

Spring 2025  
Volume 36

# JOURNAL

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



## In This Issue:

- Exploring the benefits of combining alternative education and physical education in Santa Cruz County.
- Examining how trauma-informed art making fosters healing for at-risk youth.
- Bridging literacy research and practice to instill hope and improve outcomes.
- A unique program introduces students to sculling along the Delta.
- A look at effective transition planning to support student success.



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Cover Designed By Student Adrian from LACOE

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



## VISION

Under the direction of the California County Superintendents, JCCASAC is a professional educational organization dedicated to preparing students who are enrolled in county alternative education programs to become self-sufficient adults who lead healthy lifestyles and are competent, caring, and academically prepared for their futures.

## MISSION

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

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

## GOALS

- Improve student achievement through research and sharing best practices
- Support special projects that enhance instructional programs
- Provide regular training for new county office administrators
- Conduct successful conferences with statewide representation
- Publish the JCCASAC Journal that informs superintendents, administrators, teachers, and affiliated agencies of the latest research, effective teaching practices and methodologies, and that showcases successful programs
- Provide scholarships to eligible graduating seniors in order to encourage 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

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— California Dropout Recovery Student

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# A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



## Mark Yost Director, San Joaquin County Office of Education

On behalf of the JCCASAC Executive Board, I am honored to welcome you to the 55th Annual JCCASAC State Conference here at the Hilton Universal in Universal City, California.

Choosing a career in education has been one of the most fulfilling decisions of my life. It has been both a privilege and a joy to serve students, families, community organizations, and fellow educators. I am deeply humbled to now serve as the 2025 Chair of JCCASAC.

The work of this organization truly makes a difference. JCCASAC provides ongoing support for students in court and community school programs throughout California. Through this professional network and our annual conference, we have the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and learn about innovative programs that are making a positive impact. These programs support not only academic achievement but also the social and emotional development of the students we serve.

JCCASAC is a platform for collaboration and the exchange of best practices. Even during times of uncertainty and change, our programs continue to be creative, resilient, and deeply committed to supporting communities across the state.

I have tremendous admiration and respect for all of you working in court and community school settings. You are the difference-makers. Your dedication transforms lives, and your commitment and compassion make you truly exceptional.

One of the main goals of this conference is to help us grow as leaders, united by a shared vision and mission to serve those who need us most. I encourage you to reflect on your journey in alternative education during your time here. You are part of a long-standing, impactful community of educators and support staff who have found purpose and fulfillment in working with youth and their families.

For over 50 years, JCCASAC has inspired innovation and helped improve instructional practices to ensure student success. This year’s conference theme, “**Love Leads to Legacy**,” captures the essence of our mission. I’m grateful for the platform JCCASAC provides—to connect, to grow, and to lead. While each of our county programs is unique, we are united by our shared purpose. As servant leaders, we remain committed to delivering high-quality programs and services.

Looking ahead, JCCASAC will continue to be a strong professional organization—building partnerships, reviewing legislation, and shaping policy to advocate for the students we serve. I’m personally grateful for the opportunity to serve this remarkable organization and for the unwavering support of my colleagues through both challenges and triumphs.

Thank you again for being here. Welcome to JCCASAC 2025!

Warm Regards,

Mark Yost

JCCASAC Chair



**Image created with ChatGPT 4.0**

**Prompt:** A high-resolution photograph showcases a large metallic globe sculpture made of polished stainless steel, with silver and chrome tones. The continents are contoured and etched onto the globe with visible longitudinal and latitudinal gridlines. Bold golden-yellow letters spelling "LOVE LEADS TO LEGACY" wrap around the equator of the globe. The globe is mounted on a pedestal in the center of a circular fountain with active water jets. The background features a lively, cinematic movie set with lights, trucks, and stage props, but the background is subtly blurred to keep the focus on the globe. No visible text in the background. The overall lighting is warm and cinematic, with a soft sunset glow enhancing the polished reflections on the globe's surface.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR-ELECT



## Diana Velasquez, Ed.D

Executive Director, Special  
Programs Support and  
Transformation, LACOE

On behalf of the JCCASAC Executive Board, I am honored to welcome you to the 55th Annual JCCASAC Conference, here at the Hilton Universal in the vibrant City of Angels! We are excited to gather with you in celebration of our shared mission and our unwavering commitment to justice-impacted youth across California.

This year's theme—**Love Leads to Legacy**—holds deep meaning for all of us who have dedicated our lives to the service of young people navigating some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. At its heart, this theme is a call to action, a reflection, and a vision for the future.

I am deeply honored to serve as your 2025 JCCASAC Conference Chair. Over the past 29 years, I've had the privilege of serving justice-impacted youth in many different roles—from substitute teacher to classroom teacher, coordinator, assistant principal, principal, director, and now as an Executive Director. Throughout this incredible journey I have been blessed to be recognized with various honors, but I can tell you wholeheartedly that nothing compares to the joy of watching our students thrive. Watching them discover their unlimited potential, reclaim their purpose, and believe in a future that is bigger than their past is the greatest reward of this work. Together, we are building a meaningful legacy.

At the core of this legacy is the understanding that love is the foundation of our work. It is more than emotion—it is persistence, it is belief. It is showing up for our students, even when systems don't. It is listening, advocating, and creating learning spaces that recognize each student's humanity. When we lead with love, we recognize the potential in every young person—not for who they were in a moment of hardship, but for who they are becoming.

When we lead with love, we model the kind of leadership that creates lasting change—a legacy. The legacy we build through love is found in the lives we impact, the students who find their voice, and the futures that take root because someone believed in them. As educators and leaders, we are charged with more than teaching academics—we are builders of possibility. We know that students in court and community school programs need champions who will fight for access, equity, and dignity.

The JCCASAC Conference has always been a space where we come together to learn, grow, and be reminded that we are not alone in this mission. Here, we share best practices and lift each other up. We remind one another that we are not alone in this work, and that together, we can reimagine what's possible for the students who need us the most. This conference is your time to recharge, reconnect, and reignite the passion that brought you into this work in the first place. It's a place to celebrate innovation, to challenge systems, and to remember that love is not a sentiment—it's a strategy—it is work.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for your heart, your courageous leadership, and your relentless dedication to students who need us the most. Let us continue to lead with love, because when we do, the legacy we leave behind will echo through generations.

May this year's conference renew your spirit and fuel your work with even greater purpose.



Image created with Ideogram

**Prompt:** A visually appealing graphic design of a large banner. The banner is bright and vibrant. In bold bright yellow letters, the words 'Love Leads to Legacy' stand out, highlighting the core values of the conference. A navy blue ribbon at the top contains the event title "55th Annual". A navy blue ribbon at the bottom contains the event's title "JCCASAC Conference" The overall design conveys a sense of motivation, growth, and unity.



## Debra Duardo, Ed.D. Superintendent, Los Angeles County Office of Education

It is my honor to welcome you to the 55th Annual JCCASAC Conference in L.A. County. Each year, this gathering serves as a powerful reminder of the work we are called to do—educating, uplifting and believing in the potential of our students, especially those who have been impacted by the juvenile justice system. This year’s theme, “Love Leads to Legacy,” resonates deeply with me—because my journey, like many of our students’, began with uncertainty, detours and second chances.

As a former teen mom and high school dropout, I know the weight of feeling unseen and underestimated. I also know the transformative power of an individual believing in you, loving you through personal struggles and refusing to let your past define your future. That belief in each person’s potential, that love, became the foundation for my own path and drives the decisions I make as the Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools today.

Throughout my career, I have sought to be that individual for as many students as possible. The work we do in county alternative and court schools is not just academic, it is human, it is meaningful and it is urgent. We serve students at the intersection of resilience and risk. They are brilliant, capable and deserving of every opportunity. And they need us to see them, love them and fight for their success.

Our legacy as educators is not built on test scores or awards. It is built on lives changed, on students who once felt lost finding their place, their power and their purpose. That is the legacy I hope we leave. It is a legacy I see each of you building every single day in classrooms, halls and communities across California.

Thank you for being here and thank you for the heart you bring to this work. Let’s continue to lead with love and let that love shape a future our students can believe in.



**Los Angeles County  
Office of Education**

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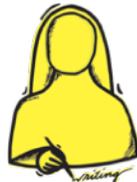


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4STUDENTLIVES is a proprietary software platform that streamlines the way districts complete, store, and pull data from Risk Assessments, Threat Assessments, and Student Safety Plans.

## Re-Imagining Risk and Threat Assessments

The 4STUDENTLIVES assessment tool aims at supporting the following:



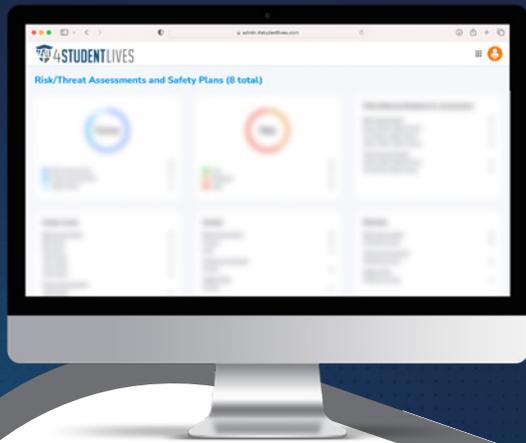
Aggregated assessment data will inform clinical judgment for school counselors, school psychologists, and licensed mental health professionals.



Supports educational leaders in making data-driven decisions related to the allocation of district resources and targeted interventions.



Supports students through psychological first aid, safety planning, recommendations for counseling and community-based linkage.



## Risk / Threat Assessment Data

Supports Assessors and District Administrators in the following:



1 Identify the referrals source



3 Identify the school site, grade level, and reasons for the student expressed threat



2 Identify the number of assessments per student



4 Document the School Resource officer and school administrator involved in the process



5 Chronicles the date and time of the Parent notification

## Safety Planning



1 Support Students in identifying Risk Factors



4 Support Students in Identifying Trusted Adults



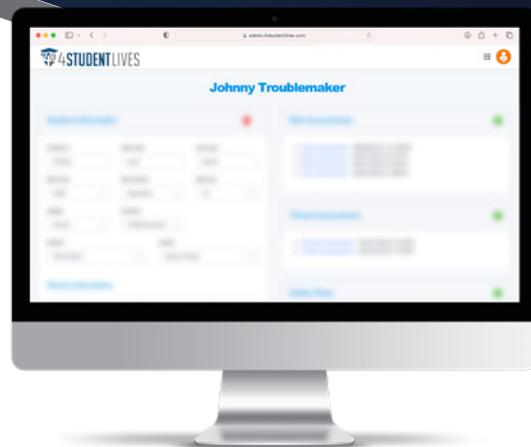
2 Support Students in Identifying Protective Factors



5 Support Students in Accessing Mental Health Resources



3 Support Students in Identifying Coping Skills



## VISION

Our vision is to create a safer and more supportive learning environment for students by providing comprehensive risk assessments, threat assessments, and safety plans. We aim to empower educators, parents, and communities to make data-driven decisions for better student outcomes.

## Data Privacy

### Ferpa (U.S.)

Student educational records are protected under FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). This federal law applies to any school with certain programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

### HIPAA COMPLIANCE

Google Cloud supports HIPAA compliance (within the scope of a Business Associate Agreement) but ultimately customers are responsible for evaluating their own HIPAA compliance.



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# A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INCLUDES TRANSITION PLANNING

BY JEARLINE DIXON

Project Coordinator - Career Services  
Special Programs Support and Transformation (SPST)  
Los Angeles County Office of Education

Exposure to college and career readiness is crucial for youth transitioning from high school to



post-secondary education or employment. This transition can be particularly challenging for many adolescents, often accompanied by fear and anxiety. For students in juvenile court schools, these challenges are intensified by the added barriers of institutionalization, high recidivism rates, discrimination, and limited opportunities. The way these services are implemented can vary significantly across academic institutions, shaped by program focus, student interests, goals, and targeted outcomes. College and career readiness may encompass a range of options, including dual enrollment, career technical education (CTE), transition planning, and work-based learning. The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) offers these services at various sites to support students in their journey.

Training, exposure, and experience are needed to ensure a successful transition, offering a solid foundation for those impacted by the system, regardless of the barriers they face. LACOE's Transition Special Needs (TSN) Unit and its committed School-to-Career Transition Team provide vital transition services for youth. These services include work readiness training, job exploration counseling, work-based learning opportunities, post-secondary education guidance, and instruction in self-advocacy. This support is bolstered by dedicated school staff and probation education services and is funded through a contract with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) and grants from the California Department of Education (CDE), which provide essential resources for students across Los Angeles County.

Students receive individualized support based on their interests, goals, and career aspirations. Specialists work closely with students to assess their needs, develop action plans, and help create work-readiness portfolios that include a master application, resume, and certificates of completion, along with other resources for post-secondary planning and community support services. Additionally, students gain exposure to various careers through Pathful, a platform that brings industry professionals into the classroom via virtual field trips and guest speakers.

A very successful component of the program is the paid work experience opportunity. This allows students not only to gain valuable work experience but also to earn a paycheck, supporting their families or saving for the future. For many, this is their first encounter with employment, leading to positive behavioral outcomes and enhanced follow-through.





Students are placed in probation facilities to perform duties such as laundry, maintenance, graffiti removal, dog care, and kitchen work, reporting directly to probation staff. Those who transition into LACOE's county community schools or independent study programs may also find placements in community agencies like the Boys and Girls Club and other LACOE facilities such as Reprographics and Warehouse. A remarkable aspect of this program is that these youth are employed by LACOE as student workers, gaining valuable experience to add to their resumes.

The collaborative effort provides a much-needed opportunity for at-risk students, many of whom have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). It allows them to learn about employer expectations, timelines, completing a timesheet, and receiving a paycheck. Furthermore, students co-enrolled in multiple LACOE program offerings, including CTE, gain insights into job safety and youth labor laws while earning industry-recognized OSHA certifications.

Students are excited to learn about their leadership abilities, and their experience working with caring staff fosters self-awareness, self-determination, goal setting, and advocacy for their rights.

Last year, 291 students from our LACOE juvenile court schools successfully participated in paid work experience.

This number is worth highlighting and celebrating as it showcases our students' resilience, motivation, and follow through in their transition from high school to employment and/or post-secondary education.



# TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH LITERATURE: THE GREAT STORIES BOOK CLUB AT ALICE M. WORSLEY SCHOOL

By MICHELLE OGAWA, TEACHER LIBRARIAN, ALICE M. WORSLEY SCHOOL, OFFICE OF THE FRESNO COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Alice M. Worsley School Library, part of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Program, was honored to be one of just 38 libraries nationwide selected to receive two Great Stories Club (GSC) grants from the American Library Association (ALA) last year. Through the selected themes, *Deeper Than Our Skins: The Present Is a Conversation with the Past* and *Finding Your Voice: Speaking Truth to Power*, students engaged in powerful discussions that connected literature to their lived experiences. Led by the Teacher Librarian, the Worsley Book Club explored identity, resilience, and self-expression through ALA-curated titles and author visits that made a lasting impact. While the grant supported access to high-quality literature, the true reward has been the continued collaboration with the ALA's Great Stories Club, its staff and resources, our probation partners, school staff, district leadership, participating authors, and community supporters to bring meaningful, relevant, and empowering literary experiences to our students.

After a disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ALA Great Stories Club returned to the Alice M. Worsley campus in 2023, offering students in our Juvenile Justice Campus a powerful opportunity to explore themes of identity, resilience, and justice through literature. By blending relevant narratives with authentic discussion, the program has become more than just an academic experience, it is a space of connection, reflection, and hope.

The first semester of the Great Stories Book Club set a strong foundation for meaningful dialogue and connection through literature. Under the

theme *Deeper Than Our Skins*, students engaged with texts that explored race, history, and cultural identity. *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates prompted deep introspection and sparked powerful conversation. Gene Luen Yang's *The Shadow Hero* offered a visually engaging entry point into discussions about heritage and representation, bringing moments of laughter and discovery alongside serious reflection.

The GSC's impact extended beyond the core titles. Students read *The Honey Jar: An Armenian's Escape to Freedom* by local author, Joan Schoettler, who personally inscribed copies for each participant, purchased by the Court Schools PTA. After reading the story, students engaged in a virtual presentation

and conversation with the author about the book's historical context and themes of resilience.

These titles, along with other experiences, were a few highlights from the Book Club's offerings during its first semester,

all focused on fostering growth, understanding, and connection.

The second semester was marked by the theme *Finding Your Voice*, beginning with *I Am Alfonso Jones* by Tony Medina. Students brought the book to life by reading aloud in character, transforming each class session into an engaging, participatory experience. The theme continued with *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero, culminating in a memorable in-person visit from the author, made possible by funding from the ALA Great Stories Club Grant. During this visit, students had the unique opportunity to ask questions and hear directly from Isabel about her writing process. The

"I feel like this book was meaningful for me because I could relate to a lot of the things she went through, and I put myself in her shoes. I feel like this is a time I will remember for the rest of my life because of everything she went through and how much we could connect to our own struggles and experiences."

students expressed deep appreciation for both the book and the author’s visit, highlighting how *Gabi* helped them connect with their own experiences, particularly around themes like addiction and personal struggles. One student shared, "I feel like this book was meaningful for me because I could relate to a lot of the things she went through, and I put myself in her shoes. I feel like this is a time I will remember for the rest of my life because of everything she went through and how much we could connect to our own struggles and experiences." The visit left a lasting impact, with students reflecting on the book’s relevance to their own lives and sharing gratitude for the opportunity to meet an author who made them feel less alone in their struggles. In addition to these highlights, the inclusion of *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton as part of the summer reading program added another layer of engagement, meeting diverse student interests and cultivating personal connections to the story and its themes. Although the ALA Great Stories Club grant was not available in the 2024-25 school year, Alice M. Worsley School continued looking ahead with strong momentum for expansion. With a growing waitlist and increased enthusiasm, the Worsley Book Club program resumed in January 2025, introducing new themes and curated titles from the ALA Great Stories Club Reading Lists and other notable selections. Building on this momentum, February 2025 brought a special opportunity for Book Club students to read the bio-graphic novel *Weirdo* by Tony Weaver, Jr., and host the author for a visit. The event provided a meaningful and memorable experience, as Tony’s story highlighted powerful themes of resilience, choices, and the transformative power of storytelling. Many students saw aspects of their own lives reflected in his journey, making the visit deeply personal and impactful. The Worsley Book Club continues this semester with other engaging themes and new opportunities for students to connect with literature.

The continued success of the Great Stories Book Club

at Alice M. Worsley School affirms that literature can be transformative, even in the most challenging environments. For many students, GSC has become a sanctuary, a space where they can read by choice, share openly, and feel seen and understood. As the Book Club continues to grow and reach more student populations on campus, we are especially grateful for the support of the GSC program, Alice M. Worsley



School, the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, Court Schools PTA, visiting authors, and other community partners. These partnerships not only help shape future reading opportunities and secure funding but also reinforce the power of stories to inspire a love of reading, personal growth, and the belief in a brighter future.

#### **Related Media and Articles:**

[Education Matters | Fresno County Superintendent of Schools](#) – Local news station featured the Alice M. Worsley GSC Book Club and highlighted its impact.

[“8 Things Librarians Should Know: Working with Juvenile Detention Facilities”](#) – Contributor to ALA Great Stories, Programming Librarian e-newsletter, December 2023 edition.

[Fresno Bee Article \(2019\)](#) – Featured coverage of the 2019 Alice M. Worsley GSC Book Club participation by reporter Aleksandra Appleton.

# JJC BOYS & GIRLS CLUB: GREAT FUTURES START HERE

BY FIDEL MARTINEZ, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF FRESNO COUNTY UNIT DIRECTOR

“To inspire all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.” – Boys & Girls Club Mission Statement



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF FRESNO COUNTY  
JUVENILE JUSTICE CAMPUS

## A BRIEF HISTORY

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Fresno County had the opportunity to collaborate with the Central Valley

Community Foundations during 2008 with the dream of placing a Boys & Girls Club inside the Juvenile Justice Campus (JJC) and begin servicing incarcerated youth. In working with the Fresno County Office of Probation, we realized that dream in 2009. Our JJC Club is located inside the commitment multipurpose room where we serve 7 different housing units. The club provides youth with a variety of programming that focus on four key elements: Health & Wellbeing, Character & Leadership, Life & Workforce Readiness, and of course, Academic Success. In Fresno, there are 14 clubhouses countywide, and here at the JJC we are proud to say we were the third Boys & Girls Club to open a Club inside a juvenile facility in the state of California and we are one out of 13 nationwide who service incarcerated youth.

## BUILDING OUR FUTURE

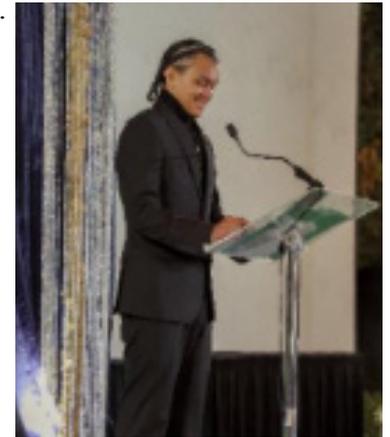
Through the Boys & Girls Club, we strive to provide youth with as many skills as possible to help them thrive and become the best versions of themselves possible. True, working with incarcerated youth can be challenging, but the reward in seeing our youth grow and succeed is worth the challenge. One program that stands out is Youth of the Year. Our Youth of the Year program gives youth the opportunity to compete for a college scholarship



against all 14 clubs in Fresno County, and for the very 1st time, JJC was able to have a youth compete. To see the growth that our youth achieved is truly priceless. From a kid, who was nervous and unsure about public speaking and his worth, to a young

man, confident and brave enough to not only place 3rd in the competition, but upon his release, continue to speak at our fundraisers and conferences about his story and how the club changed his life inside the JJC. We encourage youth to get out of their comfort zone and try new things.

Here at the JJC, the Boys & Girls Club also runs organized sports programs in Flag Football, Basketball, and Baseball. Through our sports programs, we teach the youth sportsmanship, leadership, teamwork,



and how to get along with one another. It's no secret that when working with incarcerated youth, there will always be tension. We are asking youth who have different gang affiliations, live in different areas, and who are constantly told there are people they are not allowed to interact with, come to the Boys & Girls Club and participate together in sports. To see youth who normally do not get along with one another, congratulate and respect each other out on our field or in our gym truly speaks volume on the impact that the club has here at the JJC. We teach the youth that there will always be negativity around you, but it's how



you react that defines you. During these programs, we also provide the youth with full sets of uniforms. It is amazing how many youth have never been a part of a team and had the opportunity to wear a uniform no matter the sport. We allow all youth who participate to take a “Team Picture” and take an individual picture with the uniform to take home so they may have a positive memory here at JJC and hopefully see it and remember all that we have taught them.

Currently our most popular program is Career Launch. Our Career Launch program teaches youth the importance of higher education. Through the program, the youth start to plan for their future like which colleges offer their major, businesses in our area that they might be interested in, and what does a valued employee and employer mean to them. During the program, each youth develops

a resume, cover letter, and goes through best interview practices. Once this program is completed, youth have the opportunity to “apply” for our youth worker program. They must use all the skills they gained during Career Launch in hopes to gain one of our limited “youth worker” positions. If chosen, they start to learn things they might come across in the workforce like work ethics, adjusting to someone else’s project idea, and even keeping track of their work hours. Some youth learn skills they didn’t know they needed like how to attach a water hose or use a measuring tape. When this program started, it was a way to get the youth out of the unit and burn off some energy by assisting the club with watering the grass and pulling some weeds. Now the youth have planted trees, set up for events, and they do major cleaning projects, and in doing so, have gained a sense of pride in their Club and Facility.



When asked, why do you like being inside the JJC, the Boys & Girls Club Unit Director always responds with, “Because I get to provide most of these youth with their first. Their first Christmas, their first Easter egg hunt, their first haunted house, their first team uniform, their first arts and crafts project, their first time being told that it’s ok to cry, and the list can go on.” The Boys & Girls Club, beyond a doubt, changes lives here at the JJC. It may not be immediate. It may be later in life when something triggers a memory from the Club. It may be a holiday they spent with us, a heart to heart moment with a staff member, a sports picture they took or a project they worked on, but they will remember the morals and values the club taught them, and it’s up to them to use them. We can teach them every



skill they will need to survive out of a textbook, but it’s the positive memories they make inside the Boys & Girls Club that will last a lifetime.



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Los Angeles County  
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For more information, please reach out to our admin support team:

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[cjoshi@studentnest.com](mailto:cjoshi@studentnest.com) (916) 505-3508

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# Alternative Education and Physical Education: A Winning Combination in Santa Cruz County

By Bradley King and Kristen Erickson  
Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Alternative education often conjures images of individualized learning and unconventional classrooms. However, in Santa Cruz County, a powerful connection is being forged between alternative learning and competitive athletics. The Monterey Bay Alternative Schools Athletics League (MBASAL), coupled with a dedicated PE program led by a specialist, is weaving physical education into the very fabric of these unique educational environments. This integration fosters not only physical fitness but also essential life skills like teamwork, resilience, and self-discipline, benefiting students both inside and outside the classroom.

## A Unique Physical Education Experience Across Sites

The **Physical Education program** is designed to be as unique as the students it serves. Each site features different facilities, but all students are given the opportunity to explore fitness, health, nutrition, anatomy, wellness, individual sports, and team sports. With a diverse approach, the PE program goes beyond just physical activity to teach students about taking care of their bodies, the importance of exercise, and how to maintain overall wellness.

“Students at Phoenix have greatly benefited from Brad King’s physical education class. My students are energetic 7th and 8th graders, and they eagerly look forward to their PE hour every week. It provides them a chance to exercise and build relationships with their peers outside the classroom. PE helps them calm down, and after an active hour, they are ready to focus on their academics like math, English, and science,” says Olivia Morrow, a middle school teacher.

The PE program also emphasizes the importance of understanding one’s own body. Students have learned about various body systems, such as the cardiovascular and muscular systems, and why they experience fatigue after exercise. Through these lessons, students gain an appreciation for physical health and recovery practices, learning how to stretch, warm up, and care for their growing bodies.

A High School teacher, Javier, expresses, “We have a PE program that is designed to allow students to spend 45 minutes of the school day doing moderate physical activity. The benefits include movement and introduction to new sports activities. It also promotes a fun and safe time to be active in a non-formal learning environment.”

## PE Teacher’s Role: A Supportive Resource for Teachers and Students

The PE teacher not only provides equipment and guidance during physical education but also assists other teachers who wish to incorporate fitness, health, and wellness into their classrooms. They help facilitate programs and provide support for those interested in coaching or encouraging students to engage in fitness activities outside of school.

Partnerships with local gyms like Watsonville CrossFit and Santa Cruz Power Fitness have been integral to the program’s success. These collaborations give students the opportunity to participate in group fitness,



functional training, and personal training sessions. These experiences have proven to be valuable, with noticeable improvements in attendance rates and classroom engagement. The PE program is more than just about sports – it’s about fostering overall well-being, which in turn strengthens students’ academic performance.

### **The Monterey Bay Alternative Schools Athletics League (MBASAL)**

The Monterey Bay Alternative Schools Athletics League (MBASAL) offers interscholastic sports opportunities for alternative school students across three counties on the Central Coast. The league promotes sportsmanship, safety, skill development, and character growth through competitive sports. MBASAL’s integration into the overall curriculum at each participating school is designed to motivate students to stay in school and make meaningful improvements in their academic and personal lives.

Bryan Love, Teacher of the Year in Santa Cruz County, shares, “Being part of competitive teams has a huge impact on our students. The bonds they build, the sportsmanship they learn, and the value of teamwork and perseverance are all crucial life lessons that help them grow.”

Coach Joe Ferguson-Sanchez adds, “The benefits of the Alternative Education Sports League are to make friends, build connections, and prove yourself in the game.”

Through the MBASAL program, students are given the opportunity to participate in seasonal sports that are in alignment with their academic calendar, making it a well-rounded experience. The common goal is to ensure that athletics support students’ academic and personal growth, while making the experience enriching for all involved.

Jasmin Evhevarria, a senior student, feels “Being part of the MBASAL has helped me grow not just as an athlete, but also as a person. I’ve learned valuable lessons in teamwork, discipline, and perseverance.”

### **PE and Team Sports: A Holistic Approach to Education**

Through the PE program and the MBASAL, students not only engage in physical education but also experience firsthand the benefits of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. This holistic approach helps them learn valuable life skills that extend far beyond the playing field. The PE program and sports leagues are an essential part of alternative education, allowing students to develop well-rounded skills that enhance their learning experience.

Coach Mike Powers emphasizes, “You’re learning all kinds of stuff about character building, which has nothing to do with sports, and more about actually learning about yourself. You also learn resilience, what it means to win and lose with grace, and deal with adversity while still keeping positive attitudes.”

