



2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



SANTA CRUZ
COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION

DR. FARIS SABBAAH • SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



CONTENTS

4

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

5

WHO WE ARE

6

BOARD OF EDUCATION

7

SERVING A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

9

SUPPORTING SAFETY & WELLNESS

13

EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

19

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



It is with a sense of deep appreciation that I share the Santa Cruz County Office of Education's 2023-24 Annual Report to the Community—highlighting the strides we have made together to support our students, educators, and families over the past year.

Throughout the 2023-24 school year, we worked closely with school districts, families, and community partners to foster a sense of belonging for students of all identities, guided by our commitment to creating safe, inclusive spaces where every learner can thrive.

School safety is a pillar of this work, and became a focal point for our office during the year. In partnership with a coalition of districts, law enforcement agencies and fire departments, we introduced the Santa Cruz County Standard Command Response for Schools to unify emergency preparedness training and protocols (p. 10). Likewise, we continued to partner with health providers to raise awareness about fentanyl and opioids—a campaign that led us to work with an exceptional student filmmaker to host informational film screenings and panel discussions (p. 11).

We are equally committed to supporting educators and fostering a representative, sustainable workforce within our schools. With the launch of the ed.PATH initiative, we are creating accessible pathways for recruitment, retention and advancement for TK-12 educators (p. 22). Meanwhile, programs like our new wildland fire academy (p. 15) and the Central Coast K-16 Collaborative are equipping students with the skills and support to succeed in high-demand fields.

This year marked a milestone for student voice with the appointment of the first-ever student trustee to the Santa Cruz County Board of Education, Oscar Alvarez-Delgado, a senior at Pajaro Valley High (p. 6). Building on the success of student trustee positions at our secondary school districts, this position ensures that students have a seat at the table in shaping decisions that affect their education. It is part of a broader approach to develop student leaders from across our community through programs such as the Youth Led Leadership Alliance and Student Trustee Academy (p. 18).

Innovation and STEAM education were also in the spotlight in 2023-24. The inaugural STEAM Expo brought together young scientists, innovators, and performers (p. 16), while our countywide robotics clubs achieved an extraordinary third-place finish at the MATE ROV World Championship in the program's first year—a testament to the power of teamwork and perseverance (p. 17).

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our educators, the passion of our students, and the support of our community partners.

Thank you, so much, for your role in ensuring every child in Santa Cruz County has equitable access to achieve their dreams.

Yours in education and equity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Faris Sabbah". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Faris Sabbah
Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools

WHO WE ARE



Santa Cruz COE staff at the 2024 Staff Picnic.

The **Santa Cruz County Office of Education** (Santa Cruz COE) is a public agency striving to support an equitable and innovative education system for all Santa Cruz County students. Our commitment is to support educators and ensure all learners have the educational opportunities they need to thrive. To accomplish this goal, we provide a wide range of services and programs geared at supporting our 10 public school districts, directly serving students, and expanding educational opportunities and outcomes for 38,000 students—and all learners who call Santa Cruz County home.

Three-Level System

In California, public primary and secondary education operates at three levels: state, county, and local. Regulations, funding, and fundamental policies are established at the state level, while the day-to-day schooling of children is the responsibility of more than 1,000 local school districts. At the middle level are the 58 county offices of education, which provide services to students and oversight roles.



Learn more about the Santa Cruz COE.
sccoe.link/aboutus

Our Mission and Vision

At the Santa Cruz COE, we envision a community with engaged learners and leaders who possess the social, emotional, academic, and technical skills to thrive in a changing world. Our mission is to lead an equitable and innovative learner-centered educational system. We uphold values of equity, innovation, partnership, and excellence, striving to create and improve programs, practices, and policies that ensure every learner has opportunities and support systems addressing their educational goals and needs

1,546



Students

339



Staff

45



Sites

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Meet the Trustees

The Santa Cruz County Board of Education is made up of seven trustees, each representing a specific trustee area within the County. Trustees are elected by

the voters of their respective areas and serve four-year terms. Elections are staggered, with three trustees elected during one even-numbered year and the remaining

four in the next even-numbered year. The County Superintendent of Schools serves as the Secretary to the Board.



