

CCSPP Stories of Impact

In 2021 legislators in California made a bold investment in support of community schools across the state. \$4.1 billion would be allocated to the design, development, and implementation of community schools to counter the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legislation was historic. The community folks who advocated for such a robust initiative celebrated, knowing that the work of creating and sustaining community schools that respond to the whole child is challenging, rewarding, and most importantly iterative. In re-branding our work as the State Transformational Assistance Center (S-TAC), we challenged the traditional implementation of programs and initiatives to engage in systems-change approaches to help us learn and understand the layers of community schools implementation. **This memo highlights stories of impact from four Deep Dive sites, selected to represent the diversity of our state and capture a “vertical slice” of the system from the practice-level to the policy-level (e.g., schools to the Regional Technical Assistance Centers [R-TACs]).**

Story #1: Igo-Ono Elementary School

Shasta County, North Star Region

Context

One in every ten students in California lives in a rural area. According to some counts 12 percent of California districts are rural; by other definitions of rurality the figure jumps to 30 percent. Rural communities adapt and learn to innovate to meet the evolving needs of their students with varying degrees of resources. The California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) has come to infuse rural schools with possibility. In Shasta County the best approach was to create a consortium that now includes 30 community schools. The original "Consortium" was the first CCSPP grant which allowed for all 25 Shasta County districts to be funded in 2020–22. **The current SCOE CCSPP Consortium began with Cohort 1 Implementation for the 2022–27 Grant Period, adding Cohort 2 and 3 schools with each application process. Cohorts 1, 2, and 3 implementation grants make up the current consortium of 30 schools.** Igo-Ono Elementary’s transformation is an example of the impact CCSPP has had in these rural communities. The following excerpt was adapted from a piece authored by Kerri Schuette for the journal *Community Schooling* (<https://communityschooling.gseis.ucla.edu/issue-6-community-schooling-journal/>).

The Value of Sharing Power with Families and Communities

Igo-Ono Elementary School, located in Shasta County, is just 11 miles west of Redding (a city in the area), but it looks a bit like the land that time forgot. The original one-room schoolhouse, built by a miner in 1872, included a well, an outhouse, and a wood stove. That schoolhouse is a historical display now, but on that same site today, two teachers serve 29 students in transitional kindergarten through eighth-grade, with support staff who make it possible to break students into smaller groups to meet individual needs. This is critical for a student population where most qualify for free or reduced lunch, a few are unsheltered, and some are English language learners. Though the school is tiny, administrators are determined to provide students with opportunities that their peers in larger schools enjoy, including music (recorders and strings), robotics, a “tech lounge,” and various recreational activities. A resource teacher and counselor are on campus twice a week. Instructional assistants serve as Igo-Ono’s after-school program facilitators to build consistency and strengthen relationships with students. Some of these additional supports are funded creatively through CCSPP and other funding sources.

When students move onto high school, school staff want them to be skilled in adaptability, communication, critical thinking, empathy, perseverance, and responsibility. **Funded by the CCSPP, Community Connect Coordinators serve as the school-site liaisons between Shasta County Office of Education (SCOE), mental health clinicians and students and families.** Brayden McClung is the Community Connect Coordinator at Igo-Ono and was selected because he had worked at the school before and had already developed strong relationships with many of the families.

In perhaps McClung’s biggest career challenge, he connected with a family living in a trailer, that then had to move into a tent. Experiencing homelessness meant the children struggled to attend school and succeed academically. McClung helped move them into transitional housing, which provided enough stability for the mom to look for apartments and fill out job applications. He also connected them with a food assistance program which meant food security. With stability and a home came the space for mom to enroll in workshops that helped her find a job and begin a new learning path to build her skills. The children began attending school regularly and engaging in ways the school had not seen.

Several months later, the mother was reflecting with McClung about how far she had come. She looked him in the eyes and said, **“I’m not totally sure why you care about**

us so much, but I have never had this level of support in my life, and you are helping us in ways I did not know [were] possible. You are changing my life.”