Similarly, Juan Riegos, an 11th-grade student from Sequoia High School, reflects, “I think the sports league is very well organized, promotes good teamwork and helps you improve as an overall person.”

**The MBASAL season offerings include:**

**Q1 Fall:** Beach Volleyball (Co-Ed, Divisions I, II, III)

**Q2 Fall:** Flag Football (Co-Ed, Divisions I & II)

**Q3 Winter:** Basketball (Boys, Co-Ed)

**Q4 Spring:** Soccer (Co-Ed)

**Building Community Through PE and Sports**

The culmination of each sports season features "mix and match" games where students and coaches play together, further building community and camaraderie. For students from Star Community School, the experience of meeting players from other schools and working together in a friendly, competitive environment has proven to be a positive experience.

“It’s a great community builder,” says Mike Powers, a teacher at Star Community School. “Seeing educators from different schools interact in a friendly way, even through competition, fosters a strong sense of community among all involved.”

Isaac Fernandez, an 11th-grade student at Sequoia High School, shares, “I think the benefits as a player include being with friends, having fun, making new friends, and playing for the win too. You get closer with people in school that now you can count as your friends. Now we can get along with them inside and outside of school and I think it’s really fun to get to know more people.”

**A Winning Formula for Success**

As Brad King, the Physical Education teacher and Athletic Director of MBASAL, emphasizes, “Hard work, dedication, and a whole lot of love is the winning formula for any sport in the MBASAL!” says Junior Maldonado.

The PE program is not only about fitness – it’s about providing students with the skills they need to thrive academically, socially, and personally. For many students, it’s an experience that helps them realize that “it’s not about the wins, it’s about the experience.”

If you're interested in learning more or getting involved in the PE program and the MBASAL, please reach out to Brad King at [bking@santacruzcoe.org](mailto:bking@santacruzcoe.org)

“If you had fun then you won!”

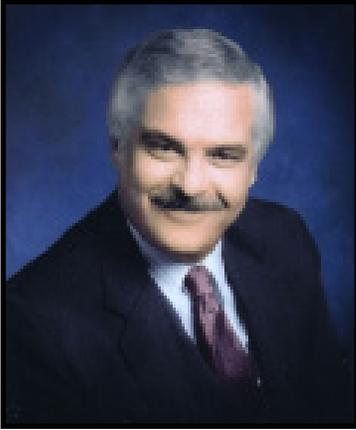




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# JOHN PESHKOFF AWARD



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

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

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

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 PESHKOFF AWARD RECIPIENT CHRISTIAN SHANNON KERN COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

It is a tremendous honor to receive the John Peshkoff Award—an award named after a true pioneer in our field and someone whose legacy continues to inspire all of us working in alternative education. John Peshkoff was more than a founder and a leader; he was a visionary who believed deeply in the power of second chances, in quality education for all students, and in the importance of lifting each other up along the way. To be recognized in his name is deeply humbling.

I've been privileged to serve with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS) for nearly 25 years, beginning in 2001 as an elementary teacher in the Alternative Education Program. My professional journey has taken me through a wide range of roles—English Learner Specialist, Coordinator of Curriculum and Special Projects, Principal at multiple Court & Community School sites, Director of Alternative Education, and Administrator of Support Services. Today, I serve as Deputy Superintendent of Operational Support. In each role, I've carried a deep belief that all students deserve high-quality, compassionate, and personalized education that equips them with the tools to self-determine their futures.

Participating in JCCASAC has been one of the foundational components of my career in education. I had the privilege of serving on the JCCASAC Board starting in 2011, and as Chair in 2016–17.



# JOHN PESHKOFF AWARD

Receiving this award is especially meaningful because of what it represents: memorable vision, service, leadership, and commitment to our students and programs. These are qualities I strive to embody, and they're the qualities that John Peshkoff modeled throughout his life. Like John, I've sought to be not just a leader, but also a mentor, an advocate, and a collaborator with my peers across the state. I'd like to thank two colleagues and past Peshkoff Award Recipients from Kern County, Dr. Ken Taylor (2009) and Jeanne Hughes (2013) who served JCCASAC with distinction for their leadership, mentorship and guidance.

Born and raised in Kern County, I earned my Bachelor of Arts from California State University, Bakersfield, my Teaching and Administrative Credential from the University of La Verne, and my Master of Science in Educational Administration from National University. My journey in education has always been deeply personal, shaped by seeing myself in the students we serve within Alternative Education, and driven by the desire to make a lasting impact on students who need and deserve our support the most.

Outside the office, I stay involved in my community, serving on the Board of the Downtown Business Association / Downtown Bakersfield Development Corporation, as a member of the Westchester Kiwanis Club, and with the Worship Leadership Team at Laurelglen Bible Church. Most importantly, I share this journey with my wife, Debby, and our growing family—our children and grandchildren—who are my constant source of strength and joy. I thank God for his infinite patience, provision, and faithfulness in my life.

The theme of this year's conference, "Love Leads to Legacy," could not be more fitting. Love has led me through every chapter of this work—from the classroom and into leadership. And if I've helped create even a small legacy that opens doors for students or lifts a fellow educator, then I consider that the greatest reward of all. Thank you for this incredible honor. I look forward to continuing this important work, side by side with all of you.



Image created with Ideogram

**Prompt:** An illustrative banner design celebrating an award, centered around "Congratulations 2025 Peshkoff Award Winner Christian Shannon". The text gracefully arcs across the banner in a bold, deep blue serif font, adorned with ornate gold flourishes resembling antique scrolls and intricately detailed laurel leaves that cascade from the top and sides, creating a luxurious border with a subtle texture reminiscent of aged parchment. The background is a deep indigo, softly illuminated by warm, inviting light emanating from the top left, gently highlighting the golden details and enhancing the banner's timeless and celebratory ambiance. This design evokes the formal atmosphere of an awards ceremony, lending a sense of prestige and accomplishment to the recognition.

# PREVIOUS JOHN PESHKOFF AWARD RECIPIENTS

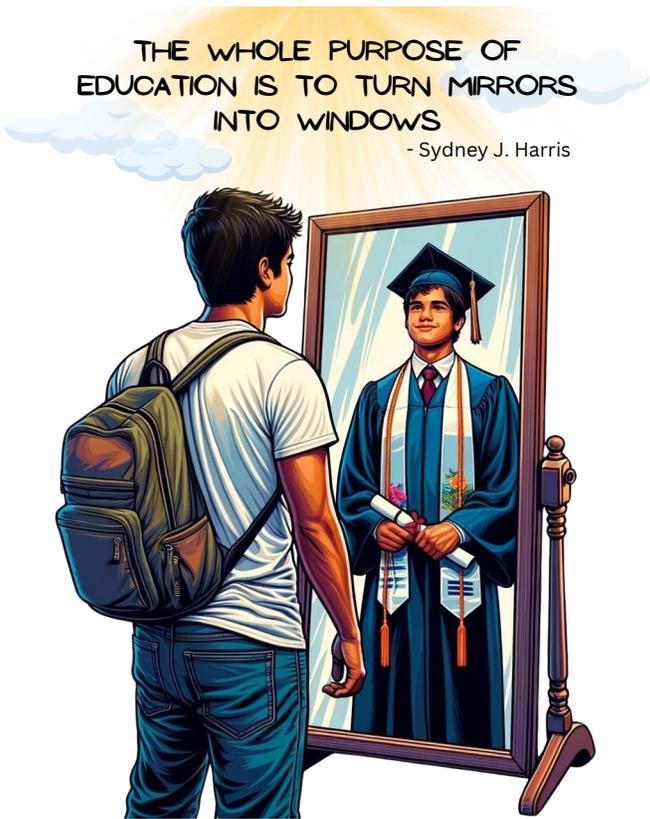
2007 Mary Louise Mack Sacramento	2007 Bob Michaels Santa Clara	2019 Talka Walser Stanislaus
2008 Janet Addo Orange	2008 Charles (Chuck) Lee San Diego	2021 Janine Kaeslin San Joaquin
2009 Ken Taylor Kern	2009 Bill Burns San Mateo	2022 Monalisa Vitela Imperial
2010 Dolores Redwin San Diego		2023 Wendy Frink San Joaquin
2011 Bianca Bloom Contra Costa		2024 Pam Coronado Fresno
2012 Gerry Riley Los Angeles		<p>THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO TURN MIRRORS INTO WINDOWS - Sydney J. Harris</p> 
2013 Jean Hughes Kern		
2014 Mary Lou Vachet Orange		
2015 Sandy Mast Santa Cruz		
2016 Jacqueline Flowers San Joaquin		
2017 Sean Morrill San Joaquin	2017 Michael Watkins Santa Cruz	
2018 Deni Baughn Orange		

Image created with ChatGPT 4.0

Prompt: high school student wearing t-shirt and jeans and nothing on their head looking into a mirror and seeing themselves wearing graduation cap and gown and holding a diploma; vector style; colorful

# HONORING JCCASAC PAST PRESIDENTS

1970 - 1971 Don Purdy Santa Clara	1981 - 1982 Joe De Mello Contra Costa	1992 - 1993 John Stankovich Kings	2003 - 2004 Jacqueline Flowers San Joaquin	2014 - 2015 Monalisa Vitela Imperial
1971 - 1972 Chuck Lee San Diego	1982 - 1983 Roy Savage Riverside	1993 - 1994 Bob Michels Santa Clara	2004 - 2005 Jeanne Dukes San Luis Obispo	2015 - 2016 Telka Walser Stanislaus
1972 - 1973 Doug Booth San Mateo	1983 - 1984 Ken Kammuller Marin	1994 - 1995 Larry Springer Los Angeles	2005 - 2006 Paula Mitchell Santa Clara	2016 - 2017 Christian Shannon Kern
1973 - 1974 Joe De Mello Contra Costa	1984 - 1985 Wayne Toscas Santa Barbara	1995 - 1996 Claudette Inge Alameda	2006 - 2007 Maruta Gardner San Diego	2017 - 2018 Wendy Frink San Joaquin
1974-1975 Marshall Lomax Los Angeles	1985 - 1986 Greg Almand Contra Costa	1996 - 1997 Ken Taylor Kern	2007 - 2008 Peter Kostas Mendocino	2018 - 2019 Katy Ramezani, Ed.D. Orange
1975 - 1976 John Hull Sacramento	1986 - 1987 Hedy Kirsh Orange	1997 - 1998 Mick Founts San Joaquin	2008 - 2009 Mary Lou Vachet Orange	2019 - 2020 Pam Coronado Fresno
1976 - 1977 Rocco Nobile San Diego	1987 - 1988 Shirl Schmidt Shasta	1998 - 1999 Dolores Redwine San Diego	2009 - 2010 Mary Bell Sacramento	2020 - 2021 Pam Coronado Fresno
1977 - 1978 John Peshkoff Santa Clara	1988 - 1989 Chuck Lee San Diego	1999 - 2000 Vic Trucco Sonoma	2010 - 2011 Sean Morrill San Diego	2021 - 2022 Jason Hasty, Ed.D. Los Angeles and Johnny Rice Santa Cruz
1978 - 1979 Jerry Matney Orange	1989 - 1990 William Burns San Mateo	2000 - 2001 Janet Addo Los Angeles	2011 - 2012 Janine Cuaresma San Joaquin	2022 - 2023 Johnny Rice Santa Cruz
1979 - 1980 Miltie Couteur Butte	1990 - 1991 John Peshkoff Orange	2001 - 2002 Michael Watkins Santa Cruz	2012 - 2013 Deni Baughn Orange	2023 - 2024 Joanne L. Finney San Diego
1980 - 1981 Marty Familletti Riverside	1991 - 1992 Orene Hopkins Contra Costa	2002 - 2003 Jeanne Hughes Kern	2013 - 2014 Gary Vincent Monterey	2024 - 2025 Mark Yost San Joaquin

# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 - 2025 JCCASAC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

## ABOUT THE JCCASAC SCHOLARSHIP:

Twice a year, the Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative Schools Administrators of California (JCCASAC) offers scholarships to Court and Community School graduates who will be attending college or have passed the GED within the 2024-2025 school year. The scholarship is intended to pay for tuition and/or books up to \$500. Two scholarships are awarded in the Southern section and two in the Northern section each January and June. Each county may submit two applications per semester (for a total of four in a year).

**J. Martinez**  
Contra Costa

**C. Luquin-Jimenez**  
Monterey

**P. Verdugo**  
Butte

**S. Jenkins**  
Monterey

**A. Colmenares Cacho**  
Orange

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Tulare

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# PAST SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

2009 - 2010 Y. Martinez San Bernardino	2010 - 2011 A. Barahona Orange	2012 - 2013 A. Meier San Joaquin	2013 - 2014 M. Sanchez Kern	2015 - 2016 N. Ibañez San Joaquin
2009 - 2010 R. Rea San Bernardino	2010 - 2011 K. Osuji San Joaquin	2012 - 2013 R. Martinez-Ramires Santa Cruz	2014 - 2015 R. Elis San Joaquin	2015 - 2016 J. Casillas Monterey
2009 - 2010 C. Willard San Joaquin	2010 - 2011 C. Shelton San Joaquin	2012 - 2013 R. Astudillo Orange	2014 - 2015 S. Gonzalez Ventura	2016 - 2017 R. Brown Stanislaus
2009 - 2010 F. Alejandres San Bernardino	2010 - 2011 J. Perez San Joaquin	2012 - 2013 R. Astudillo Orange	2014 - 2015 I. Villalobos Stanislaus	2016 - 2017 J. Straughen Stanislaus
2009 - 2010 E. Santos-Lawas San Joaquin	2011 - 2012 F. Vilifana San Diego	2013 - 2014 J.D. Cordier Contra Costa	2014 - 2015 H. Johnson San Luis Obispo	2016 - 2017 J. Nicolette-Burr Nevada
2009 - 2010 J. Elkins Sacramento	2011 - 2012 D. Perce Merced	2013 - 2014 M. Mackey Mendocino	2015 - 2016 J. Elwel Los Angeles	2016 - 2017 M. Montgomery Mono
2009 - 2010 T. White San Joaquin	2011 - 2012 D. Stone San Luis Obispo	2013 - 2014 D. Thornbrugh Santa Cruz	2015 - 2016 A. Medina Los Angeles	2016 - 2017 J. Romero San Diego
2009 - 2010 J. Hernandez San Bernardino	2011 - 2012 A. Guzman Monterey	2013 - 2014 R. Turner Napa	2015 - 2016 T. Stone Kern	2016 - 2017 D. Lopez Los Angeles
2009 - 2010 S. Viliquette San Joaquin	2011 - 2012 S. Francis San Luis Obispo	2013 - 2014 A. Hayworth San Luis Obispo	2015 - 2016 N. Jones Kern	2016 - 2017 J. Padilla Kern
2009 - 2010 J.L. Figueroa San Bernardino	2011 - 2012 J. Patrick San Bernardino	2013 - 2014 B. Lazoya Kern	2015 - 2016 J. Erbe-Reyes Santa Cruz	2016 - 2017 M. Zermeno Los Angeles
2010 - 2011 Y. Orduno San Joaquin	2011 - 2012 K. Kaur Kandola San Joaquin	2013 - 2014 S. Moss Orange	2015 - 2016 A. Leonard Santa Cruz	2017 - 2018 D. Orlando Merida Monterey

