, or teachers no longer have correct contact information for them. The average length of enrollment at one ACCESS school is 44 days (ACCESS Attendance and Records, 2008). Attrition accounted

for nearly half of the initially eligible students to be excluded from the study during the pre-sampling phase.

An additional variable that may account for reduced trancies during certain months, is the fewer school days in certain months. For example, in the month of December there are only 14 school days compared to October when there are 22 school days. Also, ACCESS attendance and enrollment naturally changes during transitional months of the year, such as when there is a large influx or outflow of students transitioning to and from ACCESS and local school district schools. By selecting the same six months (August – January) from both the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, it helped to control for this factor so that results would not be skewed, as would be the case if differing months were studied (August-January versus February-July). Other extraneous variables that may have affected the decrease in student truancy rates could be their involvement in any of the following activities:

- Receipt of Student Consultation Team (SCT) Meeting with the student and their parents
- School-based mental health counseling and/or community-based transition services
- Student's home life improves
- Participation in Learning Labs (outreach students attend these 1 or more times per week)
- Student was placed on formal probation, legally requiring them to attend school daily
- Student was identified as in need of Special Education services or additional assistance
- Transportation/case management needs were identified and corrected



Although there was a greater decrease in trancies by students who did attend a D.A. Meeting (76% decrease) as compared to those who did not attend (55% decrease), data results revealed that, regardless of whether the student attended the meeting, receipt of the Level 1 D.A. Letter was successful in decreasing trancies for the months post-intervention.



- Parent involvement increased due to fear of progressive consequences or increased awareness of issue and/or attendance in ACCESS New Beginnings Parenting Classes

**Implications:**

For the students who received any ATRP interventions and were enrolled in an ACCESS North PAR school from August 1, 2008 – January 31, 2009 (n = 92) there was an overall 58% decrease in trancies, as compared to a random sample of 112 students enrolled in ACCESS North PAR sites during the same months in the 2007–08 school year when no progressive ATRP Interventions were available.

ACCESS students are among the most vulnerable and highest-risk youth population in Orange County. They are often already involved in the juvenile justice system or at-risk for involvement due to their truant behavior. Due to the severity of current juvenile crime and the limited space in county juvenile correctional facilities, youth are often not prosecuted or adjudicated with truancy offenses, as compared to juveniles with more severe crimes. There were well over 6,000 juveniles actively supervised by Orange County Probation in 2007 and only 955 juvenile institution beds (OC Probation, 2008). That is only room for 15% of all juvenile cases. By their enrollment in ACCESS, students have often “fallen through the cracks” of traditional systems, including juvenile courts, local school districts, and their own families.

A major factor uncovered during the study was all ATRP interventions were not currently being fully and systematically implemented by the educational team (teachers, administrators, probation officers, and enrollment technicians).

The ATRP project outlines that every student with 3 or more trancies in one school year should receive a D.A. Letter. The D.A. Letter were to be given or mailed out at one of the following points of identification: 1) time of enrollment, 2) during teacher notification to the DPT Coordinator, and/or 3) review of attendance records by an Administrator. According to the ACCESS Attendance and Records Office, there were 1,361 students in the 2008-09 school year. Of these 1,361, there were 822 students identified as truants, meaning 60% of the student enrollment were truant offenders. Although researchers did not study this

According to the ACCESS Attendance and Records Office, there were 1,361 students in the 2008-09 school year. Of these 1,361, there were 822 students identified as truants, meaning 60% of the student enrollment was truant offenders.

antecedent specifically, comparison numbers at the time of data collection indicated that implementation was inconsistent. In the case of an Outreach Intervention, every student with one additional truancy day beyond the receipt of a D.A. Letter would benefit from an Outreach Referral. Currently, the team of four Outreach Teachers assigned to the ACCESS North PAR area often triaged and prioritized Outreach interventions by age, meaning if the student is 17 ½ years old and has demonstrated

excessive truancy, the Outreach Referral was made immediately at enrollment. For this reason among others, there were a total of 216 Outreach interventions made in the 2008-09 school year, but only 40 students received both the Level 1 & 2 interventions (D.A. Letter and D.A. Meeting attendance) prior to a Level 3 Outreach Referral. Currently, DPT Outreach Teachers may be responsible for monitoring student attendance, cooperation, history of truancy, family risk factors, and other elements that affect truancy. They may also be responsible for meeting appropriate referrals beyond their scope of practice. These types of services might be more appropriately addressed by Student Consultation Team (SCT) Meetings which is an area in need of further study. After weighing all elements, the DPT Outreach Teachers were



allowed discretion when referring student for a SART hearing, the most advanced level of truancy intervention at a district level. It is important to continue considering students on a case by case basis for referral to a SART hearing, but the shortcoming was in students not receiving all three levels of ATRP interventions prior to referral to SART, as noted during the time of data collection. There were 19 students referred to SART in the 2008-09 school year, yet only 4 students received all three interventions prior to the SART referral.

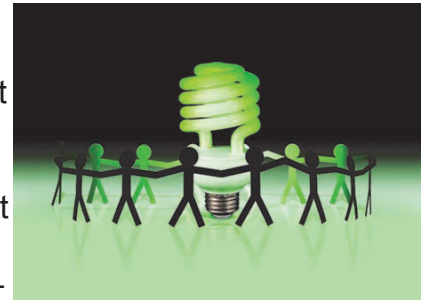
With the amount of success revealed through this study, it quantifies that if all levels of ATRP were fully implemented in progression as prescribed, the interventions could have an even greater impact on reducing truancy among ACCESS students and manifest an increased revenue stream for the District.