Community Connect epitomizes the work of community schooling: ensuring that students’ physical, mental, and emotional needs are met enables them to fully access the rich educational opportunities provided to them at school. “We are now able to really come alongside families, in partnership with their schools, and connect them with important services in the deep way that they need,” Wendy Hall, SCOE Director of Continuous Improvement said.

Community Connect Coordinators Provide Essential Supports

The 30 Community Connect Coordinators, funded entirely by CCSPP, directly serve school sites, providing essential supports. For example, coordinators may lead family engagement efforts during the school day (e.g., Un Cafe Con Los Padres), before and after school events such as back to school nights, and special family events like Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) night. They also support positive attendance through positive phone calls and interactions with families demonstrating initial attendance challenges. Many of the Community Connect Coordinators facilitate the use of the centralized food pantry to supplement their site pantries. They also organize engagement activities with students on campus, sitting in on school site team meeting like Student Study Teams, School Attendance Review Teams, Teacher Student Teams, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Multi-tiered System of Supports, parent club, site council, and accompanying or leading the walking school bus.

Community Connect Coordinators work to connect with each family using multiple methods – letting the family know that they are available to serve as partners and provide support, helping find solutions to whichever challenges the family is facing. This case management and care coordination is free, confidential, and completely voluntary. Once needs are identified, a Community Connect Coordinator, like Mr. McClung, and family develop a plan to move forward together. **The relationship is ongoing, and the Community Connect Coordinator continues to work with the family to build their strengths, resolve concerns, and link them to the community-based services and supports that sometimes feel out of reach for an overwhelmed parent.**

For the 2022–23 school year, Community Connect Coordinators received 1,791 referrals from across the county, from both CCSPP-funded and non-CCSPP-funded schools. Coordinators reached out to families associated with every referral and successfully contacted 76 percent percent of the families, with 69 percent of them fully

engaged with services. For the 2023–24 school year, Community Connect received 1,735 referrals from across the county, which included both CCSPP and non-CCSPP sites. Community Connect has reached out to families associated with every referral and has successfully contacted 82 percent of them so far. Of those 1,422 contacts, 85 percent (1,209) have accepted services. The majority of referrals are for counseling, mental health services, and basic needs. **And once families have their basic needs met, the students quickly feel the impact, and behavior, attendance, and mental wellness improve.** To read more about the transformation taking root in Shasta County please read Issue 6 of *Community Schooling* (<https://communityschooling.gseis.ucla.edu/issue-6-community-schooling-journal/>).

Story #2: Western High School

Anaheim Union High School District, Orange County, Southern Coast Region

Context

Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) serves more than 27,000 students with over 78 percent of students being classified as low income and 22 percent classified as English Learners or emerging bilinguals. AUHSD's school redesign work began in the 2008–09 school year with the adoption of instructional coaches at every site. The coaches are now known as 5Cs coaches to signal their focus on supporting teachers to fully incorporate the district's aims for students: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and character/compassion. The 5Cs have evolved over time and were adopted by the whole district after 200 teachers collaborated on writing the descriptors in the 2017–18 school year.

Since 2013 students have been advocating for more robust investments from the city of Anaheim, which lead to the expansion of partnerships to curate educational experiences that are connected to industry demands and 21st century skills. These partnerships are foundational to AUHSD's community schools vision. In 2019 AUHSD designated Anaheim High School and Sycamore Junior High as community schools. The National Education Association (NEA) awarded the district a community schools grant in 2021, and the district established its first community schools steering committee. **In 2022 AUHSD was awarded \$25 million from the CCSPP for 13 community schools; the total increased to 15 community schools in 2023. That same year all AUHSD schools earned the California Democracy Schools distinction.**

In Anaheim the impact of community schooling is described by Denise Reyes, a graduate of Western High School (WHS), a comprehensive high school that serves

about 1,700 students in grades nine to twelve. Denise recounts the impact of community schooling on her learning trajectory as a young researcher addressing issues in her school community. Through the CCSPP grant, WHS has been able to conduct a robust needs and assets assessment process to collect data from students, families/caregivers, community members, and school personnel. **The grant also supports a community school coordinator and a community school teacher lead at WHS who collaborate with the 5Cs coaches.** The survey responses from the needs and assets assessments have directly informed student research projects like Denise's public health projects focused on students with disabilities and unhoused peers. Teachers integrate the data from the surveys to ensure instruction is relevant to students and responsive to their assets and needs. The collaboration among school staff members allows for the creation of performance assessments that elevate community-based learning practices and center student voice and agency. The following is an excerpt of Denise's youth research piece for the journal *Community Schooling*. To read Denise's entire piece please read Issue 5 of *Community Schooling* (<https://communityschooling.gseis.ucla.edu/youth-research-issue-5-community-schooling-journal/>).