2017 - 2018  
V. Avila Guerra  
Monterey

2018 - 2019  
M. Sandoval  
San Joaquin

2022 - 2023  
R. Vasquez  
Imperial

2017 - 2018  
G. Perez  
Orange

2018 - 2019  
M. Ybarra  
San Joaquin

2024 - 2025  
V. Sillanueva  
Stanislaus

2017 - 2018  
M. Tran  
San Diego

2018 - 2019  
A. Vasquez  
San Diego

2024 - 2025  
J. Zanders-Davis  
Shasta

2017 - 2018  
H. Baumer  
Orange

2018 - 2019  
J. Alvarez  
San Diego

2024 - 2025  
E. Gisselle Mendez  
Imperial

2017 - 2018  
G. Pott  
Los Angeles

2022 - 2023  
A. Dominguez  
San Joaquin

2024 - 2025  
J. Prado Garcia  
San Diego

2017 - 2018  
N. Aguillon-Palermo  
Monterey

2022 - 2023  
B. Humanes  
Imperial

2024 - 2025  
C. Prado  
San Diego

2017 - 2018  
F. M. Soto  
Placer

2022 - 2023  
S. K. Amador  
San Diego

2025 - 2025  
M. Magdaleno  
San Joaquin

2018 - 2019  
D. Grant  
San Francisco

2022 - 2023  
J. Vega  
Riverside

2024 - 2025  
A. Rahman Gawusu  
San Diego

2018 - 2019  
D. Rodriguez  
Stanislaus

2022 - 2023  
J. Williams  
San Francisco

2024 - 2025  
M. Escobar  
San Diego

2018 - 2019  
Silvestre Viga  
Kern

2022 - 2023  
N. Oliveras  
Santa Clara

2018 - 2019  
A. Rubio  
San Diego

2022 - 2023  
A. Alora  
Kern

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# JCCASAC Teacher of the Year - 2025

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

## Congratulations to Tim Allison Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

The Fresno County Superintendent of Schools is honored to celebrate Mr. Tim Allison as the 2025 JCCASAC Teacher of the Year. As a History and English instructor at Alice M. Worsley School, located at the Fresno County Juvenile Justice Campus, Mr. Allison has devoted over 35 years to shaping the lives of incarcerated youth. He is more than just a teacher, he is a mentor, a guide, and a constant source of hope for students who have often been given up on by society.

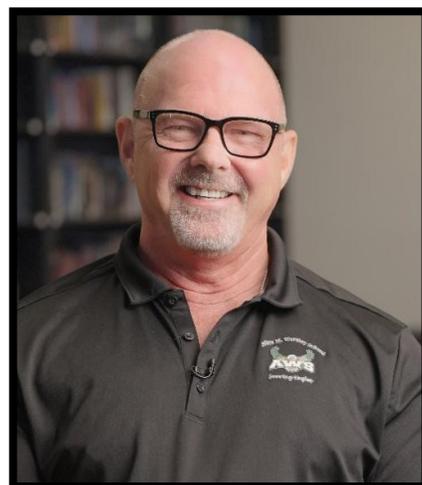
Mr. Allison's work has always gone far beyond the classroom. His colleagues, students, and administrators consistently highlight his unmatched ability to connect with youth on a deeply personal level. A former student, who earned his high school diploma while incarcerated, wrote:

*"Mr. Allison is so much more than a teacher. He's a mentor, a role model, and an unwavering source of support... His trust in me made me believe in myself."*

That sentiment is echoed by a colleague who shared:

*"It is rare to find someone with such unwavering commitment to both academic excellence and personal growth for those in his care... His influence on their success is immeasurable and cannot be overstated."*

Tim's work is grounded in empathy, respect, and belief in each



student's potential. Having come from similar beginnings, he brings a unique authenticity to his role. His career includes 31 years of service in the high-security unit, including time spent at a juvenile boot camp, and a tireless focus on building both academic and life skills. His classroom is a space of safety and structure where students learn not only English and History, but how to be accountable, reflective, and resilient.

Tim experienced a powerful moment at recent graduation when the keynote speaker, now a father, husband, and successful business owner, shared how a teacher had changed his life while he was incarcerated. Unbeknownst to the speaker, that teacher, Tim Allison was in the audience that day. The heartfelt reunion afterward was as moving as the graduation itself and reflected the lifelong impact Tim continues to have.

His colleagues describe him as the kind of teacher they would want for their own children: firm, compassionate, honest, and consistently present. He teaches students that, despite their backgrounds or affiliations, they are more alike than different and that together, they are a team. In his classroom, every student feels valued, seen, and challenged.

Beyond school walls, Tim has dedicated himself to advocacy and service, contributing to organizations such as Hope Now for Youth, Free Mom Hugs, GLAAD, The Trevor Project, The Human Rights Watch, and the ACLU. He was recognized with the 2024 Fresno County Community Hero Award for his dedication to both education and social justice.

In every measure, character, commitment, and classroom excellence, Tim Allison exemplifies the spirit of the JCCASAC Teacher of the Year. His story is one of transformation, not only of students but of education itself. While we honor his decades of service, we also celebrate the future he's helped shape for so many.

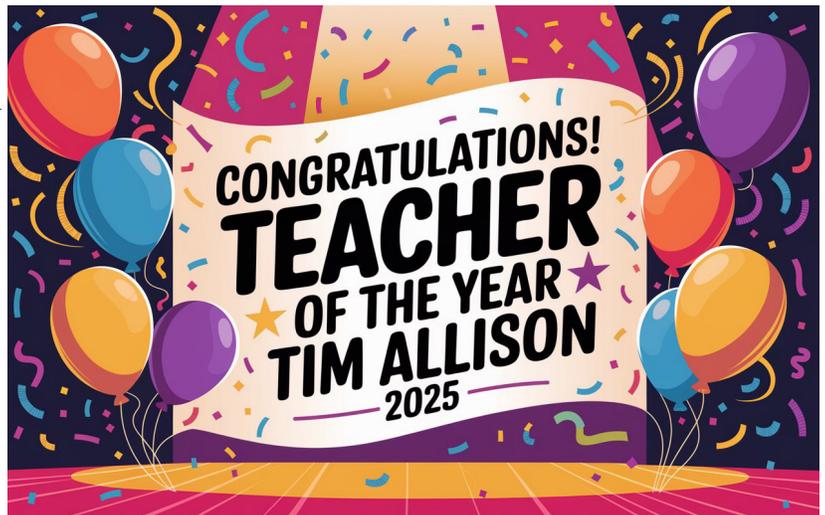


Image created with Ideogram

*Prompt: A vibrant and festive illustration featuring a large, eye-catching banner. The banner is adorned with the words "Congratulations Teacher of the Year 2025 Tim Allison" in bold, colorful letters. The design incorporates a celebratory background with confetti, balloons, and streamers in a variety of vivid colors. The overall atmosphere is joyful and triumphant, perfect for honoring an outstanding educator, illustration*

# JCCASAC Teacher of the Year-Nominees

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES!



**Edward Martinez**  
SAI Teacher  
Riverside



**Eva De Lucia Zeltzer**  
Program/Intervention Teacher  
Contra Costa



**Amanda Duke**  
Teacher  
Kern



**Anders Benoit**  
Teacher  
Shasta



**Ty Kastendiek**  
Teacher  
Los Angeles



**Cathy Garcia**  
Education Specialist  
San Diego



**Shannon Erickson**  
Independent Studies Teacher  
Merced



**Dallas Ipach**  
Community School Teacher  
Ventura



**John Van Huystee**  
Teacher-ROP: Construction &  
Green Energy CTE Instructor  
San Joaquin



**Michele Delibery**  
Teacher  
Santa Cruz



**John Charlton**  
Teacher  
Orange



**Ferrari Green**  
Teacher  
San Bernardino

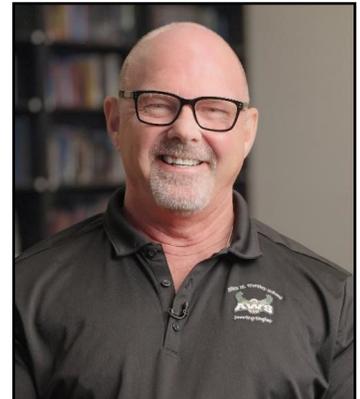
Juvenile Court, Community, and Alternative School Administrators of California



**Scott Davis**  
Teacher  
Monterey



**Elizabeth Medlyn**  
Instructional Specialist  
(Teacher)  
El Dorado



**Tim Allison**  
Court Schools Teacher  
Fresno



Image created with Ideogram

**Prompt:** A large, vibrant banner reading "Congratulations Teacher of the Year Nominees" hangs prominently against a backdrop of a lively celebration. The illustration captures a joyful scene with balloons, streamers, and confetti scattered around, exuding warmth and excitement. Soft, golden lighting bathes the scene, highlighting the celebratory atmosphere and making the moment feel truly special

# The Aspen Challenge at SOAR YTC

JUVENILE COURT AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, SAN DIEGO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Students at San Diego SOAR Academy, which serves incarcerated youth, developed an incentivized attendance program to help Monarch School combat chronic absenteeism as part of their participation in the Aspen Challenge.

In the Aspen Challenge, high school students use their imagination, enthusiasm, competitive spirit, and sense of global citizenship to solve some of society's toughest problems. Homelessness was one of the problems they could choose to address.

“All of our students have experience with either being homeless themselves, or knowing someone who has. They all recognized the importance of attending school, especially now in this stage of their lives,” said Mimi Seney, JCCS instructional coach. Seney, teachers Isaiah Giddings and Ray Mallard, and Probation Officer Rashad Johnson, facilitated the process for students.

Students worked together for 10 weeks to develop their plan and presentation. During the process, they decided on a team captain and created a team charter, which included their method of how decisions would be made and division of responsibilities and tasks.

The solution for Monarch School was a program called Champion Scholars. It involved awarding students raffle tickets for perfect attendance, which could then be used to enter a drawing for four gift cards or a Nintendo Switch bundle. All students who improved their attendance participated in an ice cream party.

The program was in place for four weeks and 203 students had at least one perfect week of attendance, while 54 students had four weeks of perfect attendance. In total, the school saw increases in attendance of 8.6% at the lower grades and 38.3% in grades 9 through 12.

SOAR students expressed interest in seeing the model continue at Monarch School or be replicated in other schools that experience similar attendance issues.

Giddings shared the students felt this opportunity gave them a chance to prove they could do anything if they worked together.

“They were proud of what they accomplished, especially considering all of the limitations they had,” Giddings shared. “They also felt proud that they were able to be responsible and demonstrate their character, given the circumstances and their past choices.”

SOAR Academy was one of 20 high schools to participate alongside schools in the San Diego Unified School District.

The challenge is put on every year by the Aspen Institute and the Bezos Family Foundation, which partner with a new city each year.





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# The Impact of Community Partnerships: Celebrating Student Voice Through the Arts

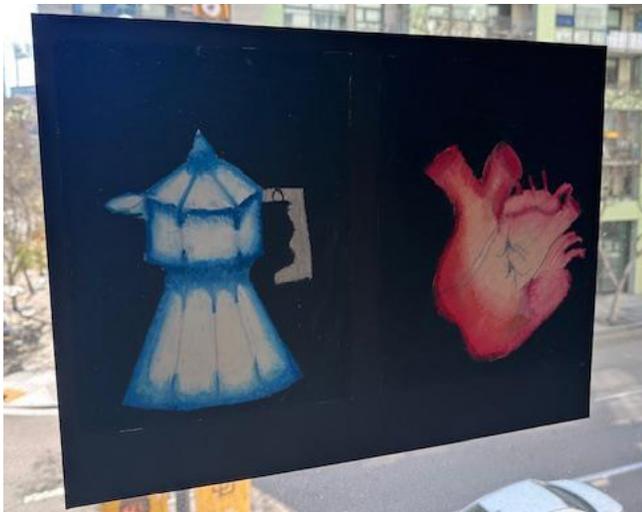
By Amanda Wallace, Visual and Performing Arts Technician, Juvenile Court and Community Schools San Diego County Office of Education

At the center of strong communities are the partnerships that make meaningful opportunities possible. This spring, the San Diego Central Library will host an art exhibition featuring the work of students from San Diego County Office of Education Juvenile Court and Community Schools (SDCOE JCCS) Youth Transition Campus (YTC) SOAR Academy in collaboration with Combat Arts, an organization founded and led by artist Elizabeth Washburn, which is dedicated to engaging justice-impacted youth through creative expression. This event is an illustration of the power of collaboration between schools, probation, arts nonprofits, and community hubs in creating spaces where students feel valued and supported. By working together, our partners are ensuring that students, many of whom have faced significant challenges, have the chance to share their voices, be seen, heard, and celebrated.

The success of this exhibition is rooted in the synergy between YTC SOAR Academy, The County of San Diego Probation Department, Combat Arts, and the San Diego Central Library—each playing a vital role in ensuring students have access to meaningful, high-quality arts opportunities. At YTC SOAR Academy, arts education is a fundamental tool for student engagement and personal growth. Combat

Arts, with its mission-focused commitment to working with trauma impacted youth, provides the creative guidance and mentorship that allows students to explore their identities, process their experiences, and develop technical artistic skills. In addition, the support of probation is critical, as their willingness to collaborate ensures that select student artists can attend and experience the impact of seeing their work publicly displayed. Finally, the library's role as a host and partner highlights the importance of community spaces in amplifying student voices and providing a public platform that recognizes their talents and perspectives.