1. In order to increase the effectiveness of ATRP, every truant offender should receive each ATRP intervention in prescribed progression to experience the maximum reduction in truancy. In so doing, students would have the support needed and opportunity provided to change their behavior at each intervention point.



2. In order to increase the reliability of the receipt of a D.A. Letter, it should be delivered during a face-to-face meeting facilitated by someone who speaks the family's native language, as opposed to being mailed to the home, as is current practice. This intervention might be maximized by partnering a DPT member with a designated School Social Worker. With the highly transient student populations, current address and contact information is often constantly changing. By delivering the D.A. Letter face-to-face, it will ensure receipt and allow school personnel the opportunity to stress the serious nature of the intervention and the importance of attending the D.A. Meeting. It would facilitate the connection between school and home, ultimately increasing school engagement and allowing for additional resources to be provided that may eliminate obstacles to school attendance.

3. In order to overcome the individual obstacles that interfere with each truant's attendance, convening a Student Consultation Team (SCT) problem-solving



meeting with all stakeholders in attendance prior to moving into the SART intervention phase would be highly beneficial and is an area for further study. During these multi-disciplinary SCT Meetings, many truancy issues can be uncovered, addressed, and resolved in a timely manner to increase the student's academic success and not only increasing District revenue, but potentially decreasing the burden on the already overcrowded juvenile justice system.

4. All staff interacting with students need to be invested in the belief that all students have the potential to succeed. By increasing staff buy-in to ATRP, it will prevent truant offenders from "falling through the cracks" or being arbitrarily "dropped from the roster", or status changed before the root cause of truancy is discovered. In order to increase understanding of the ATRP intervention process, teaching staff could be mandated to attend at least one SART hearing on a rotating basis as part of their professional evaluation process. This inclusion will allow all staff to be involved in the shared vision of increasing school engagement.

5. Finally, a six member Student Attendance Review Team (SART) needs to be formed to include stakeholders from each of the following disciplines: 1) administrator, 2) school social worker, 3) school nurse, 4) Probation Officer, 5) teaching staff, and 6) Truancy Response Lead. The SART members would oversee the implementation of the ATRP intervention process district wide. This multi-disciplinary team would be based on the shared vision of decreasing truancy and ensure team cohesiveness. This concept would also provide a frame of reference for the team's commitment to impacting truancy issues and assisting students to achieve their educational goals.



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# The Common Elements of Best Practice

by

Wendell Callahan, Donald Dixon and Stephanie Johnston

## Overview of the Best Practices Project

From 2006 to 2010 the Educational Options Best Practices Demonstration Project operated as a coordinated effort of the California Department of Education's Educational Options Office and the San Diego County Office of Education. The purpose of the project was to use a peer review process to select best practices in California Court, Community, Community Day Schools, and other alternative education programs. Information about the practices, the educators and their schools and programs are disseminated to the field via the project website ([www.sdcoe.net/edoptions](http://www.sdcoe.net/edoptions)), professional journals and professional conferences. This report will provide an overview of the Best Practices Project, the review method and present common elements characteristic of the practices selected for 2009-10.

### *The Domains of Best Practice*

Practices were submitted from one or more of the following broadly defined domains:

- Assessment, Evaluation and Data Management
- Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Technology
- Leadership and Staff Development
- Student Support, Retention and Transition

## *Review Process*

A two-page (single spaced, 12 point font) narrative describing the practice is submitted for review. The narrative also includes a description of the school, student population and how the practice has improved student achievement. Submissions are required to include appropriate outcome data (including ASAM indicator data) demonstrating the effectiveness of the practice in improving student achievement.

The peer review process is central to the best practice selection method. An expert review panel comprised of representatives from the California Department of Education Educational Options Office, Juvenile Court & Community and Alternative Schools Administrators of California (JCCASAC), California Continuation Education Association (CCEA), California Consortium for Independent Study (CCIS), the Community Day Schools Network (CDSNet) and the California State University meets in the Fall or Winter of each project year. The meeting is focused on project review and selection using an evaluation instrument designed to rate each submission on the following dimensions:

- **Measurable Impact on Student Achievement:** Defined as the degree to which the practice produces measurable results on indicators of student achievement. ASAM indicator data or other outcome data is typically reported.

- **Innovation:** Defined as the degree to which the practice breaks new ground or addresses ongoing issues in an original method.
- **Replicability/Generalizability:** Refers to the degree to which a practice is easily transportable to another setting or program. For example, a practice may be highly innovative but so idiosyncratic to a particular teacher or setting that it is virtually ungeneralizable to any other setting and consequently of little value as an *easily replicable* best practice for dissemination to the rest of the field.
- **Program Integration/Coordination:** Defined as the degree to which the practice involves cross-disciplinary or interdepartmental collaboration and integration. For example, Valley Community School's (appearing in the Journal Spring 2012) Workplace Learning Academy is a fine example of coordination and program integration between the Merced COE's Special Education Department and Regional Occupational Program.
- **Teacher/Staff Training:** Defined as the capacity building required for implementation of the practice.
- **Resource Demand/Allocation:** Defined as the cost, both in fiscal and human resources, of implementing the practice.
- **Collaborations/Outreach:** Defined as the degree to which the practice involves school to home, school to community or interagency collaboration.

Each year, the reviewer evaluated the submissions received by the project and rank ordered the practices based on their evaluations. The review panel then completed consensus rankings of all submissions. Since 2006, the review committee has selected 23 submissions as best practices. The practices, domains, educators and programs are presented in Table 1 (page 62).

