



CALIFORNIA COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS

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TAKE 5 BRIGHT SPOTS & PROMISING PRACTICES

SEPTEMBER 2023

Take 5! is a monthly spotlight of *promising practices* happening at county offices of education throughout the state, rotating the five that are featured and the focus areas covered. You can view past *bright spots* by clicking the link at the bottom of this page. The map coordinates with the location of the stories featured this month from across our state.



Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

The Shasta County Office of Education is proud to have been part of the work behind AB 516 (R-Dahle), which excuses school absences for cultural ceremonies. Back in 2017, Shasta County chronic absenteeism data showed that Native Americans had the highest percentage of chronically absent students, so Shasta County Superintendent Judy Flores convened Native American leaders for a listening session. From there began the American Indian Advisory with representatives from local tribes. Native parents were surveyed for the reasons of absences, and one of the main reasons was cultural events and celebrations. The advisory found cultural events did not match the school calendar, so they reached out to Assemblywoman Dahle to propose the simple but impactful change of excusing absences for cultural ceremonies. It also opens the door for educators to ask students about the ceremonies when they return to class, encouraging students to share their cultural experiences with their classmates.

[Learn More Here](#)

[Helping Parents Navigate Substance Abuse & Mental Health Concerns in](#)



Teens

Contra Costa County Office of Education has developed a new online guide titled, “Substance Use, Mental Health, & Teens: A Guide for Parents & Other Caring Adults,” which focuses on resources to protect and care for teens facing substance abuse and mental health challenges. Created by the agency’s Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) department, the resource was inspired by April Rovero, Founder/ Director of National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse (NCAPDA), to equip adults with knowledge and resources they need to support young people in their lives to make positive decisions regarding their health.

[Learn More Here](#)



Addressing Lack of Housing as a Barrier to Solving the Teacher Shortage

As a lack of affordable housing exacerbates the teacher shortage, educational leaders continue to explore innovative solutions to attract and retain educators in Santa Clara County. School district leaders and school board members recently gathered at the **Santa Clara County Office of Education** (SCCOE) to learn about a variety of housing resources and projects at the Educator Workforce Housing Symposium co-hosted by the Santa Clara County School Boards Association. At the symposium, the SCCOE released its Educator Housing Resource Booklet. This resource provides extensive information about legislation, laws, housing solutions, and homebuying programs.

[Learn More Here](#)



STEAM Show Designed To Help Students Apply School Learning to Real Life

After over two decades and with more than 950 live episodes in the books, **Kern County Superintendent of Schools TV** program, “Do the Math” recently kicked off

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its 22nd season. Michael Cushine, a GATE teacher with the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District, has served as the show's host since the beginning and is proud of the way the program has evolved over the years. As the show transformed, evolving and adapting to include more STEAM content as time went on, there was one personal journey unfolding off-camera that no one really knew was happening. Mackenzie Cushine used to watch her father host "Do the Math" as she quietly did her own math homework in the next room. At only five years old when the show began, Mackenzie spent many of her formative years closely watching the organized chaos it would take to tape "Do the Math" successfully. Her natural ability to handle pressure and implement creativity in her work led her to be the first student producer, where she would help Mike plan the show and schedule guests.



Leading in Cybersecurity Efforts

As cyber attacks against educational institutions have increased, the **San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE)** has been leading the way in cybersecurity efforts locally and across the state. SDCOE was the first county office of education in the state to fully implement multi-factor authentication — and the transition occurred during the height of the pandemic. SDCOE is also the creator of a widely used platform that simulates phishing attacks as an ongoing training for school employees. The Red Herring phishing awareness program, created by SDCOE to address a need for low-cost, effective cybersecurity training, has grown to about 200,000 users in more than 100 local educational agencies across California. This system enables schools, districts, and county offices of education to simulate phishing attacks and help train staff members to better identify suspicious emails and other security threats.

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