For many students at YTC SOAR Academy, traditional academic settings have not always fostered a sense of belonging or success. Elizabeth Washburn's Combat Arts bridges this gap by offering a creative outlet where students can express themselves, develop new skills, and gain confidence in their abilities. Through hands-on instruction in drawing, painting, and mixed media, students are encouraged to explore themes of identity, resilience, and transformation. The impact of this work extends far beyond the classroom, when given the space and opportunity to flourish. Seeing their artwork displayed in a public space like the San Diego Central Library reinforces that their voices matter and that their stories are worth telling. Elizabeth Washburn's dedication to YTC JCCS is palpable, she shared, "We harness the transformative power of the arts to support marginalized and trauma-impacted youth and veterans, helping them express themselves, find therapeutic relief, and navigate the challenges they face due to illness, injury, violence, neglect, and exclusion. Our programs are designed to serve diverse audiences, promoting inclusion and equity for all disabilities, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and genders. Art is a deeply therapeutic practice that requires no special skills—only access to opportunities for creative engagement. Through our program, we empower individuals to use art-making



as a tool for play, independence, and stress management." Combat Arts exemplifies the success of arts partners actively supporting the students they serve.

A key factor in making this exhibition possible is JCCS's partnership with San Diego County Probation's Mike L. Whatley, Division Chief of Youth Transition Campus. Division Chief Whatley is a stalwart supporter of JCCS arts, and who has worked alongside YTC SOAR Academy and Combat Arts to support student participation. For justice-impacted youth, access to opportunities outside of school is often limited, making this collaboration especially significant. By allowing a select group of student artists to attend the exhibition, probation is not only recognizing the value of arts education but also reinforcing the idea that students deserve to be celebrated for their creativity and hard work. This level of support helps shift the narrative around justice-impacted youth—highlighting their talents, resilience, and potential rather than focusing solely on their past challenges. Division Chief Whatley's unwavering support of JCCS's arts programs has been pivotal. Beyond this event, probation has been an instrumental partner in expanding arts education opportunities for students at YTC SOAR Academy. Through their collaboration with JCCS and arts organizations, they have helped bring programs in music, photography, and digital music production to students who might not otherwise have access. These creative outlets provide students with alternative pathways for self-expression and skill development, fostering personal growth while also offering potential career and educational opportunities. When students see that probation leadership, officers,

educators, and community leaders are invested in their success, it fosters a sense of accountability, encouragement, and hope for their future beyond their time at the Youth Transition Campus.

At YTC SOAR Academy, arts education is an essential component of student engagement and personal growth. The school's leadership team has been steadfast in ensuring that arts programs remain a priority, recognizing their profound impact on students' academic and emotional well-being. Principal Joanne Finney, Executive Director Roberto Carrillo, Senior Director Dyane Plumly, Executive Director for Special Education Cara Schukoske, and Director Leilah Kirkendoll have played a pivotal

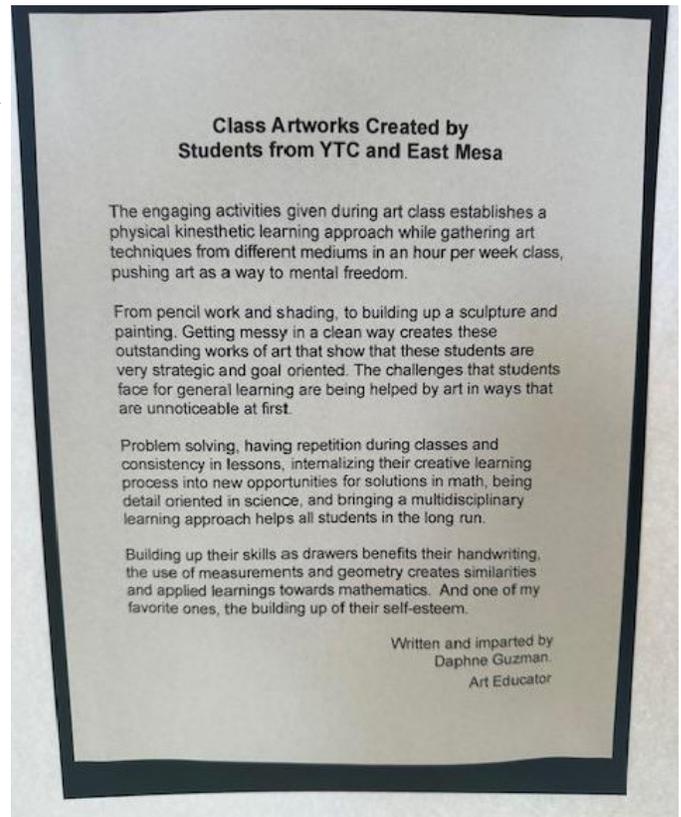
**"Seeing their artwork displayed in a public space like the San Diego Central Library reinforces that their voices matter and that their stories are worth telling."**

role in creating space within our classrooms and curriculum that integrates and celebrates the arts, ensuring that students have meaningful opportunities for creative expression. JCCS's commitment to arts education is deeply rooted in student and community feedback. By listening to student voices and incorporating input from

families and community members via the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and Community School Forums, the arts have remained a vital component in student success. With this input, we have continued to grow our arts programming, ensuring that students have access to visual arts, music, photography, digital music production, and more. Additionally, Stephanie Johnston Austin, JCCS's CCSPP Grant Manager, whose support of community schools and families has been invaluable, as well as the efforts of the Student and Family Engagement team have also contributed significantly to creating a school culture that connects students with the resources they need to thrive. Without the unwavering support of this leadership team, these programs—and the transformative experiences

they provide—would not be possible. Their collective efforts demonstrate a clear understanding of how the arts can serve as a vehicle for student empowerment, personal expression, and future success.

The role of the San Diego Central Library in this collaboration cannot be overstated. By providing a public space for the art exhibition, the San Diego Central Library not only serves as a venue for showcasing student work, but also acts as a crucial partner in amplifying student voices. For many of these students, who have historically expressed feeling disconnected from their educational outcomes, the opportunity to have their art displayed in a community space is both a validation of their talents and an affirmation of their worth. The San Diego Central Library's partnership, led by Cassarah Coffey, Manager of the Pauline Foster Teen Center at the San Diego Central Library @ Joan A Irwin Jacobs Common, underscores the importance of public spaces in making students feel seen and heard by the broader community. The San Diego Central Library's commitment to engaging local youth through art exhibitions creates and develops a sense of pride and ownership in the students' work. It helps them understand that their contributions have meaning beyond the spaces they are in, and can be impactful to their own communities.



The collaboration between Combat Arts, JCCS SOAR Academy, San Diego County Probation, and the San



Diego Central Library has shown that when community arts organizations, educators, and community based institutions come together, the impact on students is profound and lasting. As we look to the future, we must continue to strengthen these partnerships and create more opportunities for youth to explore their creativity and voice within the communities they live and beyond. Through the power of the arts, we are helping students not only to transform their lives but also to inspire the communities around them.

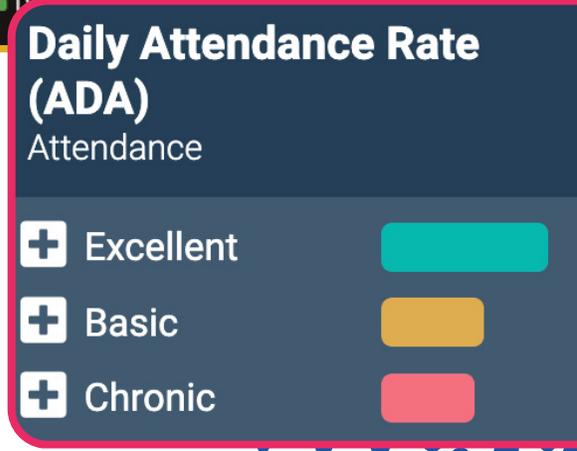
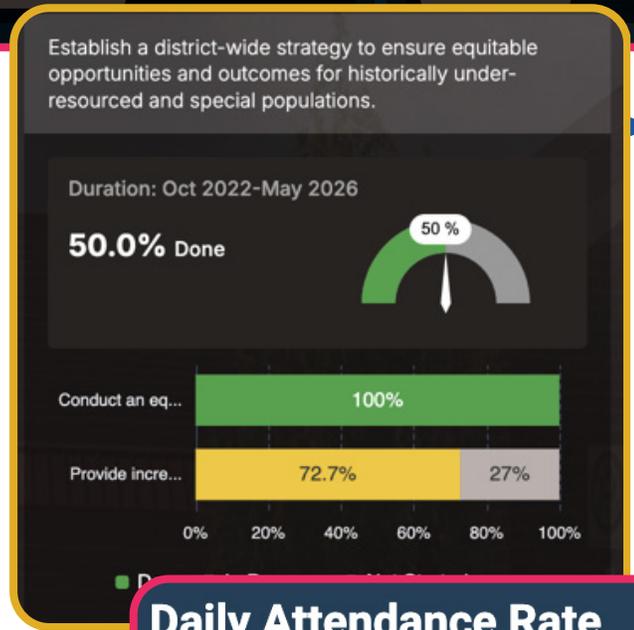
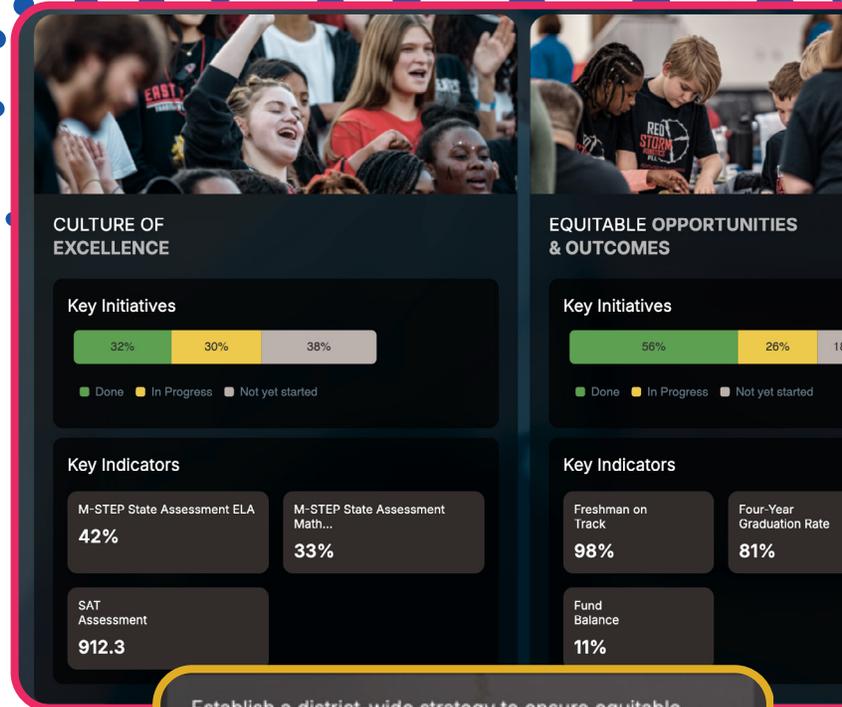
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you read, the  
more things  
you will know.  
The more that  
you  
learn,  
the more  
places  
you’ll go.”  
-Dr. Seuss**

Image created with Adobe Firefly

Prompt: the science of reading; teen sitting under a tree excited to be reading a book; background is out of focus; bright sunny day; vector style; leave room for text on the left

# JCCASAC JOURNAL

## Call For Papers



We invite you to submit original articles, research papers, and student/program success stories related to:  
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### CRITERIA

-  Write with administrators in mind as your audience.
-  Integrate research-based management, instructional theory, and practical field experience for a comprehensive approach.
-  Ensure submissions are outcome-driven rather than proposal-oriented. Employ an active voice throughout, utilizing third person as much as possible, and incorporating first person only when it enhances the reader's experience.
-  If the submission was previously printed, include permission to reprint.
-  Incorporate a brief, twenty-five words or fewer, biographical overview of the writer.

### ARTICLE FORMAT

-  Single-spaced Word document or Google Doc, Times New Roman 12-point font.  
***\*If you are submitting using Google Docs, kindly ensure that you share your document with the designated contact person mentioned below.***
-  Embed any charts, figures, pictures, or tables as a PDF at the relevant positions.
-  There is no page limit to the length of the article.
-  The title should be directly related to the essence of the article. Please also include a running title for subsequent pages.
-  Please provide the author's name(s) and county office as it should appear in the journal. Include all authors and their academic titles as necessary.
-  Please provide a photo of each of the authors to be published in the journal.
-  Please provide reference page in APA format.
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# WAVES of Change: Trauma-Informed Artmaking as a Pathway to Healing for At-Promise Youth

By Amy Bultena, Director of Arts, Stanislaus County Office of Education

## The Crisis and the Call

Across California, a significant number of the students entering alternative education and juvenile justice systems are carrying the heavy weight of trauma. These students, who are often labeled as "at-promise," are not broken or irredeemable. They are children navigating extraordinary challenges: unstable housing, systemic poverty, substance abuse, mental health conditions, and the aftershocks of childhood abuse, violence and neglect. For them, school is often one of the most consistent, structured, and "safe" environments. Yet, while many educational programs offer support to at-promise youth, few are intentionally designed to address the specific impacts of trauma.

National data reveals that 70-90% of youth involved in the juvenile justice system have experienced traumatic events, often multiple times, with many exhibiting symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation (Arroyo, 2001, Branson et al., 2017, Development Services Group, 2017, Ezell et al., 2018). Despite this reality, fewer than



10% of public juvenile justice organizations offer programs specifically designed to address trauma (Ezell et al., 2018). This

glaring gap between what students carry and what schools are equipped to offer demands creative, human-centered solutions that restore dignity and hope.

## Trauma and At-Promise Youth

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system face a disproportionate burden of trauma. While more than two-thirds of American students report experiencing at least one traumatic event before age 16, that number rises to 70-90% among justice-involved youth (Arroyo, 2001, Branson et al., 2017, SAMHSA, 2022). These children experience, on average, five distinct types of trauma, including physical abuse, emotional neglect, community violence, and traumatic loss (Listenbee et al., 2012). The impact of this trauma is not only psychological but also physiological, disrupting the development of the brain's prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making and emotional regulation, and altering immune and stress responses, often permanently (Flannery, 2017). Youth experiencing incarceration are nearly three times more likely to suffer from PTSD than the general child population and are significantly more likely to have mental health and substance use disorders (Development Services Group, 2017, Form et al., 2007, U.S. Department of Justice, 2023). Yet, fewer than 10% of public juvenile justice organizations offer programs specifically designed to address these substantial traumas (Ezell et al., 2018). Addressing the impact of trauma is not optional; it is essential for any program aiming to engage, educate, and empower at-promise youth.