Sue Roth
Trustee, Area 1



Bruce Van Allen
Trustee, Area 2



Sandra Nichols
Trustee, Area 3



Edward Estrada
Trustee, Area 4



Rachel Williams
Trustee, Area 5



Ed Acosta
Trustee, Area 6



Abel Sanchez
Trustee, Area 7



Faris Sabbah
Secretary to the Board



Oscar Alvarez-Delgado
Student Trustee

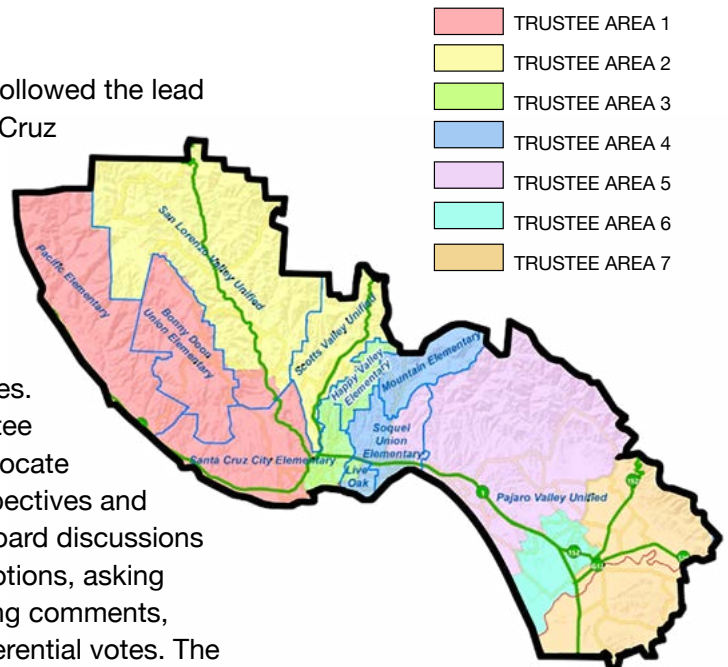
Above: The 2023-24 Santa Cruz County Board of Education. For up-to-date information visit sccoe.link/board.

A Milestone for Student Voice



In the 2023-24 school year, the Santa Cruz County Board of Education reached a significant milestone with the appointment of its first-ever student trustee, Oscar Alvarez-Delgado, a senior from Pajaro Valley High School. This historic moment marked a new chapter in the Board's commitment to amplifying student voice in local education.

trustee position followed the lead of several Santa Cruz County school districts, including all four high school districts, that have recently introduced similar roles. The student trustee serves as an advocate for student perspectives and participates in Board discussions by presenting motions, asking questions, offering comments, and casting preferential votes. The creation of this position underscores the Board's commitment to ensuring that students play an active role in shaping the educational policies that affect them.