### *Disseminating Best Practices*

The Best Practices in Educational Options Project website, [www.sdcoe.net/edoptions](http://www.sdcoe.net/edoptions) (Callahan & Johnston, 2007), is the primary dissemination method for information about identified best practices. Beginning in late Spring 2009, expanded profiles of each practice were posted to the website. In addition to basic program information and the Portable Document Format (PDF) file of the narrative submitted for review, users are able to view detailed video presentations filmed on location at the school sites where the best practices are being implemented. Contact information in the form of phone numbers, website addresses and email links is also posted.

### **The Common Elements Study: Method & Findings**

A two-phase common elements study of the three selected 2009-10 best practices was conducted. The two phases of the study were:

- Expert review of selected practices
- Development of a proposed Theory of Action

A four member subgroup of the project review panel reviewed the three 2009-10 best practices using the Common Elements Rating Instrument (CERI). The CERI was developed based on the common elements study of the 2008-09 selected practices (see Best Practices Project Year 3 Progress Report, 2009). The CERI is presented in Exhibit 1 (page 59). The CERI uses a five-point Likert scale to rate best practices based on 39 items derived from the following common elements:

- *Engagement*
- *School Culture*
- *Administrative Environment*
- *Change in Student Time Horizon/Perspective*



• Table 1. Best Practice in educational options, 2006-2010

<b>Practice</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<b>School/Program</b>	<b>District/LEA</b>
Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA)	2006-07	Leadership	ACCESS	Orange County Department of Education
Effective Teacher Training Models	2006-07	Leadership	JCCS	San Diego County Office of Education
Innovative Database System	2006-07	Curriculum	Charter Community School	El Dorado County Office of Education
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Assessment	2006-07	Assessment	JCCS	San Diego County Office of Education
Public Information/Community Relations	2006-07	Leadership	Valley Community Schools	Merced County Office of Education
Special Education Compliance	2006-07	Student Support	ACCESS	Orange County Department of Education
Standards-Based Instruction	2006-07	Curriculum	JCCS	San Diego County Office of Education
Summer of Success	2006-07	Student Support	JCCS	San Diego County Office of Education
Workplace Learning Academy	2006-07	Curriculum	Valley Community School	Merced County Office of Education
Wrap-Around Services	2006-07	Student Support	Lindsay Community School	San Diego County Office of Education
Academic Decathlon	2007-08	Curriculum	Valley Community School	Merced County Office of Education
Community-based Science Instruction	2007-08	Curriculum	Calvine High School	Elk Grove Unified School District
Special Education-ROP Partnerships	2007-08	Curriculum	Valley Community School	Merced County Office of Education
College Study Skills Program	2008-09	Curriculum	Palomar High School	Sweetwater Union High School District
Data Chats	2008-09	Assessment	Valley Community School	Merced COE
Forensic Science	2008-09	Curriculum	Desert Valley High School	Brawley Union High School District
Math2Success	2008-09	Curriculum	JCCS	San Diego County Office of Education
Professional Learning Communities	2008-09	Assessment	Mendocino Alternative Education	Mendocino COE
Truancy Response Project	2008-09	Student Support	ACCESS	Orange County Department of Education
US Navy Internship	2008-09	Curriculum	Palomar High School	Sweetwater Union High School District
Come Back Kids: A Riverside County High School Student Program for Drop Outs	2009-10	Student Support	Riverside County High Schools	Riverside County Office of Education
Special Education Co-Teaching Model in East Mesa Detention Facility	2009-10	Leadership	Mesa Region Court School	San Diego County Office of Education
Wrap-around Service Programs	2009-10	Student Support	Valley Community School	Merced County Office of Education

Table 2 (page 64) presents the four reviewers' mean CERI ratings (with standard deviations) for the three practices. Ratings trended toward the higher end of the scale, typically ranging between 4 (Present to a Moderate Degree) and 5 (Present to a Maximum Degree), with a grand mean of 4.36 (SD=.68). These findings indicate that the raters determined that many elements of best practices (as identified by our prior year's common elements study) were evident in the three practices selected for 2009-10. Additionally, the variation in ratings was typically low, with standard deviations averaging 0.68. This finding suggests that the ratings were consistent across CERI items. Four items deviated from this pattern, with standard deviations greater than 1.0. Two of these items related to student engagement ("Student interest in program" and "Shared language and vocabulary"), one related to administrative environment ("Deep implementation"), and one related to change in student time horizon/perspective ("Connection to career or college").

In summary, the 39-item Common Elements Rating Instrument (CERI) (which was derived from our 2008-09 expert review that yielded common elements of best practices related to student and staff engagement; school culture, administrative environment, and change in student time horizon/perspective) was used to rate

the 2009-10 selected practices using a quantitative method. Overall, the expert raters judged the 2009-10 practices to evidence most of the common elements of best practice from a moderate to a maximal degree. These elements included factors relating to student and staff engagement, school culture, administrative environment, and change in student time horizon/perspective. These preliminary results also suggest that the CERI shows potential as a measurement tool to review and quantify best practices. However, further study of the CERI is required with larger samples of practices and raters to adequately estimate its reliability and validity.