## Trauma-Informed Care in Education

Trauma-informed care is an approach rooted in understanding how trauma impacts behavior, learning, and relationships. Rather than asking "What's wrong with you?" trauma-informed educators ask, "What happened to you?" This mindset shift reframes student behavior as

communication and emphasizes emotional safety, trust, choice, and empowerment. In trauma-informed learning environments, educators intentionally reduce triggers, use consistent routines, explain the “why” behind decisions, and view dysregulation through a lens of compassion. These practices are especially vital for students whose nervous systems are stuck in survival mode, often becoming hypervigilant, withdrawn, or reactive due to prolonged exposure to stress and threat.

It is not uncommon to hear the question, “Don’t these kids know right from wrong?” when discussing the behavior of at-risk youth. In truth, most do. However, the reality is that when individuals (especially those with significant trauma histories) are functioning in survival mode, they are nearly neurologically incapable of accessing the parts of the brain responsible for moral reasoning and self-regulation. Survival mode, characterized by the body’s instinctive fight, flight, or freeze response, prioritizes immediate safety over long-term consequences. In these heightened states of stress, behavior is governed not by values or reflection, but by primal, protective instincts. Therefore, when a student who has experienced chronic trauma exhibits dysregulated or challenging behavior, it is often not a conscious choice to “do wrong,” but rather a neurobiological response to perceived threat.

Understanding this distinction is critical to



**Emotions:**  
Sadness, Anxiety, Fear, & Love

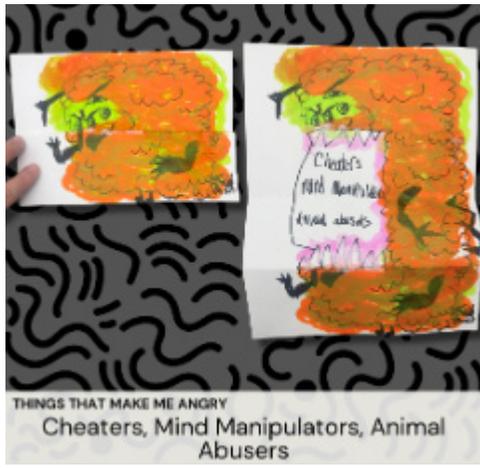
developing compassionate, effective, and trauma-informed approaches to student support.

Importantly, trauma-informed care benefits all students, not just those with known trauma histories. Its principles align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), making school environments more emotionally accessible and inclusive for everyone. Despite growing visibility around trauma-informed care, many educators report confusion about how to implement trauma-informed practices. Research shows that training for educators providing services to at-risk youth often focuses on managing disruptive behavior, rather than understanding the root causes (Quinn, 2021). This underscores the need for accessible, actionable tools that help educators integrate trauma-informed care into their daily practice.

### **What is Trauma-Informed Artmaking?**

Trauma-informed artmaking is a process-oriented approach to creativity that supports emotional regulation, healing, and resilience, particularly for individuals who have experienced trauma. It differs from traditional art education in both intention and structure. Rather than focusing on technical skill, aesthetics, or critique, trauma-informed artmaking is grounded in accessibility, agency, and emotional safety. It invites participants to explore the act of creation without fear, judgment, or the pressure to produce a "successful" final product.

One of the defining features of trauma-informed artmaking is that it is accessible to everyone, regardless of talent or prior experience. In trauma-informed artmaking, there are no wrong answers, no "bad" art, and no expectation for the art to look a certain way.



Instead, the focus is on what happens during the process: the slowing down, the exploration, the release of emotions through line, texture, or

color. It is in this act of mark-making that healing begins.

For example, in a WAVES lesson titled Anger Monsters, students explore the concept of anger and where they feel it in their bodies before creating a playful, fold-out creature designed to “gobble up” those feelings. In another lesson, My Shape and Color Journey, students use abstract shapes and colors to represent events from their past, present, and future, constructing a personal visual narrative of their life. In both cases, students are not asked to “perform” or demonstrate skill, but are instead invited to reflect, explore, and express themselves in ways that feel safe and authentic.

For at-risk youth, many of whom have been judged, stigmatized, or silenced in other areas of life, trauma-informed artmaking offers a rare opportunity for safe self-expression. It is not about performing or impressing. It is about being. It unbinds participants from perfectionism and gives them permission to simply explore. This shift from outcome to process makes artmaking both more inclusive and more emotionally resonant. As one student shared, “I don’t know what my art’s supposed to be. I’m just working

through some stuff.”

### Why Artmaking Works

The science behind artmaking as a healing practice is well established. Visual art enhances emotional regulation, builds coping skills, improves quality of life, and reduces mental distress (Magsamen & Ross, 2023, Malchiodi, 2006). Physiologically, it increases serotonin, reduces cortisol, and activates the same brain wave patterns found in meditation and/or prayer (Belkofer et al., 2014, Carsley & Heath, 2018, Griffith & Bingham, 2020, Kay & Losel, 2018). For youth whose nervous systems are chronically dysregulated due to trauma, these effects can be profound. Art also re-engages regions of the brain that are disrupted by trauma, specifically those associated with language, memory, and executive function (Kay & Losel, 2018, Wolf & Rattigan, 2024). This neurological reactivation supports students in developing verbal processing skills and emotional vocabulary (Kaimal et al., 2017). Additionally, artmaking fosters a sense of control and mastery, especially when students are given choice. This autonomy, paired with nonjudgmental creative exploration, helps students build self-efficacy and confidence. In many ways, art invites students to become co-authors of their own healing.

### WAVES: A Curriculum Designed for Healing

The Stanislaus County Office of Education developed WAVES in response to the clear need for trauma-informed, SEL-focused programming tailored to at-risk youth. The curriculum was designed to offer accessible, meaningful opportunities for emotional expression and healing within the very school settings where such support is often missing.



highly structured settings.

The WAVES curriculum includes 35 trauma-informed art lessons, each about 60 minutes in length. Every lesson is aligned with California Arts Standards and CASEL's five core SEL competencies, integrating contemporary art and culturally relevant pedagogy to make learning accessible and relevant for diverse student populations. The curriculum emphasizes student choice, sensory-safe materials, and a predictable structure to promote regulation. Importantly, WAVES was designed so that any educator or counselor can implement it, regardless of prior art experience. WAVES provides both the structure and the freedom for students to reconnect with themselves through the creative process.

### **WAVES Implementation at Stanislaus County Juvenile Hall**

Over the past two school years, WAVES has been implemented bi-weekly at Stanislaus County Juvenile Hall. Sessions are facilitated in secure spaces and follow all facility regulations regarding materials and supervision. Students complete a short mood self-assessment before and after each session, allowing for consistent data collection on emotional

Recognizing the lack of creative outlets in alternative education and juvenile justice environments, Stanislaus COE created WAVES to reintegrate artmaking into these spaces in a way that is both practical and impactful, even in

impact. Participation is voluntary, and the program has maintained high levels of engagement, even among students with significant behavioral challenges.

The setting is highly restrictive, with many students experiencing limited movement, minimal sensory stimulation, and few opportunities for emotional expression. Within this environment, WAVES offers a rare and meaningful outlet for creativity, choice, and calm. Artmaking becomes more than an academic activity, it becomes a lifeline. As one student shared, "Making art distracts your mind. You're not really thinking about being here at juvie; you're focusing on making art." Another added, "It makes me a lil bit happy to do art," while a third reflected, "It makes me feel less lonely. It really does."

These reflections reveal the emotional resonance of the program. One student remarked, "This art chilled me out. I was mad, but this helped me calm down." Another shared, "I know people think I picked the chains 'cause we're locked up, but it's not about that. It's like how we have chains sometimes inside of us, keeping us back." The program's structure, materials, and trauma-informed approach have proven both feasible and deeply impactful in a juvenile justice setting. As one student put it, "Other juvies should try this out. It gives you somewhere where you can get feelings out and not get in trouble."



## Evidence of Impact

WAVES has collected robust data from the 23-24 and 24-25 school years. This data includes 827 students and 48 trauma-informed artmaking sessions at Stanislaus County Juvenile Hall. Students completed mood self-assessments using a Likert-style emoji scale before and after each lesson. Statistical analysis using a paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of artmaking on students' mood. The analysis revealed a statistically significant improvement in mood following the artmaking intervention,  $t(827) = 8.534, p < .00001$ . This substantial t-value, paired with the extremely low p-value, indicates a robust effect. These findings suggest that the trauma-informed artmaking sessions are having a significant positive impact on students' emotional well-being. The mean difference in mood scores before and after artmaking was large, confirming the effectiveness of this intervention within a juvenile justice educational setting.



These findings align with qualitative feedback gathered from student reflections. One student explained, “I like this art. It helps me get my feelings out...it means these feelings aren’t all up inside me anymore.” Another said, “When we get to make art, it’s like Christmas. You have to go slowly to make the art time last.” The combined quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the effectiveness of trauma-informed artmaking as both a behavioral

intervention and a tool for emotional growth. A student summed it up plainly: “I feel good when I make art.” Another added, “If I could tell other people about this, I’d say, ‘pay attention; it’s more than just art.’ It teaches us how to find deeper meaning. For real. It’s more than just art. It’s more like something important; something that’s a new experience.”

## Implications for Practice

The implementation of WAVES offers valuable insight into how trauma-informed artmaking can function as a meaningful intervention for at-risk students. Programs like WAVES demonstrate that when creative expression is approached through a trauma-informed lens, it can foster emotional regulation, increase student engagement, and support overall well-being. These outcomes are especially critical for students who have experienced chronic stress, disrupted schooling, and stigma within traditional education systems. Teachers have also observed these benefits firsthand. “The artmaking honestly helps them a lot,” one teacher explained. “A kid will be mad, and then, after making the art, he will be calm.” Another teacher reflected, “The students’ behavior is always better after art time.” The success of WAVES highlights the potential for integrating artmaking into broader SEL and mental health strategies in schools. Its design prioritizes the creative process rather than the final product, values accessibility over expertise, and emphasizes emotional safety instead of performance. This approach offers a flexible model that educators, counselors, and support staff can adapt to meet the unique needs of their own communities. As districts explore how to make meaningful use of resources such as Proposition 28 / AMS funds and AMIM

funds, trauma-informed artmaking presents a promising path toward student-centered, healing-centered engagement.

Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, trauma-informed artmaking can complement existing supports, deepen relationships, and create space for students to process experiences that are often invisible in academic data. WAVES is just one example of how this work can look in practice. Its success encourages us to ask not just how we teach, but how students feel while they are learning, and to center practices that honor their full humanity. “The kids get excited when they know it’s an art day,” one staff member shared. “They’ll ask the day before if the art time will be the next day. They count down the days to the next art time.”

### **Trauma-Informed Artmaking and MTSS**

Trauma-informed artmaking can be integrated into a school’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as a Tier 1 universal practice, Tier 2 targeted intervention, or Tier 3 intensive support, depending on implementation. As a Tier 1 strategy, artmaking can be embedded into advisory periods, enrichment time, or wellness blocks to proactively support student well-being and build classroom community. At Tier 2 or Tier 3, artmaking can serve as an emotional, skill-building intervention for students identified as needing additional emotional regulation or SEL support.



Because trauma-informed artmaking is flexible and universally designed, it allows educators to respond to a wide range of student needs. It supports CASEL-aligned SEL development, enhances engagement, and strengthens relationships between students and caring adults, which are all key components of a robust MTSS framework. Programs like WAVES demonstrate how artmaking can be used strategically to improve emotional health, reduce behavior incidents, and contribute to a more supportive learning environment.

**Funding Trauma-Informed Artmaking in Schools**  
Schools and districts interested in implementing trauma-informed artmaking can fund these programs through multiple sources. Proposition 28 / Arts and Music in Schools (AMS) funds are an ideal match, as they are specifically intended to increase access to arts education. Arts, Music, and Instructional Materials Discretionary Block Grant (AMIM) funds can also support professional development, curriculum purchase, and materials.

In addition to arts-specific funding, trauma-informed artmaking programs can be leveraged to address CA Dashboard indicators including chronic absenteeism, suspension rate, and graduation rate. Districts receiving support via Differentiated Assistance (DA) due to these indicators may be able to use DA funds to implement SEL-focused, trauma-informed strategies like WAVES.

Finally, CalHOPE funding can also be applied to trauma-informed creative programs, particularly when these programs are used to build student resilience, improve emotional regulation, and reduce behavioral referrals.

With intentional alignment to student outcomes, trauma-informed artmaking programs can be both fundable and sustainable within existing school systems.

### **Conclusion: Hope Through Creative Practice**



Programs like WAVES demonstrate that trauma-informed artmaking is not simply a feel-good or superficial activity. It is a necessary, evidence-based intervention that meets students where they are and supports their growth into who they are capable of becoming. In the face of overwhelming adversity, at-promise students often carry stories that have never been spoken, let alone honored. WAVES offers a way to honor those stories without the constraints, stress, or need for written or spoken language. As one student wrote, “This is my past: it’s dark, jagged, and broken. This is me now; there’s lots of confusion. And, this is my future because I want abundance.”

It is time we listen to what both the data and the students are telling us: art heals.

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# Confidence and a Second Chance: San Joaquin County Office of Education Provides Workforce Training Inside San Joaquin County Jail

## San Joaquin County Office of Education

Razor wire cast shadows in the courtyard where students took turns maneuvering a forklift around cones to get in position to raise and lower training pallets.

The students -- all inmates at the San Joaquin County Jail's Honor Farm -- were in a six-week CTE (career technical education) program. At the end of the warehouse and logistics class, they would have certification showing they could inspect and safely operate a counterbalance forklift as well as a variety of certifications related to logistics, transportation, and warehousing they earned through the Prologis interactive training software application.

"This is my shot. This is a great opportunity," said Lakai, who in September was ready to complete the program in a few days, well ahead of his anticipated release date in October. He said he would be leaving the program with a lot more than just the knowledge to operate a forklift. "It gives me the confidence and courage to learn other equipment, too."

Lakai and his classmates spent their final days in the program polishing their resumés, too. Before celebrating at a completion ceremony, they went through mock interviews to help them bring their new skills to new jobs.

"My ultimate goal is to show them what different job opportunities are available when they get released and get these guys integrated back into the community," said class instructor Andrew Haase-MacMillan. Students also meet with representatives from the Teamsters union and MacMillan is working to make connections with local employers looking for skilled workers.

This program at the jail started in January and is the newest addition to the educational programs offered by the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE), in partnership with the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office, at the San Joaquin County Jail and the Honor Farm, a lower-security part of the jail.