Explore Board meetings, policies & more.
sccoe.link/board

SERVING A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

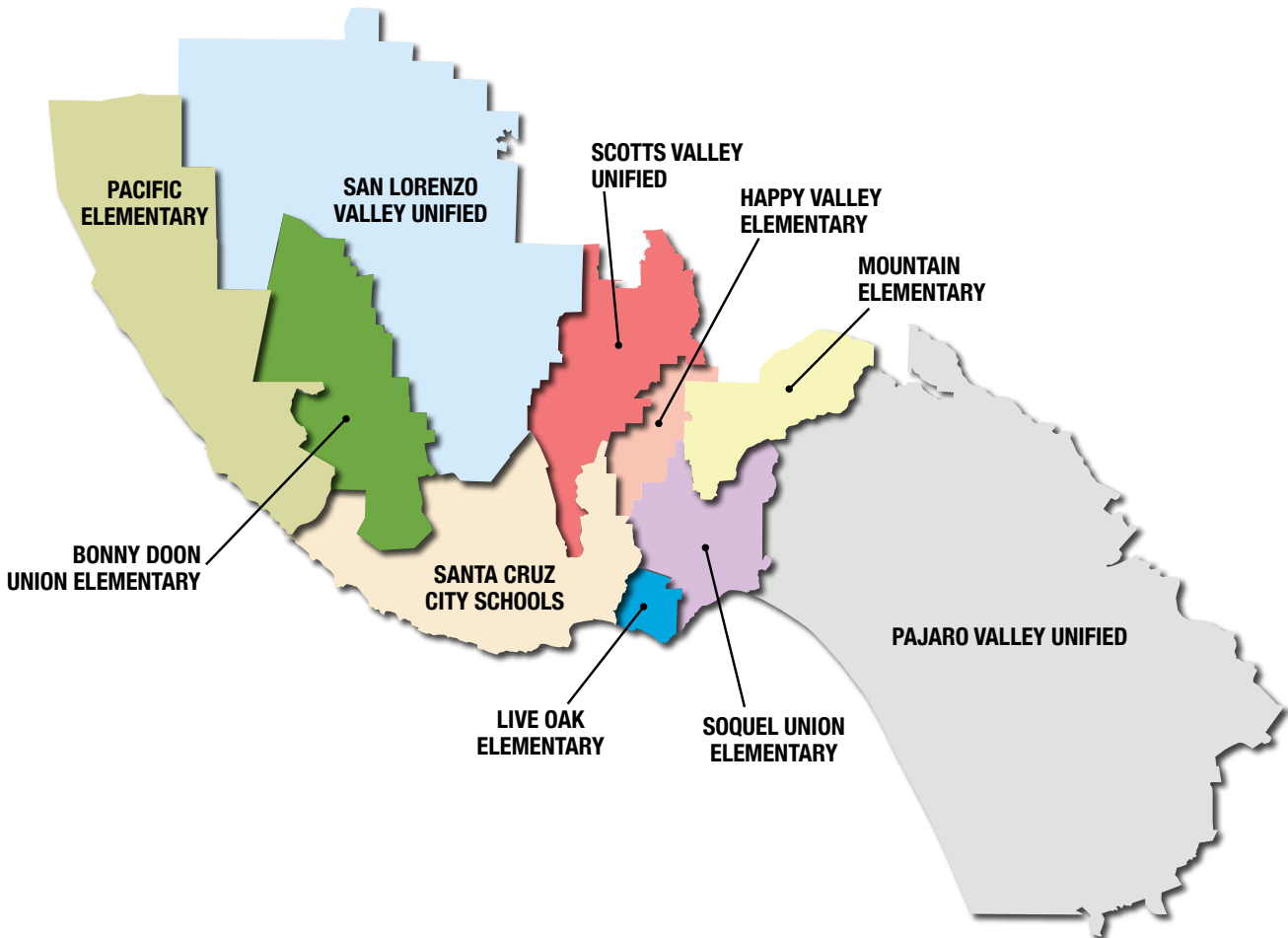
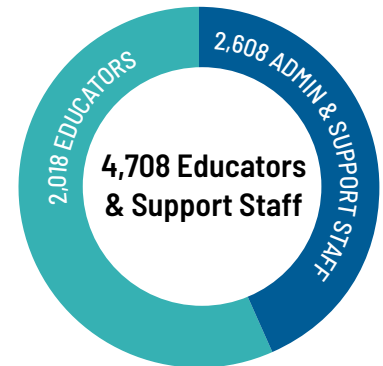
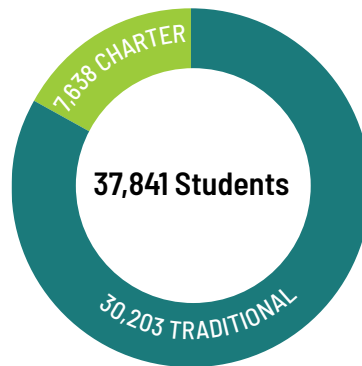
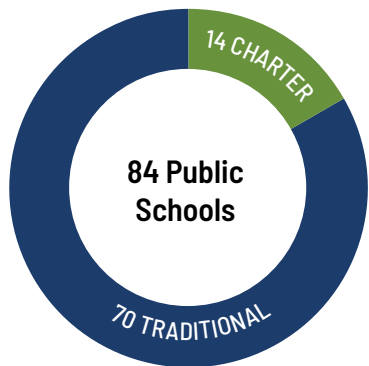
Located on the California Central Coast, Santa Cruz County is the second-smallest county in the state by land size and is home to about 262,000 residents. First incorporated in 1850, the land was inhabited for thousands of years prior by the Awaswas-speaking people whose descendants continue to actively steward the land with traditional practices



Connect with Santa Cruz County school districts.
sccoe.link/districts

today. Santa Cruz County encompasses the four cities of Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Capitola, and Scotts Valley, as well as large swaths of unincorporated land ranging from agricultural fields to

redwood forests. Its residents are served by 10 public school districts and the Santa Cruz COE with a total enrollment of nearly 38,000 students in the public school system in grades TK-12, 23% of whom are categorized as English Learners and 54% of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. More than half of all students identify as Hispanic or Latine.



SERVING A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Student Demographics