The Value of Classroom-Community Connections: A Student's Perspective

"As students participating in the North Orange County Regional Occupational Program (ROP) Public Health and Social Work Pathway at Anaheim Union High School District, we were given an inside look at communal health advocacy through the lens of our neighborhoods. We developed research initiatives to gain a richer understanding of the science of protecting and improving the health of our communities. Throughout the process, the community schools initiative in my school and our medical pathways converged to enhance and enrich scholars' soft and hard skills. For me, the research component allowed me to dive deeply into housing and food insecurity in my community. I was also afforded the opportunity to address these issues in innovative ways that can authentically support students and families facing these issues. The culmination of my research project and internship contributed to the creation of 'La Bodeguita,' a food pantry at my school.

The power of student research led the way to viable solutions. I was awarded the prestigious Rising Scientist Award by the Child Mind Institute for my study of homelessness and food insecurity in my community and how these factors impact mental health and overall well-being. Through this project, I realized how much I can actively do to enhance public health for my peers and their families. **As a community school, my high school offers many spaces for students to realize their dreams**

through rich learning experiences that help us apply our learning in real-life

contexts. After completing my research project, I had the opportunity to engage with district board members, allowing me to contribute to broader community discussions on issues affecting our student body. My community-based internship was located at my own school and through the community schools initiative I was able to leverage my research findings to address food insecurity by collaborating with other students and community members.

Based on the AUHSD needs and assets survey completed at the beginning of 2022–23, 33.37 percent or about 270 students from the 809 students surveyed reported basic needs as inaccessible. Students reported food insecurity as a critical issue they face. Guardians also reported basic needs including food, shelter, and clothing to be a barrier for themselves and their families, with a sum total of 31 percent or 313 guardians reporting this as a challenge. This survey launched our Beyond Western Tour, which resulted in the creation of our community pantry called “La Bodeguita.”

Furthermore, my peers and I initiated our summer food drive to alleviate the decline in food accessibility that occurs when schools cease operation for the summer at our partner location. I also helped coordinate the Western Clothing Drive for all families in our area. To disseminate information about the resources accessible to the community, I contributed to the development of a media campaign comprising videos and social media posts. Through my internship, I applied what I had learned as a researcher—I analyzed data and identified local community needs. I also applied the research to collaborate on a project that addressed food insecurity. Throughout this journey, I relied on my critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills to navigate the complexities of community needs and to develop effective solutions. This opportunity made real the connection between soft and technical skills. I also gained insight into the power of being an engaged community member whose passion can lead to real change.”

How CCSSPP is Shaping Transformation

Reading Denise’s account helps one appreciate what is possible thanks to the CCSSPP and the ways in which the district has leveraged the grant to expand educational opportunities for students within and without the school. Robust partnerships create an eco-system supportive of student aspirations and passions. The work in AUHSD is guided by a rich vision that centers youth voice and purpose, 21st Century skills, and technical skills. Performance assessments capture student learning beyond traditional metrics and are a defining characteristic of Anaheim’s effort to center student voice and

agency **Through complex performance task assessments the district is capturing important areas of whole-child development. AUHSD collects data to monitor student progress beyond high school graduation (college acceptance, college persistence, industry data) to inform decisions about improvement and future work.**

Solidifying the progress monitoring work requires intentional efforts to collect and share data with the school community. Anaheim engages in continuous listening tours and data-sharing processes with their community to ensure community schooling reflects community aspirations and critical feedback. The success students are experiencing in Anaheim, through a rich educational program and holistic approach to address their needs, is an inspiration for community schools across our state.