**Putting the Findings in Context:  
Developing a Theory of Action**

The examination and articulation of common elements of best practice in educational options moves us closer to the development of a conceptual model or theory of action to understand how knowledge of best practices leads to the presence of common elements in school programs. These components are thought to provide the foundation and infrastructure to support increased student achievement, as depicted in Figure 1 below. Our study of common elements has yielded several key findings that support the

**Figure 1. Best Practices in Educational Options  
Theory of Action**

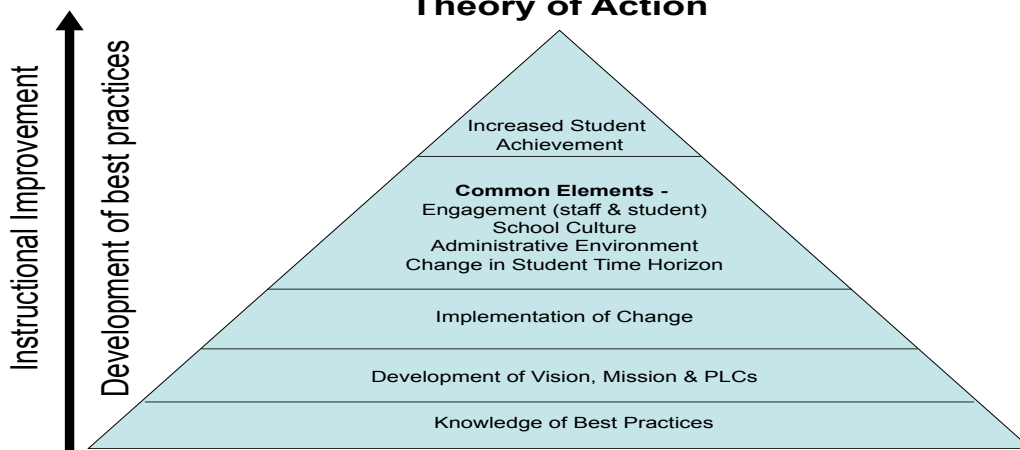


Table 2. Mean CERI Ratings (n=4 raters)

<b>Element</b>	<b>Mean Rating (1=lowest; 5=highest)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
<b>Engagement (staff and student)</b>		
1. Connection between staff, students, community	4.58	0.51
2. Buy-in from students and staff	4.75	0.45
3. Student interest in program	4.27	1.19
4. Shared language and vocabulary	3.60	1.07
5. Rapport	4.18	0.60
6. Enthusiasm	4.75	0.45
7. Encouragement	4.75	0.45
<b>School Culture</b>		
8. Communication	4.50	0.52
9. Caring	4.92	0.29
10. Staff availability to students	4.58	0.51
11. Reciprocity (for staff and students)	4.45	0.69
12. Commitment	4.67	0.49
13. Concordance of goals and priorities (shared by staff and student)	4.25	0.62
14. Collaborative/collegial relationships	4.58	0.79
15. High expectations	4.50	0.67
<b>Administrative Environment</b>		
16. Coordination (internal and/or multi-agency)	4.58	0.67
17. Deep implementation (commitment over multiple years)	4.08	1.16
18. Monitoring	3.50	0.67
19. Data driven decision-making	3.58	0.79
20. Team model	4.58	0.79
21. Cooperative partnerships	4.50	0.67
22. Shift of locus of control to site or program level	4.58	0.67
23. Teacher-led design and change	4.00	0.74
24. Central/district administration supports experimentation	4.75	0.62
25. Stable implementation	4.42	0.90
26. Leveraging existing resources	4.33	0.65
27. Developmental model of program	4.42	0.67
28. Change over time	4.08	0.51
29. Responsiveness to student needs and outcomes	5.00	0.00
<b>Change in student time horizon/perspective</b>		
30. Teaching students to look beyond the immediate	4.17	0.83
31. Education as an investment vs. consumption	4.00	0.77
32. Connection to career or college	3.58	1.31
33. Development of necessary language and vocabulary	3.67	0.71
34. Relevance and practical application	4.75	0.45
35. High expectations	4.33	0.89
36. Students engaging differently with staff and peers	4.25	0.62
37. Students assigned more personal responsibility	4.27	0.79
38. Students building confidence and efficacy	4.58	0.67
39. Students feel school is there for them	4.64	0.50
<b>Grand Mean=</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>0.68</b>



development of a theory of action. These findings include:

- The common elements of practices reviewed to date appear to cluster within the categories of engagement, administrative environment, school culture and change in student time horizon/perspective.
- Schools and programs that evidence these common elements out perform other alternative school programs on external indicators of school performance (i.e., ASAM indicators; see Callahan, 2009).
- Preliminary CERI ratings suggest that these elements can be reliably quantified.



There remains much future work to clearly articulate the details of the proposed theory of action. Specifically, the linkages between the knowledge of best practices, the change process (i.e., development

of vision, professional learning communities, etc.) and the presence of common elements are largely unknown and warrant further investigation. Moreover, the relationship between common program elements and increased student achievement, while intuitively obvious, needs to be documented in specific detail. For example, which common elements appear to have the greatest impact on student achievement?

Future work to elucidate these important details could include further piloting of the CERI as well as focus group methods. A pilot study of the CERI with a larger sample of practitioners identified in prior project years (i.e., educators whose programs were selected as best practices) will help to establish the scale's psychometric characteristics and could lead to its development as a useful self-rating instrument for educational options schools and programs. Focus groups comprised of the same practitioners could assist in articulating the linkages between knowledge of

best practices, program improvement, development of common elements and improved student achievement. Evaluation logic models might be especially useful to address these research questions. Julian, Jones, & Deyo (1995) as well as Wholey (1987) offer some guidance in the application of logical models to evaluation of practice as well as the development of program theory.