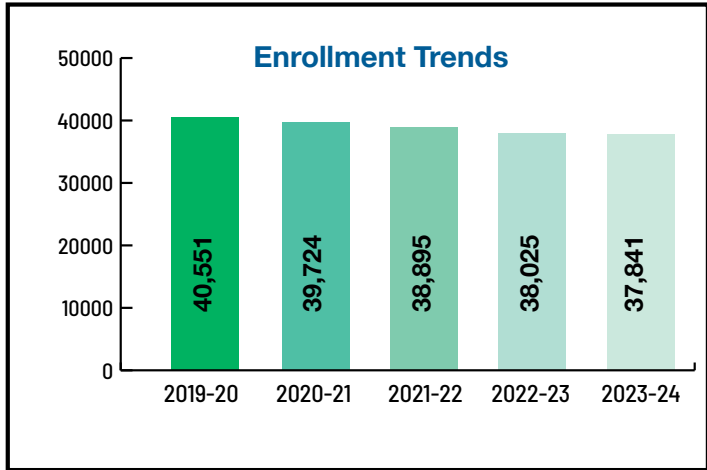
Santa Cruz County’s public schools serve a richly diverse student population of 37,841 students as of the 2023-24 academic year. The county’s ethnic composition reflects this diversity, with most students (57.6%) identifying as Hispanic/Latine, about a third of students identified as White, and smaller percentages representing Asian, African American, and other ethnic groups. The county’s Ethnic Diversity Index of 0.65 highlights a moderately balanced distribution among these groups.

Most students (54.1%) in Santa Cruz County are socioeconomically disadvantaged. More than 22% are categorized as English learners, and Spanish is the most common home language after English, with other languages such as Mixteco, Tagalog, and Mandarin further contributing to the county’s linguistic and cultural diversity.

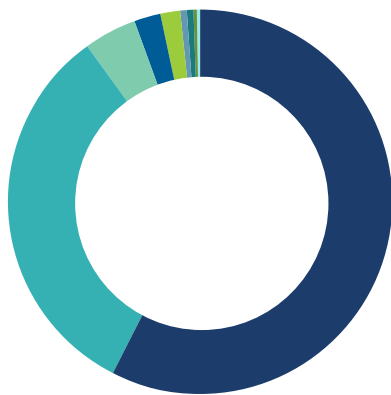
Public school enrollment is on a downward trend, both in Santa Cruz County and statewide. This trend is anticipated to continue for the next decade. The Santa Cruz COE works with school districts to ensure the school community is ready to meet evolving needs while maintaining fiscal stability.



Access additional data on the COE's Data Portal. sccoe.link/data



Ethnicity



- 21,801** Hispanic or Latine
- 12,341** White
- 1,701** Two or More Races
- 831** Asian
- 558** Not Reported
- 230** Filipino
- 227** African American
- 77** Pacific Islander
- 75** American Indian or Alaska Native

2023-24 ENROLLMENT	
DISTRICT	STUDENTS
Pajaro Valley Unified	17,520
San Lorenzo Valley Unified	5,540
Santa Cruz City High	4,504
Scotts Valley Unified	2,694
Santa Cruz City Elementary	1,768
Live Oak Elementary	1,675
Soquel Union Elementary	1,566
Santa Cruz County Office of Education	1,564
Other	461
Pacific Elementary	167
Mountain Elementary	163
Happy Valley Elementary	122
Bonny Doon Union Elementary	97

SUPPORTING SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Our Goal: Every learner is safe, connected, supported, and socially and emotionally healthy.



SUPPORTING SAFETY AND WELLNESS

School Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Standard Command Response for Schools

The **Santa Cruz County Standard Command Response for Schools (SCRS)** is a uniform approach to school safety emergency response first implemented in the 2023-24 school year. SCRS is now adopted by the Sheriff's Office, law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and school districts within Santa Cruz County, with the goal of fully aligning emergency response procedures to facilitate clear communication and efficient response to any emergency impacting a school site.

Participating Santa Cruz County schools trained all staff and students in SCRS, utilizing presentations and video demonstrations created by the COE with partner support. Additionally, all first responders have been trained in the terms used for emergency response, and more than 1,000 classroom and office spaces were supplied with Standard Command Response for Schools Posters.



Threat Assessment

Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines (CSTAG) is a proven, evidence-based protocol for assessing potential threats in schools. CSTAG focuses on early intervention to resolve student conflicts before they escalate. By training staff in this method, schools aim to foster a safer, more respectful environment. So far, 150 representatives from Santa Cruz school districts and school resource officers have been certified to use CSTAG.

Incident Command Academy

Convened by the Santa Cruz COE, the **Incident Command Academy** for school administrators completed year two for comprehensive and charter schools. Additionally, a new cohort of early childhood education center administrators have completed their first year of the Incident Command Academy.



Learn more about school safety programs.
sccoe.link/safety

Tobacco Use Prevention and Education

The Santa Cruz COE promotes tobacco-free school environments through the **Tobacco Use Prevention and Education (TUPE)** program, offering training, technical assistance, and guidance for enforcing tobacco-free policies.

In October 2023, TUPE partnered with Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance to host the first countywide vape education

professional development day. Trainers from Stanford REACH Lab presented a curriculum on vape prevention and intervention, exploring connections between tobacco, nicotine, and cannabis. Over 100 participants, including school nurses, resource officers, counselors, and substance/mental health representatives, attended the event.