The SJCOE's classes are one piece of broader offerings at the jail to provide education and skills as well as courses to build social skills, control anger, and provide cognitive behavior intervention, jail officials said. The goal is "...to completely change their lives and, ultimately, reduce recidivism," said Captain Kimberly de la Cruz with the Sheriff's Office.

Doug Silva, the SJCOE County Operated Schools and Programs director overseeing the SJCOE programs at the jail said the hope is to continue to grow and add college-level classes, too.

The SJCOE's programs at the jail and at Juvenile Hall have the same goal of having a positive impact in the community, he said. It starts with the students, who often are experiencing their first educational successes in one of these programs.

"Once they get their feet wet and understand they can do it -- then anything is possible," he said.



# The school of tomorrow is being built today— let's make sure it has room for everyone.

unknown author



Image created with ChatGPT 4.0

**Prompt:** A colorful, modern digital illustration poster featuring four diverse high school students collaboratively building a school out of large puzzle pieces. The puzzle pieces are labeled with the words "Equity," "Belonging," "Innovation," and "Voice." The students are shown placing the puzzle pieces onto a school-shaped structure in the background. Each student wears casual clothing and represents different ethnicities. The background is bright and vibrant, with dominant shades of blue and green, fluffy clouds, and a hopeful, inclusive atmosphere. At the top of the image, a bold quote reads: "The school of tomorrow is being built today—let's make sure it has room for everyone." The attribution underneath says "unknown author." The overall tone is uplifting, inclusive, and eye-catching.

# Expressing Emotions through Art

## San Joaquin County Juvenile Justice Center students featured in California County Superintendents Arts Initiative

San Joaquin County Office of Education

Through the use of art therapy, one.Cruikshank Court School has allowed young people to express their emotions in a positive, creative way.

Four years ago, the walls lining the San Joaquin County Juvenile Justice Center were stark white cement blocks. Now, they are covered in vivid, colorful murals that are designed by students, building a therapeutic learning environment for all while setting the tone for creativity and adaptability.

The partnership between the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) and San Joaquin County Probation has allowed



**Best in Show / First Place - High School**  
"New Beginnings" by K.G.

for the growth of the art therapy program to transform the inside and outside of one.Cruikshank court school. "Art has allowed the students to exercise their emotions in a completely therapeutic way," said Doug Silva, director over one.Cruikshank.

This program has played a huge role in the connectedness of staff and students. Students are given the opportunity to explore their experiences and emotions in a way that is powerful and meaningful to them. Giving these students an outlet has been beneficial for staff and for the SJCOE's partners at San Joaquin County Probation as well. The art therapy program, which infuses trauma-informed educational practices into it, has reduced the suspension rates, physical outbursts amongst the young people, and has fostered a more peaceful, connected environment for students.

"I tell my students...you can't fail at art. You can make mistakes, but you can always add another layer to it," said Erin Elizabeth, local artist who supports the Art Therapy



**First Place - Graduates**  
"Light At The End" by R.C.

program. "What I think that's teaching these young men and women is that you can't change the past - that layer will always be there - but you can transform it into something better."

Due to the impact on students and staff of one.Cruikshank, the transformative program caught the attention of the California County Superintendent's Art Initiative. The highlight video can be viewed [here](#).



**Distinguished Landscapes**  
"Stillness At The Mountains" by A.C.



**Honorable Mention**  
"Vision Of Serenity" by S.P.



**Honorable Mention**  
"Sunny Day" by L.M.



**Honorable Mention**  
"Sacred And The Faithful" by D.F.

# Creating Generational Change in San Bernardino County Schools: A Family Engagement Success Story

Kohleun Adamson, M.Litt.  
Alliance for a Healthier Generation



For the second year in a row, several schools in San Bernardino County, Calif., have been recognized among [America's Healthiest Schools](#) for excellence in [family and community engagement](#), an accolade sponsored by Kohl's through Kohl's Cares. Cecilia Holguin, Parent & Family/Community Engagement Content Manager for San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) says, "This award is a testament to the dedication of our entire team and our commitment to empowering families to thrive and transform lives through education. We're passionate about supporting the whole child, which includes the whole family, and this recognition motivates us to continue our work with even greater enthusiasm."

With support through Kaiser Permanente, several schools in SBCSS have been working with the Thriving Schools Integrated Assessment (TSIA) tool to identify and reach their goals. They look forward to continuing their stellar family and community engagement strategies and excelling in other areas of whole child health. We recently joined Back-to-School Jams at three SBCSS schools to see firsthand how they work to connect with students and their families.

## **"It feels like a home."**

SBCSS educators work hard to build relationships so that students feel safe at school. Many of this year's awardees are alternative schools for students who need more focused support to succeed. Teachers here set boundaries and high expectations for students, without dwelling on the behaviors that brought them to the alternative school environment. "I don't ask students what they 'did,' " said one teacher. "We don't judge them," said another. Instead, they focus on checking in with each other, showing care, and making sure their students get the academic and health resources they need. For instance, SBCSS provides mental health services with licensed clinicians to every student in its schools, going above and beyond state standards.



Students benefit from a learning environment rooted in belonging and emotional safety. One student said, “It’s like a home; I don’t feel like anyone judges me here,” to which other students nodded their agreement. Another student noted that teachers and staff “...care about me as a person,” and check in with him about his life and family. Since he started attending Bob Murphy Community School last year, he can tell that teachers want him to learn, not just pass assignments. When a teacher took the time to work with him until he understood tricky concepts, “That’s when I found out I’m good at math!”

### **“We wanted our kids to have a safe place to go.”**

“Any time we get recognized for a program, it acknowledges the commitment of our staff to make changes in children’s lives, and not just make changes but transform their lives,” said Dr. Scott Wyatt, SBCSS Area Director and school board member. The schools’ response to recent wildfires exemplifies this commitment. “We kept our schools open in cities where other schools shut down. We wanted our kids to have a safe place to go during these fires. We wanted them to have a place that was cool because a lot of our kids don’t have air conditioning. And we wanted to make sure they had food.” The feedback principals received from families was resoundingly grateful for the effort to provide safety and consistency during a time of distress.

### **“We need to meet the students where they’re at.”**

“Research clearly shows that students, especially those that are struggling academically and in other areas of life, typically do a lot better when a concerned and caring adult is involved,” said Dr. Christopher Hauck, principal of Bob Murphy Community School, explaining SBCSS’s approach to family engagement. “Now, if you look at our schools and our families and the particular situations they’re challenged with all the time, involving the parent is likely going to result in much better outcomes, whether it be attendance, academics, social-emotional health, or physical health” (Barger, et al., 2019; Hall, 2020).



He shared an example of a newly enrolled student whose family had received an eviction notice, making it hard for their mother to participate in academic goal-setting. “So, I reached out to some of our clinicians and family engagement team, and they got her rapid rehousing assistance... I’m the academic leader of my school, but if you don’t know where you’re going to be living next week, what should really be the focus of my efforts and our efforts?” Dr. Hauck has concluded, “To be the most effective, we’ve learned that we need to meet the students where they’re at – meet the families where they’re at.”

SBCSS staff recognize that this requires a customized approach. “Through personalized engagement initiatives, we’ve learned that every family has unique strengths and needs. Counselor-family meetings have revealed the resilience and resourcefulness of our community. These interactions have helped us tailor our

support to better meet the specific needs of each family, whether it's through academic support, mental health resources, or community connections," Ms. Holguin explained. Families also provide feedback through surveys, focus groups, and organizations like the local African American Parent Advisory Council, District Advisory Council, and District English Learner Advisory Committee.

**"We are always looking to build and strengthen our community partnerships."**

SBCSS encourages community organizations to take an active role in students' success. At the Back-to-School Jams, several local and regional partners were on site to connect with families – from a credit union offering savings accounts to youth in foster care, to housing connection counselors ready to rehouse families, to a barber academy that provided complimentary haircuts in a classroom usually used for shop classes. Some events bring medical and dental services to campus to treat students free of charge.

Ms. Holguin and the team work diligently to identify and engage these partners. "We are always looking to build and strengthen our community partnerships," she said. "Support from more community partners in areas such as increasing food support, job training programs, and extracurricular activities after school would be incredibly beneficial."

**"You could be the one who creates generational change."**

These accomplishments are hard won. Dr. Wyatt noted that the schools lose students to violence, substance misuse, and self-harm every year. So, they encourage students to create change for their families. "We teach our kids that, 'You could be the one that creates generational change for your kids, your grandkids, your great grandkids,'" said

Dr. Wyatt. The staff will even connect alumni to resources years after they graduate or leave the school.

Although alternative schools are often seen as a temporary step in a student's education, SBCSS has found that many students want to stay in an environment where they have the support of a caring community. In 2015, after decades of Dr. Wyatt, Dr. Hauck, and other educators advocating for their students, the schools celebrated their first graduation ceremony. "I look forward to graduation every year. It's the highlight of my year," said Dr. Hauck. For Dr. Wyatt and colleagues, graduation is the culmination of their hard work for students and their families. He said, "I get excited every year for our graduation to see new generations of high school graduates getting ready to go out and conquer the world, be responsible adults, and change generations to come."

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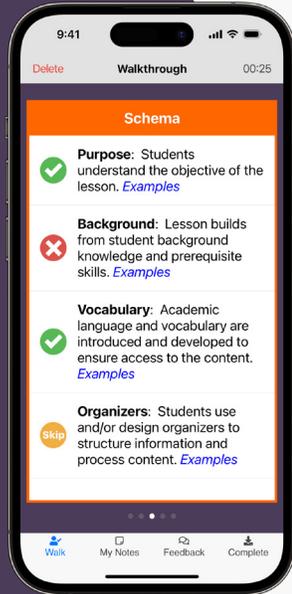
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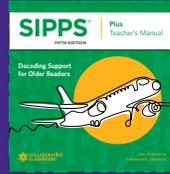
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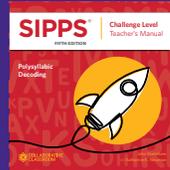
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# Hope Through Literacy: Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice

By Jacqueline Newman, Program Specialist Reading Intervention, Orange County Department of Education

As I step onto the grounds of two of our most restricted educational environments—Otto Fischer Juvenile Hall and Sunburst Youth Academy—the contrast is immediate and striking. At Juvenile Hall, the atmosphere is stark and still, the heavy clank of security gates echoing against concrete walls. Walking toward the federal court building, I pass through crowds of bustling voices and families gathered in support of one another. As I enter, I'm immediately met by strict security—only those with clearance are allowed inside. I slide my access card, unlocking the first door. One by one, each door— heavier than the last—slams shut behind me as I move deeper into the institution. Once past the final security checkpoint, I'm greeted by warm sunlight and the sound of birds chirping, briefly transporting me back to a school environment. Inside each classroom, it's clear: we are at school—not in a prison. Here is where we learn and make ourselves better through education. Here is where lives are changed.

Students move in silence, eyes downcast, hands clasped behind their backs, escorted by probation staff from unit to classroom and back again. Every step is monitored. Every moment is controlled.

Just miles away, at Sunburst, the routine is no less structured, but the energy feels different. Cadets in uniform march with precision under the watchful eyes of military mentors, their shoulders squared with purpose. Here, the tone is one of high expectations and earned respect. Despite their differences—one governed by the justice system, the other by military discipline—both campuses serve students who have long struggled with reading. And in both places, hope is being restored through the same approach: explicit, systematic instruction grounded in the Science of Reading. In the most unlikely of classrooms, the path to literacy is being paved—one lesson, one breakthrough at a time.

The key message in my previous article, “Unlocking the Reading Code to Address Reading Challenges and Empower Minds” is that all students deserve access to evidence-based reading instruction. Through the Science of Reading and structured literacy practices, educators can empower struggling readers to thrive academically and beyond. This article explored the Science of Reading and its critical role in addressing our nation's literacy crisis. While understanding the research behind reading development is essential, knowledge alone is not enough. To truly transform student outcomes, we must move from awareness to action. This follow-up article focuses on how we can turn the principles of the Science of Reading into effective, scalable, and sustainable literacy practices that benefit all students.

## **Bridging the Gap: From Knowledge to Implementation**

The transition from traditional reading instruction to evidence-based practices is not without its challenges. Many educators were trained in outdated methodologies, making the shift to structured literacy a significant paradigm change.

At ACCESS, we recognized that simply acknowledging the importance of the Science of Reading was not enough. We needed to empower educators with the tools and confidence to apply these principles effectively. This meant addressing common misconceptions—such as the belief that phonics instruction is only for early learners—and replacing ineffective strategies, like the three-cueing system, with structured, explicit, and systematic reading instruction.

One of the key steps in our implementation process was professional development. By equipping educators with knowledge about phonemic awareness, decoding, and the six syllable types, we created a foundation for effective reading instruction. However, knowledge is only the first step—

ongoing coaching, collaboration, and data-driven decision-making are essential to sustaining this change.

### **Impact on Students and Educators**

Since incorporating structured literacy approaches, we have witnessed remarkable transformations among our students and educators. Struggling readers who previously relied on guessing strategies are now applying decoding skills to unfamiliar words. Teachers who once felt uncertain about phonics instruction are now leading engaging and effective literacy lessons.

One standout success story comes from a middle school student who entered our program reading at a second-grade level. With targeted intervention focusing on phonological awareness and multisyllabic word decoding, this student progressed significantly within months, gaining confidence and fluency. Educators have reported similar breakthroughs, reinforcing the power of direct and explicit reading instruction.

### **Building a Literacy-Focused Community**

Transforming literacy instruction requires more than individual classroom changes—it demands a community-wide effort. At ACCESS, we have focused on building a literacy-rich culture that extends beyond the classroom, engaging teachers, paraeducators, administrators, and families in the process.

Our four quarter professional development series, titled the ACCESS Reading Academy, has been instrumental in this effort. By training not just teachers but also paraprofessionals and interventionists, we have created a network of literacy advocates within our schools. Additionally, our universal assessment strategy, which includes tools like i-Ready, allows us to identify students' specific needs and tailor instruction accordingly.

For educators looking to implement structured literacy, the following steps can help:

- **Start with Assessment:** Use universal screeners to identify struggling readers and target interventions effectively.
- **Focus on Professional Development:** Provide ongoing training on phonological awareness, decoding, and comprehension strategies.
- **Build a Collaborative Culture:** Encourage teamwork among educators, interventionists, and support staff to share best practices and problem-solve together.
- **Engage Families:** Partner with parents and caregivers to reinforce literacy skills at home.