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**COMMON ELEMENTS RATING INSTRUMENT (CERI)**

School or Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Rater: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SCALE</b>	
1=not present or no evidence	
2=present to a minimal degree	
3=present to a limited degree	
4=present to a moderate degree	
5=present to a maximum degree	
<b>Instructions to Rater: PLEASE RATE THE SCHOOL OR PROGRAM ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:</b>	
Element	Rating (1-5)
<i>Engagement (staff and student)</i>	
Connection between staff, students, community	
Buy-in from students and staff	
Student interest in program	
Shared language and vocabulary	
Rapport	
Enthusiasm	
Encouragement	
<i>School Culture</i>	
Communication	
Caring	
Staff availability to students	
Reciprocity (for staff and students)	
Commitment	
Concordance of goals and priorities (shared by staff and students)	
Collaborative/collegial relationships	
High expectations	
<i>Administrative Environment</i>	
Coordination (internal and/or multi-agency)	
Deep implementation (commitment over multiple years)	
Monitoring	
Data driven decision-making	
Team model	
Cooperative partnerships	
Shift of locus of control to site or program level	
Teacher-led design and change	
Central/district administration supports experimentation	
Stable implementation	
Leveraging existing resources	
Developmental model of program	
Change over time	
Responsiveness to student needs and outcomes	
<i>Change in student time horizon/perspective</i>	
Teaching students to look beyond the immediate	
Education as an investment vs. consumption	
Connection to career or college	
Development of necessary academic language and vocabulary	
Relevance and practical application	
Students engaging differently with staff and peers	
Students assigned more personal responsibility	
Students building confidence and efficacy	

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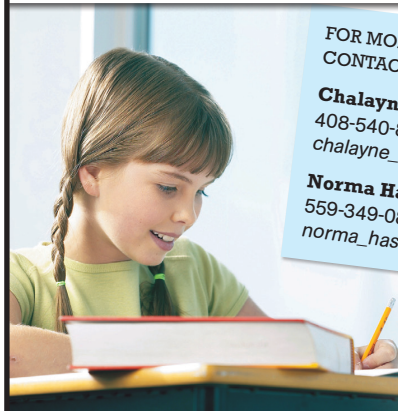
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# High Expectations of the Alternative School Leader: The Principal's Role in School Improvement

by Ted Price and Rick Martin

## Abstract

Improvement of public education is a focus of national and state politics. In West Virginia, a state initiative, 21st Century Skills, is driving improvement of its public schools by introducing significant changes in the education system. School systems across the nation are expected to challenge their own teachers and administrators to prepare students for the 21st century.

Principals, including those in Alternative Schools, are expected to lead this school improvement initiative by working closely with teachers and staff to create the most effective learning environment possible in every school. "Best practice" input from teachers and administrators will be invaluable as principals institute changes across the board to enable students to survive and succeed in today's high-tech society.

## Introduction

The improvement of public education has become a centerpiece of America's political agenda. Starting with the National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1984 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (and more recently with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), policy makers have proposed significant reform in the public school system (Paine, 2006). Improvement in public education is a focus of both national and state politics. For example, in West Virginia, a state initiative, 21st Century Skills, is driving improvement in West Virginia schools by introducing significant changes in the education system (Paine, 2006). School systems are expected to embark on the improvement of learning environments that assist teachers and administrators in preparing the learner for the twenty-first century. There is an expectation that the principal will

lead this initiative by playing several roles, including: Instructional leader, promoter of improved learning environments, teacher mentor, curriculum and instruction specialist, staff developer, and strategic planner. The principal must be at the center of creating an improved learning environment (Glass, 1992).

## Background

In July 1966, Coleman reported in *The Equal Educational Opportunity* survey that family background was a major determinant of student achievement (Lezotte, n.d.). This report led to the creation of compensatory educational programs that dominated school improvement and fueled the Effective Schools Movement (Lezotte, n.d.), which supported the belief that all children could learn and that schools control the factors necessary to assure student mastery. The role of the principal, as the school's leader, in implementing

effective change in public schools became a key factor in school reform. The role the principal takes to help create effective learning environments is critical to all involved and calls for rethinking the training, preparing, and selecting of school principals (Devono, 2010).

Today, principals are often unprepared to create effective learning environments. However, some have suggested that instructional management that improves student performance may be the most important form of leadership challenge facing school leaders today (Cuban, 1985). How is the dilemma of finding leaders who are prepared to lead school improvement efforts reconciled with the need to find capable administrators who are trained to fulfill the role now expected of them?

### The Role of the Principal

Originally, the role of the principal was that of teacher. In recent years the role transformed from that of an educator to more of a school manager. Further transformation has resulted in the perception that the principal is now teacher, school manager, politician, and most recently, educational reform leader, specifically focused on classroom instructional improvement. Due to this change, some educators think that the principal is too far removed from the classroom, affecting the principal's ability to facilitate instructional classroom change effectively (Rallis, Tedder, Lachman, & Elmore, 2006). Nevertheless, principals are environment-builders who serve as key players in terms of influencing the way in which effective instructional learning environments are improved (Waters and Marzano, 2007).

Today, as the educational leader for the school, the principal is faced with the difficult challenge of cultivating and sustaining learning under conditions of rapid change (Fullan, 2001). The quality of America's schools depends on the



effectiveness of its school principals. The principal position requires a bold, creative, and energetic visionary who can deal with social change and diverse school populations (AASA, 1993).