Youth played a central role in highlighting the harms of tobacco. Empower Watsonville students shared substance-use survey data, and students from Watsonville Wetlands Watch authored a proclamation, adopted by the County Board of Supervisors, declaring April 1, 2024, as Take Down Tobacco Day—a youth-led movement against Big Tobacco.

SUPPORTING SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Fentanyl and Opioid Awareness

In 2023-24, the Santa Cruz COE intensified its efforts to combat the opioid crisis, including by hosting two screenings of the film “Fentanyl High.” This impactful film, directed and produced by high school student Kyle Santoro, of Los Gatos, delves into the opioid epidemic through the perspectives of adolescents. The first screening took place on May 2, 2024, at the Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz, followed by a screening at the Green Valley Cinelux in Watsonville. Both events featuring a panel discussion with the filmmaker, educators, experts,



‘Fentanyl High’ director Kyle Santoro speaks at a screening in May 2024.

family members of those impacted, and high school peers. Attendees received resources such as “Let’s Talk” booklets and tip sheets on recognizing overdose signs, as well

as naloxone distributed by SafeRx Santa Cruz County.

The COE continues to work with SafeRx Santa Cruz County, school districts, and other partners to increase awareness and access to naloxone, including by distributing bilingual “Let’s Talk” booklets to incoming 9th grade families and partnering to host naloxone distributions and trainings.



View school health resources and information. sccoe.link/health

Youth Mental Health First Aid

The Santa Cruz COE began offering **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)** training to school districts and community partners in the 2022-23 school year, providing adults with tools to identify, understand, and respond to youth mental health and substance use challenges. The training covers topics such as anxiety, depression, substance use, eating disorders, disruptive behavior disorders, and psychosis-related disorders. Participants learn a 5-step action plan to support young people in crisis and non-crisis situations, fostering a proactive and informed approach to mental health care.

More than 151 Youth Mental Health First Aiders

have been certified to date, spanning numerous school districts and community-based organizations. Participants include staff from school districts and community organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, CASA of Santa Cruz, and Monarch Services.

Looking ahead, the COE is excited to introduce teen Mental Health First Aid Instructor training, empowering students to directly support their peers. By equipping both adults and youth with the skills to recognize and address mental health issues, we are working to foster a culture of awareness, advocacy, and care to support the wellbeing of all youth.

Centering Wellness

Santa Cruz County School Districts and the COE are working together to enable high schools to open an on-campus **Wellness Center** that will offer universal, coordinated, and timely mental health-related services to all students through an easily accessible location. This inclusive environment reduces barriers to access services, maximizing student engagement and success.

Research shows students are 10 to 21 times more likely to receive behavioral health services when they are provided on a school campus. These Wellness Centers will also serve as a key linkage point foundational to the success of all families and students

in our region. Through this effort, we aim to destigmatize mental health, offering an open door to wellness for students at all levels of need, and integrate a community of support between school staff and agencies to remove barriers to care.

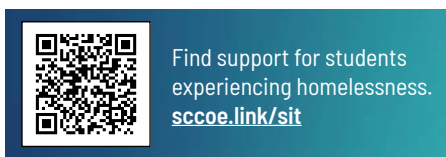
Planning and implementation is underway to open the first few Wellness Centers in three Santa Cruz County school districts in the 2024-25 school year, with the goal to open additional Wellness Centers at every comprehensive high school in the county over the next several years. This work is supported by the federal Community Project grant and state Project Cal-Well grant.

SUPPORTING SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Students in Transition

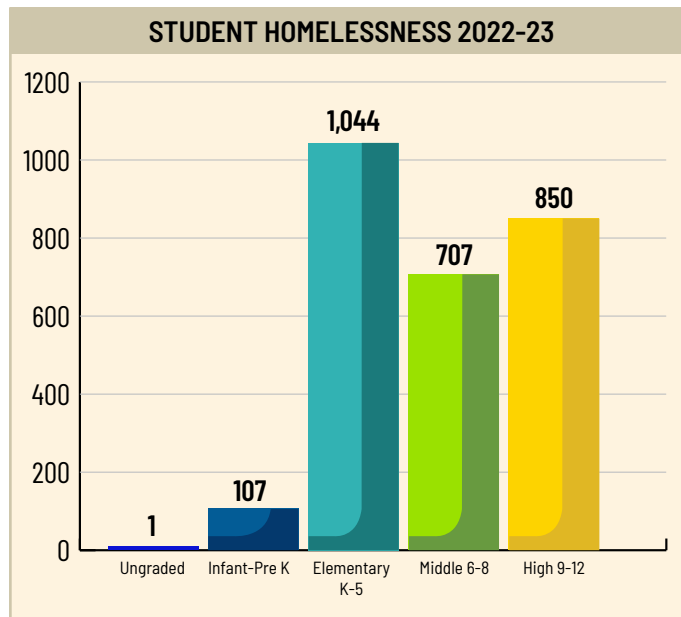
The Santa Cruz COE has been dedicated to serving homeless children and youth in our community since 1989. Our **Students in Transition** (SIT) program utilizes a comprehensive approach that addresses enrollment, retention, and academic success, helping students transition to self-sufficient futures. Recognized nationally as a best-practice model, SIT collaborates with schools, social services, nonprofits, and the wider community to meet the needs of the whole child and family.