Story #3: Tomás Rivera Middle School

Val Verde Unified School District in Riverside County, Southern Inland Region

Context

Located in the city of Perris, **Val Verde Unified School District was awarded \$32 million as part of Cohort 3 of the CCSPP grant. Among its community schools is Tomás Rivera Middle School, a Title I school that welcomes over one thousand students in sixth through eighth grade.** Thirty-five percent of students are classified as English Learners or emergent bilinguals and over ninety percent qualify for free and reduced meals. Tomás Rivera Middle School lives up to the legacy of the late Rivera whose own mission was to expand educational opportunities for first-generation students like himself.

CCSPP funds are supporting the expansion of partnerships and expanded learning time through the school's signature Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) lab. Earlier this fall, students visited the STEAM lab to apply their engineering and math skills to build ships from popsicle sticks. The ships are supposed to help them reenact the Boston Tea Party, a historical event they are currently studying in US History. CCSPP funding will expand teacher interdisciplinary work and leverage the STEAM lab to provide students with rich cross-disciplinary learning. In the school's elevated "woodshop" elective class, woodwork is re-imagined to include new technology like laser engraving and graphic design elements that feel more like computer science and art combined with engineering. The new approach builds on the assets and interests of students. The woodshop students proudly make high utility items like school hall passes and other school-related materials. Partnerships across various industries

allow the district to keep expanding their offerings and college and career pathways for students. **CCSPP funding represents a key source of support and assistance to create a sustainable infrastructure for best practices for students and their families/caregivers.** Val Verde also designs robust course offerings for parents and caregivers to meet the needs and aspirations of the families in the community.

The Value of Continuous Improvement: Centering Learning for All

The Family Engagement Community Resource and Learning Center (the Center) stands on the campus of Tomás Rivera Middle School, just yards away from the main office. The Learning component at the heart of the community center reveals Val Verde's exceptional focus on learning for the entire community. The Center, a one-stop shop for Val Verde families offers a plethora of courses that help individuals build their skills, learn English, become familiar with new technology and better navigate educational spaces for the benefit of their children. There is a significant and mutually reinforcing connection between CCSPP funding and the work Val Verde Unified is doing through their Center. **The initial efforts supported by CCSPP funding have enabled the district to establish elements of this vital community resource center, which serves as a hub for family engagement and support within Val Verde Unified School District.** This funding not only enhances the resources available to the district families but also allows the Center to tailor services to meet the specific needs and aspirations of the community.

The course offerings at the Center change frequently because they are based on the input provided through their needs and assets processes. Families have shared how much they have learned from computer classes, English classes, parenting and workshops on well-being like yoga and healthy meal preparation. But the learning is further differentiated for special sub-groups of students, for example, foster families learn about resources they can leverage to support children under their care. Immigrant families are informed about the California Dream Act which allows them to access financial aid for their college bound students. In addition, families have the chance to share their assets with the school itself. According to Riverside County Coordinator, Amanda Wade, "Schools have always been a centerpiece of neighborhoods and communities, and we want to expand on that tradition and ensure that students have access to what they need to be successful in the classroom and beyond."

Val Verde is activating the whole village to transform the learning experiences of the whole community. Partners include Neighborhood Healthcare, Inland Empire Health Plan, Bordando Nuestras Raíces, Riverside University Health System, Families

Achieving Success, Stater Bros, Hanes, as well as many local community organizations and individuals. The Family Engagement Coordinators feel at home at Tomás Rivera Middle School as they interact with the principal, parents, families and students to help curate educational opportunities for families and provide the conditions conducive to learning. The Center is a testament to the longstanding efforts to operationalize a vision for spaces that serve the whole child and the whole family/community. “We wanted a laundromat for our families,” the Val Verde team recalls when reflecting on their journey. The team understood that access to services like laundromats and grocery stores is essential for families to fully participate in their children’s education.