### The Principal as Instructional Leader

The principal, as the instructional leader of the school, must develop positive relationships among the administration and staff within the school. The nature of these relationships "has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else" (Barth, 2006).

Plans, techniques, and methodologies all affect a principal's ability to create the desired effective learning environment. As principals establish educational initiatives within the school, stakeholders must remain included in the process adopted for creating effective learning environments. The plan must be understood as the collective wisdom of the principal, teachers, educational community, and stakeholders as they set out together to improve the school through an accepted change process (Johnson, 1996). The principal, however, must be the driving force. As Bennis and Nanus (1985) said, "With a vision, the leader provides the all-important bridge from the present to the future of the organization."

Principals, in their instructional leadership role, must encourage teachers to be instructional leaders, too, and provide professional staff development necessary to develop effective leaders. Principals must be willing to demonstrate this leadership, allowing teacher autonomy (authority and responsibility), coupled with central office and board support (Herman & Stephens, 1989).

Collaboration in the change process emerges when principals encourage teachers, and district personnel to assume responsibility for program change as team members (Johnson, 1996).

The principal position requires a bold, creative, and energetic visionary who can deal with social change and diverse school populations (AASA, 1993).



Creating effective learning environments within a professional learning community works best as a collaborative experience among all staff within a school system (Price, 2009). Plans to change the learning environment of schools will need to involve

all stakeholders in understanding the importance of what it takes to ensure that students learn. Understanding what is required is part of the instructional leadership role the principal plays in the schools we have today (Price, Carr, Harsh & Chapman, 2010).

#### Principal Roles: Perceptions of Principals and Teachers

To assist principals in their role of leading the charge to create effective learning environments, a new survey instrument was developed, the Principal Efficacy Questionnaire (Price, 2010). The survey instrument was designed to examine principals' and teachers' perceptions of a theory-based framework of principal leadership roles and actions (Bennis and Nanus, 1985) as those roles and actions were carried out in everyday principal behaviors. The bottom line—were the perceptions of principals and teachers similar or different in terms of how the teachers perceived the principal behaving and how the principal's perceived their own behaviors? The study was designed to answer the questions: If there were differences in perceived behaviors could this information be helpful to principals in changing their behaviors? And would those changed behaviors, as perceived by teachers, more appropriately define the role of the principal as the instructional leader of the school? Would the new behaviors enhance the school and classroom improvement process?

In the study, principals and teachers were asked to give their impressions of the principal's behavior and actions as the principal performed as the education leader. Principals responded to questions based upon actions taken by the principal and teachers responded to the same

questions based upon on what behaviors they observed principals displaying. The survey developed consisted of 28 questions based on research as to effective actions leaders take in leading schools (Waters and Marzano, 2007). Each group was asked the same 28 questions. The rating scale for each question included responses in the range of "never" to "almost always" in terms of observed behavior. The questions focused upon the leadership behaviors of the principal.

In analyzing the results, the Principals responded significantly higher to questions that addressed behavior consistent with: values, open and non-defensive responses, having a problem solving process, and demonstrating an awareness of the impact of change on people. The teachers scored the same items as "less visible" and "less frequent". For example, Question #25 in the survey stated, "The Principal's behaviors are consistent with his/her shared values and beliefs."

The principal's responded with 56% indicating a rating of "almost always" and did not respond with a "never" rating.

Teacher responses indicated 14.6% with a rating of "almost always", with four responses in the "never" category. The same discrepancy is evident in Question #27, "The Principal uses a problem-solving process to solve daily problems and utilizes strategic planning to take advantage of future school improvement opportunities and to overcome long term obstacles." Fifty-six percent of the principals rated this statement "almost always" with none giving a "never" or "rarely" rating. Teachers though had only 10% rating on this statement with an "almost always" rating and 11% gave a "rarely" rating and an additional 3.7% rated it with a "never" score. When it came to question #28 regarding principal's awareness of the impact of change on people and "provides support that allows for adjustment to the change" only 9.8% of the teachers responding rated the behavior as "almost always" compared to 43.8%



The values used to inform the decision and the actions of the principal need to be articulated to staff. What a principal does along with communicating “the why” of the decision and the subsequent action are keys to leading staff in the direction of school improvement.

of principals, who rated this action as “almost always”.

Teacher responses to questions related to observed principal behaviors and actions such as: “ensuring school goals are visible, ensuring professional development activities are attended, conducting formal evaluations, and monitoring safety policies” all received a higher rating by teachers than principals on the survey. Question #4 stated, “The Principal ensures that school goals are visible throughout the school facility (i.e. school office, bulletin boards and poster).” Teachers responded at the 69.1% level with a rating of “often” compared to a 31.3% response level of principals rating the actions/behaviors taken or observed statement as “often”. These types of principal actions, behaviors and roles are more easily measured and recognizable and perhaps this is the reason that teachers give these types of questions a higher ranking. The questions not specifically noted here had a similar range of responses from both groups.

What seems clear in terms behaviors of principals regarding: a decision making process, awareness of change on staff, and their actions being consistent with their values, is, however, not clear to teachers. This is an indicator that principals must not assume that these facets of the principal’s behavior are obvious and understood by staff. Communication of these areas is essential in the role of leadership. Principals may need to check with staff—check for understanding as a way to determine if what they think they are doing is perceived by teachers and staff as what is in fact intended, perceived and being done effectively. To the teachers, the process used in making the decision is as important as the decision itself. The values used to inform the

decision and the actions of the principal need to be articulated to staff. What a principal does along with communicating “the why” of the decision and the subsequent action are keys to leading staff in the direction of school improvement.