The SIT program's count of youth homelessness, released in Fall 2023, identified 2,709 Santa Cruz County students experiencing homelessness in the 2022-23 school year under the McKinney-Vento Act definition, including 69 unsheltered, 81 in hotels/motels, 319 in shelters, and 2,240 in doubled-up living situations. The SIT program received 126 student referrals and provided advocacy and essential resources, including support with school enrollment and transportation and over 2,500 backpacks through the Stuff the Bus program, and 110 emergency hotel stays for unsheltered students. SIT also distributed shoes, gift cards, and farm bags to families in need. In conjunction with FosterEd, SIT hosted 15 professional development sessions, training over 80 educators and community partners throughout the year.



Companion Project

The **Companion Project** provides students with meaningful support, referrals and connections to behavioral health and substance use services, working in partnership with Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health. The project broadens available responses to reduce stigma, while promoting resiliency, wellness and student engagement within the school setting. In the 2023-24 school year—the project's second year—the Companion Project served 228 students, with referrals from every Santa Cruz County school district.



Data from the 2022-23 Annual Count of Homeless Students in Schools, conducted by the SIT program.

Foster Youth Services

The Santa Cruz COE's **Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program**, works to improve educational outcomes for students in foster care. Through the **FosterEd** program model, we support foster youth ages 5-20 in Santa Cruz County, providing advocacy, resources, and trauma-informed strategies to ensure academic and personal success.

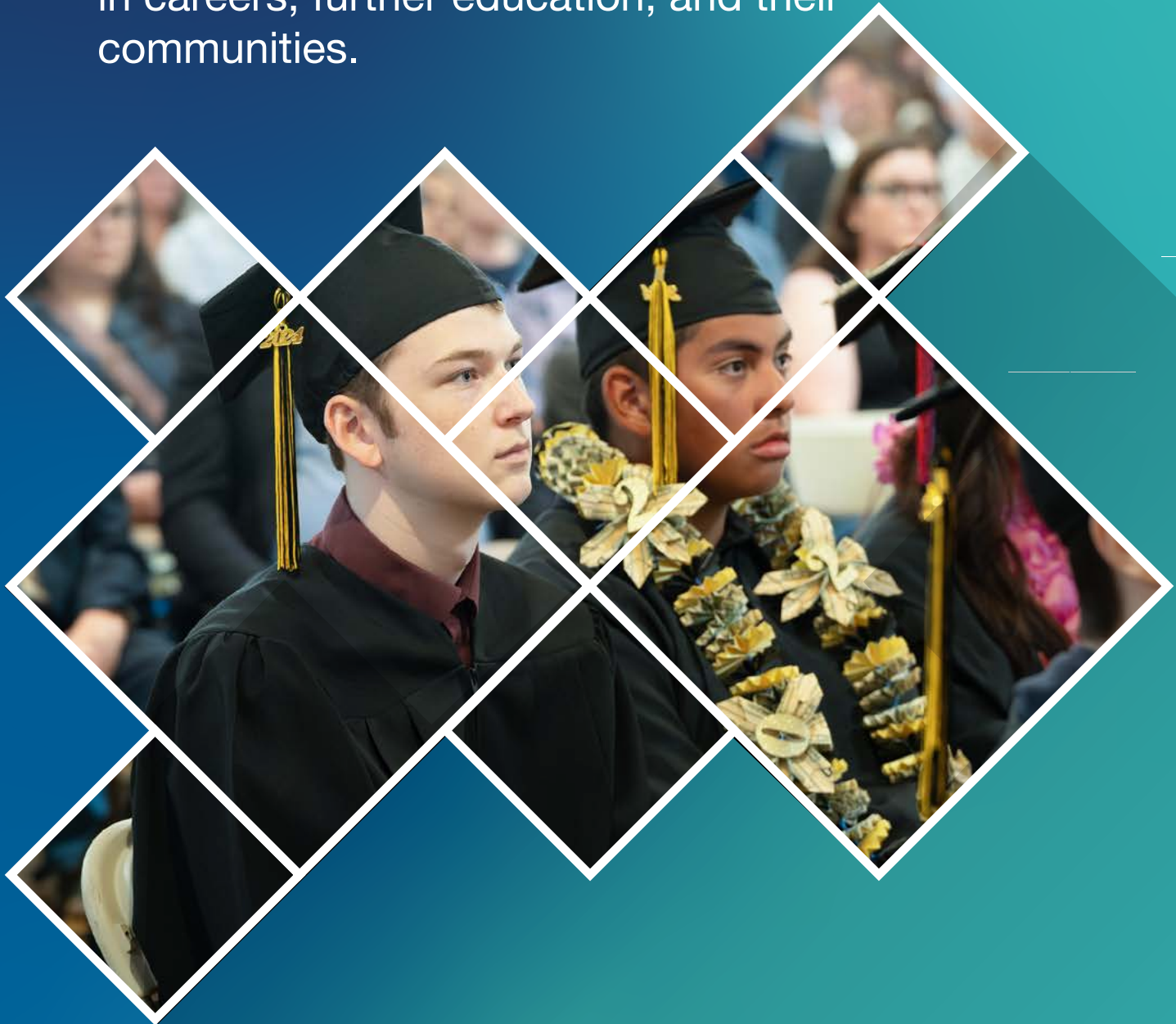
In collaboration with Family and Children's Services, school districts, CASA, Cabrillo College, and others, FosterEd helps identify foster youth, connect them to resources, and facilitate timely school enrollments and record transfers. The program supports