This year, Val Verde is celebrating ten years since they officially launched their Family Engagement unit at the District Office. A special ribbon cutting ceremony was held on October 2nd to commemorate the work and to officially inaugurate their new Family Engagement Community Resource and Learning Center which now hosts a medical clinic. **The special ceremony was a moment to acknowledge the transformational work that’s been happening for ten years while appreciating the future and the role the CCSPP is playing in impacting the lives of children and families in Perris and neighboring cities.**

Story #4: Betty Reid Soskin Middle School

West Contra Costa Unified School District, Contra Costa County, Bay Area Region

West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) serves over 25,000 students in grades Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 12 across five different cities. Key partnerships with the City of San Pablo support the development of rich educational and civic engagement opportunities for young people. WCCUSD instituted a strategic collaborative leadership structure to support their community schools initiative that includes three tiers of steering committees: community school action collaboratives (at the site level), the community schools support collaborative (at the district level), and the systems change collaborative (includes cross-sector community decision makers). Although WCCUSD has a long history of community schooling, the CCSPP has re-ignited and enhanced the work happening in multiple schools. Impactful partnerships are improving the educational experiences and outcomes for students. **There are 26 CCSPP funded community schools in West Contra Costa and 32 community schools in total.**

The Value of Classroom-Community Connections

At Betty Reid Soskin Middle School, community schooling began over seven years ago but has expanded tremendously under the CCSPP to provide additional support for students and families. At the core of the school's work is the student as a learner, change agent and community member. Seventh grader Lilia explains that thanks to working with writing coaches she has improved dramatically in her ability to express herself through writing. Partnerships with Writer Coach Connection, Growing Together/Farms-to-School and Farms-to-Communities allow students to access relevant hands-on experiences that seamlessly blend writing instruction across the curriculum and science education with community health initiatives. According to seventh grade student Briyana, "We can make stuff from the garden, we know it's fresh, we know what's in it...and that it's healthy." Joaquin, also a seventh grader, shares: "I have become a really good community speaker...with this program, it's helped me get excited to give a speech in front of people, which can really help me in the future." Growing Together offers dedicated personnel like Farmer Matt, who works directly with students in both science classrooms and in the school farm to help students learn about sustainability, planting and harvesting healthy food, and culinary arts education. Students experience first-hand, community-based learning with sustainable farming practices, health education, as well as writing and speaking opportunities to share their learning and activism in the community.

Principal Jay Eirvin shares the impact of programs supported by the state funding: "For the second year, the CCSPP has enabled us to partner with organizations that support our goal of creating a space where students feel cared for and feel safe to achieve academically. Without the CCSPP, we would lose the partnerships with StudioFive10, Farm to Communities Program, and the Writers' Coach Connection. Additionally, we use CCSPP to fund a 0.6 Academic Counselor and provide a step pay increase for our Community Schools Director. **"We have built strong relationships with the community-based organizations in large part because of the CCSPP Implementation Grant. With the Farm to Communities program, the Soskin Farm has become a successful model in our district."**

The integration of both academic, social, and community-oriented learning helps students develop a deep sense of belonging and agency in their school. For more information, see this Community School Fellow video about:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WG2jMetwel>

Advancing Statewide Learning and Implementation

With the CCSPP planning and implementation grants came tangible support and resources to fuel and advance community schooling. At the onset of the third year of the

CCSPP we notice closer relationships between R-TACs and local educational agencies (LEAs). The relationships have evolved to incorporate a rich menu of learning opportunities, role-alike spaces for community school coordinators and in some instances for administrators as well as classroom teachers. Supportive coaching is happening across the state with various staff members driving over to meet district teams in person. In addition, R-TACs are providing key resources to better understand expenditure reports and other technical pieces of the work that facilitate the implementation of community schools. The S-TAC convenes spaces to help grantees connect to their regional centers and with each other. Informal networks are forged every month and folks traverse the state to meet each other and build new networks of support. Teams are centering the classroom and student voice, aligning the work under the community schools strategy, elevating the role families/caregivers and students play in decision-making bodies, and forging strong partnerships to sustain the work in the future. **Transformation is happening. More systems (e.g., LEAs, consortia) are leveraging community schooling as a coherence strategy that can align and integrate allied initiatives taking root in our state.**

California Department of Education, November 2024