The role of the principal is multifaceted and includes leadership that is related to: instruction, mentorship, staff development, strategic planning, and being a change agent. To better prepare those aspiring to the role of principal, the professional development needs to include the skills of collaboration and also a way to check if the skills are being demonstrated in a fashion that is easily understood by the teaching staff. This involves the areas of facilitation, communication, and shared leadership. A principal will need to create a vision as well as be able to communicate, share, and reinforce the vision with all stakeholders. A vision needs a plan and the assessment necessary to measure progress toward the goals that will lead to vision attainment to give life to the vision—to ensure that teachers and staff understand the place where the principal wants the school to be. To prepare effective school leaders some new skills and likely some re-training is needed for effective leadership to reside in all schools, and this may be an especially critical component for leadership in alternative schools.

Research results also indicated that principals and teachers identified curriculum knowledge and consensus building as essential. It is important for principals and teachers to have a good working relationship through con-



sensus building. When curricula initiatives are presented at the school level, these programs need the support of the instructional staff who will be implementing these ideas. The principal allocates staff and presents educational opportunities to teachers to foster a creative learning environment. With these things in place, it becomes the responsibility of the building administrator to supervise teaching and learning (Johnson, 1996).

Narrative statements taken from the research study also indicated that if a principal wanted “buy in” from staff, the teachers needed to be included in the decision-making process as educational initiatives were introduced. One way for principals to build consensus with teachers and staff is to include them in the decision-making process through professional learning communities. Empowering professionals through such efforts enhances the opportunity for teachers and staff to be directly involved at both the county and school level (DuFour, 2008).

The principal is the leader who balances political concerns and creates a management style that encourages participation by all stakeholders. An indication of a successful leader is when each teacher or administrator embraces the organization’s goals and implements those goals within their own workspaces (Cunningham, 1985). If our primary purpose is to educate children in the most effective learning environment, then the role of the principal must be one of a leader who listens to teachers and staff who deal directly with the students in the classroom.

School reform is arduous. A few schools have been successful with school reform, but many more find it difficult to effect change. A principal can support change by examining the

district’s needs, proposing solutions, and supporting and inspiring teachers and staff who are committed to implementing change to improve school (Johnson, 1996). New behaviors and actions suggested for principals as a result of the above survey research include: Principal Mentor, Curriculum and Instruction Specialist, Staff Development Facilitator, and Strategic Planning Leader.



#### The Principal as Teacher Mentor

The principal can have a direct role in developing an effective learning environment by supporting teachers and staff.

When the principal develops the school’s mission with teachers, staff, and the education community, necessary classroom resources and teacher supports are identified which enable teachers in making sound educational decisions (Herman & Stephens, 1989). The principal, in the principal mentor role, may then work in concert with teachers, support staff, and community members in providing identified supports in order to meet the educational goals of the district. Bjork refers to this role as “the art of the possible” (Bjork, 2005).

According to the literature, principals are instructional leaders (Fullan, 2008). Leaders within a school system encourage change daily as the system evolves through collective understanding, thinking, and action that result from school-wide engagement (York & Barr, 2001). The success of the learning environment is related to the effectiveness of the principal in building professional learning communities. “Principals do make a difference in school improvement and student achievement...They are second only to the teacher” (Fullan, 2008). For the change pro-

Research indicates that teachers stay in teaching when they have strong leaders who value them as resources (Salyer, 2003). Teachers of at-risk and disengaged students, a growing population, especially want a knowledgeable and supportive leader who builds working relationships with the faculty (Graseck, 2005).



cess to succeed, the principal must involve the administrators, and principals must understand the school and its community in order to inspire change.

### The Principal as Curriculum and Instruction Specialist

Administrators need to understand curriculum and instruction before they can begin to effect change (Peterson, 2001). Principals need to be involved in the staff development process; they need to be directly involved with the teachers and district office to establish goals and monitor initiatives as they are implemented within the classroom. Research indicates that teachers stay in teaching when they have strong leaders who value them as resources (Salyer, 2003). Teachers of at-risk and disengaged students, a growing population, especially want a knowledgeable and supportive leader who builds working relationships with the faculty (Graseck, 2005).

Establishing priorities, implementing performance measurements, and monitoring formative and summative assessments results can provide insight into student learning. A process of systemic review must be done annually, re-viewing curriculum alignment and student performance (AASA, 1993). Principals must decide how to exercise this authority to make the system work for students. "Everyone from the principal to the teacher has to lead by managing and manage by leading" (Johnson, 1996).

### The Principal as Staff Development Facilitator

Improving instruction within the classroom means changing what teachers do in their classroom. Because most reform efforts are initiatives established through county or state department officials, teachers can feel as though they are not included in creating or designing the changes - that they merely implement changes mandated from above. "If schools are to change, teachers must change their practice in significant ways to offer more effective instruction and produce higher levels of achievement for students" (NSDC,



2005). Staff development presents an avenue for school systems to retrain the workforce. "Learning is not workshops, and courses and strategic retreats. It is not school improvement plans or individual leadership development. These are inputs. Rather, learning is developing the organization, day after day, within the culture" (Fullan, 2008). Interestingly, teachers and principals similarly ranked the area of Staff Development as last or next to last in importance; however, teachers viewed staff development as more important than did principals.

Professional learning communities are enhanced by school culture. If stakeholders believe professional development is valued, it will have meaning within the school (Peterson, 2002). The more positive the school culture, the more valued staff development will be and the greater staff will be involved in the professional development activities.