high school transitions, college and career readiness, and access to special resources for older youth.

In 2023-24, FosterEd served 163 students, including 16 McKinney-Vento students, built education teams and case plans, and provided critical resources like graduation waivers under AB 2121. Professional development efforts included training educators and caregivers on trauma-informed strategies and foster youth rights. FosterEd's collaborative approach ensures coordinated support among schools, families, and service providers, empowering foster youth to achieve their educational goals.

EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

Our Goal: All learners have the academic and non-academic skills and supports to be actively engaged and successful in careers, further education, and their communities.



EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

Serving Learners of All Ages

The Santa Cruz COE provides comprehensive support for learners from early childhood through adulthood, ensuring every member of the school community is supported throughout their educational journey. From addresses the needs of infants and toddlers with developmental delays, to specialized services for K-12 students with unique learning needs, we prioritize individualized growth and



Explore programs for learners of all ages.
scooe.link/student-services

achievement. For students seeking alternative educational paths, the COE offers supportive, small-group learning environments that guide students toward high school completion. The COE's Career and Adult Learning Services, meanwhile, provide high school and adult learners with hands-on training and essential job skills in high-demand fields, bridging academic accomplishments with real-world readiness.

Alternative Education



The **Alternative Education Department** is a pillar of the services provided by the Santa Cruz COE, with 22 programs serving close to 900 students in grades 7-12. Our WASC-accredited Alternative Education schools provide standards-based instruction in safe, supportive and structured environments for students in need of a small-school setting. Teachers meet students where they are and develop an individually tailored academic program. High school students are able to earn credit towards graduation, and develop life and employment skills.

Students who enroll in our programs may recover credits to transfer back to their district school for graduation, or graduate from one of our programs in preparation for college or the world of work. Our Alternative Education programs boasted 335 graduates during the 2023-2024 school year.

Special Education

The Santa Cruz COE's **Special Education Department** is focused on providing students with highly effective individualized instruction and related support services so each student can achieve their full educational, social emotional, and vocational potential.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the department served 155 students with extensive support needs through programs including the **Early Start Program**, for infants and toddlers, ages birth to three years and in cooperation with the San Andreas Regional Center; **Chrysalis Autism Program**, providing services

incorporating evidence based practices for students with autism in special day classrooms for students from preschool through twelfth grade; **Extensive Support Needs Programs**, integrating basic skills, life skills, functional curriculum, communication and prevocational skills for students who require direct instruction in all areas of development; and the **Post-Senior Student Programs**, providing the opportunity for students 18-22 years of age to participate in vocational skills training and job experiences in the community after receiving a certificate of completion from their high schools.



EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

Career and Adult Learning Services



The Santa Cruz COE's **Career and Adult Learning Services (CALS)** Department works to provide students with the opportunity to acquire academic, career, and technical skills and to prepare for life-long learning and success in the changing workplace.

We accomplish this mission through programs providing high school diploma and equivalency services for adult learners (**Career Advancement Charter**), a workforce development program for 16-24 year olds (**Sueños**), magnet high school programs, and career training programs for adults. We work closely with district and in-

dustry business partners to stay up to date with industry and workforce trends.