### **The Next Frontier: Sustaining Momentum**

While we have made tremendous progress, our work is far from over. Sustaining and expanding structured literacy instruction requires continuous professional learning, data-driven instruction, and a commitment to student success. Future initiatives will focus on deepening teacher expertise, refining intervention strategies, and advocating for policy changes that prioritize evidence-based reading instruction in all schools.

As we continue this journey, we must ask ourselves: How can we ensure that every student, regardless of background or circumstance, receives the literacy instruction they deserve? The answer lies in our collective commitment to action. By staying informed, supporting one another, and keeping literacy at the forefront of educational priorities, we can unlock the potential of every student and create a future where reading is a right, not a privilege.

Let's move forward together—because when we invest in literacy, we invest in lives.

# Gliding along the Delta: Program prepares students for first sculling experience

San Joaquin County Office of Education

“Arms, body, legs.”

Five students from one.Harmony listened carefully to instructions as sculling coach Dhaon Davis reviewed the proper form for using a modern rowing machine called an ergometer or “erg” for short.

“Legs, body, arms.”

The students warmed up on the ergs on a recent trip to the Stockton Delta Sculling Center. They had been training on the rowing machines at their school. At the Sculling Center, they took their training to the water, experiencing sculling on the water for the first time.

It was the culminating moment of months-long preparation that began in October when the Delta Sculling Center invited teachers from the one.Program to participate in their train-the-trainer program, funded by a grant from the George Pocock Rowing Foundation. The program allowed six teachers to learn an erg-education curriculum and brought 20 machines on loan to one.Program schools.



Richard Holbrook, a teacher at one.Harmony, was participated in hopes of inspiring a lifelong love of fitness in his students. From November through March, Holbrook incorporated the erg curriculum into his sports medicine lessons. After learning the proper body mechanics, students began using fun games to continue training, including monthly relay races to be crowned tops in the school.

“With these machines, I now know how to stay fit for life,” said Oswaldo, a one.Harmony senior. In December, he developed a love for erg machines due to the explosive energy they require and intense cardiovascular benefits. When it came time to test his skills on the water in April, he felt ready.

On the big day, students met their four coaches and learned the different parts of sculling boats and their uses, including the stern, spacers, and bow ball. They then used a different rowing machine to learn additional arm mechanics to propel the sculling boat. Though it was their first time trying, students were all smiles when they became more comfortable with how to turn their oars and cut through the water.



Finally, students took turns venturing into the Delta with a coach to practice what they learned. Boats were equipped with pontoons, the boat equivalent of training wheels, to ensure students could be safe as they took to the water for their first time. Their movement was slow until the technique training they

received that day clicked in. In no time, students were quickly gliding across the water, receiving on-the-spot corrections from the coaches when needed.

“You can see how excited students are to put their knowledge to the test,” said Jessica Andersen, youth program manager at the Delta Sculling Center who helped train teachers in the curriculum. “I’m hoping this is the first of many student visits through this program.”



# Gentlemen Scholars: The Sacred Work of the Check-in

Alameda County Office of Education

Walking into the JJC building felt intimidating. Even with 26 years of teaching behind me, I had just made a leap from working primarily with middle schoolers in a traditional district to teaching in a court school. I knew this shift would be profound. My decision to start fresh in a different part of California stemmed from a growing urgency to work with students at the margins—those caught at the intersection of education’s point of failure and the carceral system. While students everywhere face monumental challenges, none experience them quite like the youth who end up detained. Many come from society’s most neglected corners, including the foster care system and arrive as court-involved youth with both social and academic gaps, often compounded by unresolved trauma and wounded instincts. I understood that this new assignment would test me—not because of the students, but because of the systems that had led them here—to this drab, featureless place where bodies and futures seemed to be held in suspended uncertainty.

I got ready for the first day by choosing a comfortable outfit and sneakers. Growing up Brown and poor in South LA and Pomona informed my decision to wear my hair coiled in a bun and jewelry that couldn’t be yanked. I was ready. I braced for the possibility of being confronted, disrespected, or rejected. After all, I had been warned that the young men I’d meet weren’t students but detainees—high school boys locked up for crimes unknown to me. On a prior tour of the facility, I had observed how some youth interacted with adults, and I entered without knowing what to expect.

As the institutional weight of metal doors closed behind me, I walked past the dining area to my classroom. A quick scan of the space showed how much work lay ahead. There was no technology except for an outdated desktop computer at my desk and an equally archaic printer sitting there, unplugged. The whiteboard had long overstayed its welcome, and the cork walls bore rough sketches of penises, neighborhood affiliations, and choice profanity scrawled in various fonts and styles. The hospital-hued walls, a discolored beige, met a crumbling cork ceiling that regularly sprinkled its disintegration onto the student desks.

On day one, I introduced myself using my full name but wrote only "Dr. C" on the board—a small, intentional choice. I wanted to set a tone of respect without pretense. I started with what I knew best: connection. I moved through the room as students walked in, shaking hands, asking for names, and looking into eyes that were so familiar they could have belonged to my own bloodline, my neighborhood, or my group of childhood friends. Each greeting was brief but meaningful, a test set mutually to answer: Who are you? Why are you here? Can you be trusted?

The first day was challenging. The young men, whom I would later affectionately call my "gentlemen scholars," weren’t quick to accept me. None were outright rude, but several resisted, and I didn’t take it personally. Many had endured an endless parade of disappointing adults in their lives—both from their families of origin and the systems tasked with their care in times of crisis. I was just another adult who, for all they knew, would be here briefly before moving on to another opportunity. They had no reason to let their guard down, and I respected that.

My first attempt at a check-in and Question to Ponder (QTP) session faltered. My question was met with blank stares and half-hearted shrugs. So, I shared first. “Alright, on a scale of 1–5, five being best, I’m at a 5 today. I have a lot to be grateful for, and I’m genuinely happy to be here working with y’all.” My words were met with a mix of side-eyed skepticism and lukewarm enthusiasm. I went on to explain that I was new to Northern California and that I was born in Mexico but raised in LA and Pomona. Shoulders dropped as their curiosity piqued, and they began asking mostly appropriate questions about my life and experiences. One asked gruffly, “So you’re a doctor? Why are you teaching here, then?” This provided the perfect segue into me explaining the “Dr.” title. I told them how important it is to me that I, as only one generation removed from illiteracy, celebrate the sacrifices my mother made to get me to a country where I could attain a terminal degree. I answered the steady flow of questions that followed honestly and allowed them to learn a bit more about me. I gave, and as the days passed, they reciprocated. Eventually, words flowed and thoughts stretched into conversations that deepened our understanding of each other.

Soon, they began gliding into class, and the one young man who originally proclaimed, “Man, this ain’t a real school. Stop asking us to do work!” became one of my most dedicated scholars, determined to complete high school during his stay at Butler Academy. As I found my bearings, I allowed myself to listen to my students’ needs—the most glaring of which was the profoundly human need for belonging and unconditional acceptance. I followed my spirit and designed the learning space, lacking as it was, to reflect the evolving journey of the youth I was tasked to teach and guide—many of whom gave me more than I ever gave them. One such student was a tall, brooding, baby-faced young man who once referred to himself as “stupid and ugly.” He resisted the challenge of the classwork, asserting over and over that he was stupid because his “IEP says so.” I resisted his soft-spoken excuses and began engaging him more one-on-one through our co-journaling practice—a journal activity where students elaborate further on their thoughts about the day’s check-in and QTP, and where I respond in writing with comments and questions about their reflections. This particular student was shy and reserved in class but expressed himself fully and uninhibited in his journal. The volley of thoughts we shared served as the foundation for his academic unfolding. He became invested in his work and, before long, asked me to review his transcripts and help set a graduation date. He left our facility before he became eligible to graduate, but he left behind poignant artifacts of his growth, rendered beautifully in the writings and art pieces that hung on the classroom wall. In one of our last conversations, he shared that he’d never wanted to be adopted while in foster care because he had always held out hope that he would be reunited with his mother. This hope was dashed when she passed away during his time at our facility, leaving him with a solitary family tie—a sister who lived out of state. I listened and mirrored back his light as best as I could as he rhetorically asked, “Would you ever adopt someone like me?”

I knew that the teaching and guiding would be a two-way street. I learned so much from my gentlemen scholars, with the biggest evidence of the impact of connection coming a few months into my time at Butler. In January of 2024, my beloved mother was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive disease. The news fell on my family like a sheet of cement, and I scrambled to do what I could from six hours away. I shared the news

with my students and told them I would be missing work to share in my mother's care. They listened mournfully and enveloped me in support, prayers, and well wishes. They made art and created cards for my mother. And when the inevitable came, and I returned from laying her to rest, I was met with a literal circle of Love that not only floored me with gratitude but felt like an orchestrated miracle from above.

When I arrived at the hall on my first day back from bereavement leave, my co-teacher, the JIOs, the supervising probation staff, and my students all formed a circle and each took a turn to speak from their hearts. Some shared what they loved about me—things they were sure I had inherited from my mother. After all, I spoke of her highly and often to them. Some cried with me, others hung their heads in solemn reflection, and some simply held me up with their empathetic gaze. They then gave me a beautiful bouquet of wildflowers—my mother's favorites—as we all stepped into the center, creating the biggest group hug I had ever experienced.

That moment affirmed the power of frequent, if not daily, check-ins with all people who share a space and do important work together. The empathy circle clearly showed that the simple act of speaking to people, of sharing from a place of authenticity and vulnerability, had created a space where both youth and adults could safely express their humanity. A facility designed to warehouse bodies had been transformed from within by those who inhabited it daily. The drab classroom came alive with students' words and work. Before long, the young men who once entered guardedly began to enthusiastically participate with and support one another. Of course, it wasn't perfect—teenage bravado and ego still surfaced—but beneath it, they revealed themselves to be thoughtful, reflective, and astoundingly resilient.

As I continue to work in learning spaces, I am reminded that education is not simply the imparting of knowledge but a mutual exchange of humanity. Students, especially those who have experienced things that would thwart the strongest among us, have an innate ability to recognize authenticity. Showing up as our true selves is the most essential part of teaching. Relationship-building comes first because it opens the pathways to learning. Schooling is both about seeing our students and being seen by them in return. It is always about Love and building bridges where walls are constantly being built to divide. May we continue to tear them down by checking in with ourselves and each other.

#### *About the Author*

*Cristina Camarena-Prieto, Ed.D. currently serves Alameda County Office of Education as a Program Manager for Post-Secondary Education at the Juvenile Justice Center in San Leandro, California.*

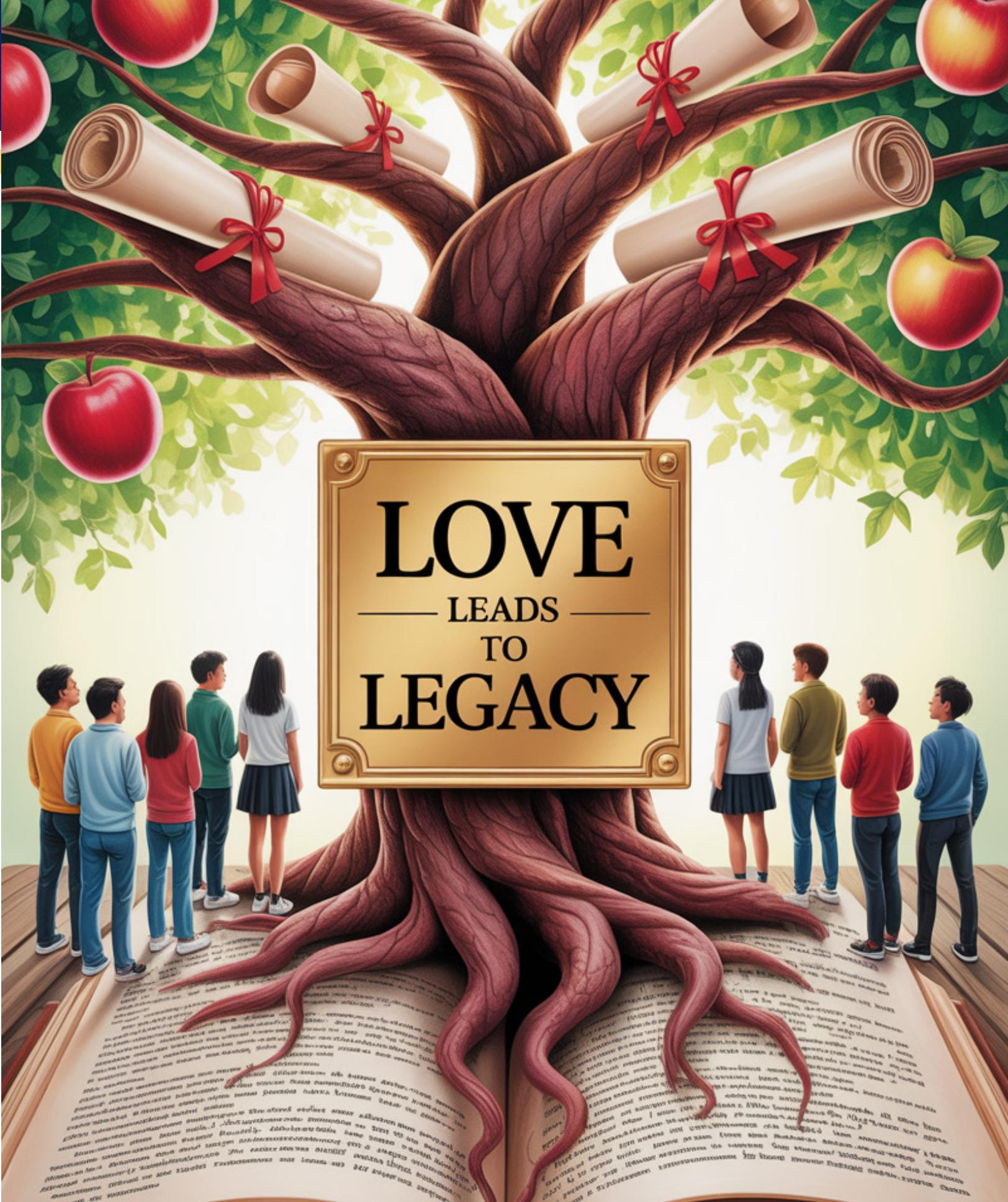


Image created with Ideogram

Prompt: A large tree growing from a book, with roots shaped like hearts and branches filled with diplomas and apples. There is a gold plaque on the tree that says 'Love Leads to Legacy". Diverse high school students dressed in modern day relaxed clothing surround the tree.

Graphic design style.

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