### The Principal as Strategic Planning Leader

Strategic planning and anticipating future trends are crucial to enhancing learning and teaching in an educational



organization. Establishing priorities within the strategic planning process empowers individuals and groups to participate in the goals of the organization. Once the priorities are established, the educational community must be involved to plan and organize the work. This type of strategic planning process enables principals to frame and solve problems in decision-making (AASA, 1993). According to the McREL report by Tim Waters and Robert Marzano (as cited in The School Administrator, 2007):

1. Leadership at the school level does matter.
2. Creating teaching and learning goals as a school with administrative involvement will impact student achievement.

Principals must "lead through leading" (Cunningham, 1985). The thought that directives starting at the top will bring change is a myth.

The old top-down leadership does not generate *inventiveness and resourcefulness within the supporting system. In order for change to take place, leaders must be present throughout the entire system (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Bennis and Nanus (1985) said, "Leading involves getting everyone to pursue a shared mission." Principals simply cannot rely solely on making good decisions to promote leadership that will create effective learning environments (Cohen & March, 1989).*

### Conclusions

Schools and instructional staffs throughout the country are retooling. Principals need to be aware of what teachers and administrators believe to be the most effective roles they can play. Research suggests that the principal must play several roles to bring about change successfully and must rely on the stakeholders within the school building to effectively impact the learning environment and education within the classroom. Principals cannot create an effective learning environment alone or develop one model that works well in all contexts. When the principal establishes a relationship with the teachers in the schools, leadership autonomy is often encouraged among the teaching staff. As the principal encourages the teachers to assume a more proactive leadership responsibility, the teacher is encouraged to embrace the established goals of the principal and the education community (Waters, & Marzano, 2007) and, in that process, effective learning environments are improved for students.

The survey research findings revealed specific principal roles: behaviors and actions (i.e., "best practices") that, if used to prepare principals, could increase on-the-job effectiveness. The education community, and specifically university departments and staff involved with preparing and training alternative school principals, need to be included in the discussion, creation, and implementation of programs and processes that will help prepare new school leaders to meet the demands of their role as they lead the challenge of creating effective 21st century learning environments for all students and staff.



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Santa Cruz County Office of Education

by Carol Polhamus

**N**atural Bridges High School and Green Careers Program is a joint effort between Santa Cruz County Office of Education, Alternative Education and Regional Occupational Program that provides high school education and employment training for students in grades 10 through 12 who are interested in pursuing “green,” environmentally sound careers. Natural Bridges High School students are enrolled in both Alternative Education and ROP. The high school curriculum focuses on Monterey Bay ecology, environmental issues and solutions, local history, local economics, thematic mathematics and language arts, as well as other high school graduation requirements, and incorporates a number of hands-on projects within each class.



The ROP program provides training in green construction, alternative energy, sustainable agriculture, environmental horticulture, computer applications, bike repair and a survey course in green careers focusing on local

careers that both address environmental issues and solutions and pay a livable wage. Hands-on activities in green building, alternative energy and transportation, green retail, natural resource protection, organic farming and outdoor recre-

ation allow students to gain first hand experience in green careers to enable them to identify career areas they wish to pursue. Students from other local high schools can choose to attend only the ROP portion of the program while continuing enrollment at their home high school.

Natural Bridges is situated close to Natural Bridges State Park and Beach, UCSC, Seymour Center

and Wilder State Park. This location has provided multiple opportunities for students to work on ecological issues in the community. Our school currently participates with UCSC in its IDEASS Program which pairs UCSC engineering students with Natural Bridges students to design and fabricate alternative energy and rain water catchment devices among others. UCSC also provides our school with a variety of volunteers and interns from their Environmental Studies program who tutor students in mathematics, work with them at Antonelli Pond on water quality testing, work in the garden alongside students and teach digital music classes in the computer lab. Our sustainable agriculture students also participate in the youth empowerment program called, Food! What?, located at UCSC’s Center for Sustain-





able Agroecology where students learn leadership skills, community organizing and involvement skills.

Other Natural Bridges High

School goals include achieving competency in public speaking and presentation skills using the latest computer and video technology, and developing leadership skills by participating in local conservation efforts and projects. Students listen to a variety of guest speakers and career panels. Our students participate in numerous field trips to such places as the Marine Mammal Center in Marin where they learn about marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation, track radio-collared pumas with Felidae in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and Elkhorn Slough where they learn about intertidal animal communities. Natural Bridges Students are required to participate in weekly community service projects, such as at the Homeless Garden Project where they use their gardening skills to assist staff with various projects to support the garden, or water quality testing and native plant restoration at Antonelli Pond.



The program's career education focus guides stu-



dents through activities designed to assist them in planning their career and future education and training, as well as creating a portfolio for employment. Internships in local businesses develop employment skills and job specific skills. Graduates of the program will have

achieved a thorough education in Monterey Bay environmental issues and potential solutions, leadership skills to permit them to work effectively in our community, a well rounded general education and a comprehensive plan for future education and training after high school.

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Parent/Guardian: _____	Telephone Number: _____

**SCHOOL DATA**

Juvenile Court/Community School Attended: _____	Date of Graduation: _____
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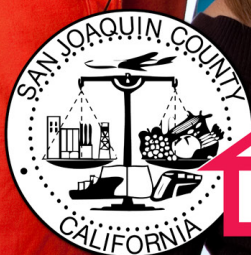
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