CALS also offers fee-based programs for adults. Our 10-month Dental Assisting and Medical Assisting programs prepare our students to become board certified. Most students are already employed before program completion.

We also provide a **Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship** program (BTPA). This 10 week course, which debuted in 2022, is focused on preparing adult students to enter an apprenticeship program, continue education at Cabrillo

Wildland Fire Academy Blazes Trails

In 2023-24 the Santa Cruz COE launched the Wildland Fire Academy in partnership with CAL FIRE and the California Conservation Corps. This intensive six-week program equips adult students with essential skills and certifications for entry-level wildfire management roles. The curriculum combines field and classroom training on fire suppression techniques, tool use and maintenance, hose lays and mobile attack, and chainsaw operation, culminating in certification exams that meet CAL FIRE and National Wildfire Coordinating Group standards. Two cohorts completed the program in its inaugural year.

College, or directly enter the local workforce. The COE offered six cohorts of this popular program in 2023-24, including expanding to two cohorts at the Rountree Detention Facility.



Find out more about career training and adult learning. sccoe.link/cals

Early Childhood Education

The Santa Cruz COE provides professional development for early educators, assists families in finding child care, and delivers data to lawmakers to improve care for children from birth to 13. Child Development Programs

include the **Child Development Resource Center (CDRC)** and the **Childhood Advisory Council (CAC)**. The CDRC is a one-stop resource for Santa Cruz County families, with Child Care Referral Specialists available by phone or

in person to connect families with licensed child care options. The CAC, meanwhile, brings together parents, providers, businesses, and government to support early care and education.

EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

Introducing the Santa Cruz County STEAM Expo



The inaugural **Santa Cruz County STEAM Expo** was a resounding success, bringing together over 110 students from grades K-12 to showcase their science and engineering projects alongside an interactive expo and engaging performances.

The event marked the first full-scale expo after plans for the 2023 debut were postponed due to severe storms and flooding in Pajaro Valley, which limited access to the fairgrounds.

Held in March 2024 at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, the

STEAM Expo represented an expansion of the traditional Santa Cruz County Science Fair with the goal of fostering more connections with industry and community partners to empower career exploration and foster connections between students, educators, and professionals.

Throughout the day, community members had the opportunity to view the Science Fair projects and witness the remarkable work of Santa Cruz County's young innovators. Award categories celebrated student achievements, with top projects advancing to



state and international science and engineering competitions.

The Santa Cruz County STEAM Expo reinforced the value of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education and created a vibrant space for students to explore and share their diverse interests.



Find out more about the STEAM Expo.
sccoe.link/steamexpo

Central Coast K-16 Collaborative

Formed in 2023, the **Central Coast K-16 Collaborative** envisions a region where historically marginalized students achieve their goals in K-16 education and local industry, securing high-wage, high-impact careers that provide upward mobility. To achieve this, the Collaborative focuses on systemic changes that benefit economically disadvantaged students while ensuring fair representation of community and student voices.

Led by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education, Cabrillo College, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Santa Barbara, the initiative spans six counties—Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa

Barbara, and Ventura—covering over 300 miles and serving a population of 2.5 million. It brings together K-12 schools, community colleges, CSUs, UCs, and industry partners to address educational and economic inequities.

Using data-informed practices, the Collaborative is committed to eliminating systemic inequities and advancing equity for the region's students over the next three years. Through collaboration and diverse leadership, the Central Coast K-16 Collaborative aims to ensure college and career readiness as a cornerstone of community growth.

EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

Robotics Club Makes a Splash on World Stage

“The team spent countless hours and late nights fixing the float and improving everything. From late-night Zoom meetings to countless hours practicing in the pool, we took every opportunity to practice, and it paid off!”

–Sophia Caselleto, Pacific Collegiate School junior

The **Santa Cruz COE X Academy Robotics Clubs** had a remarkable first year, sending a team of high school students to the MATE ROV Competition World Championship in Tennessee where they clinched a remarkable 3rd Place finish on the global stage.

Comprising 13 students from six Santa Cruz County high schools, the Hephaestus team earned top scores in their engineering presentation and marketing poster and demonstrated outstanding technical skill with their underwater devices, “Talos IV” and “Vulcan III.” The club, launched in partnership with the nonprofit X Academy at the start of the 2023-24 school year, provided free, hands-on robotics experience to students from across the county.

The MATE ROV competition tasks students with designing underwater robots to perform real-world environmental tasks, such as coral transplanting and creating 3D models. In its inaugural year, the Robotics Clubs engaged 52 students from 17 schools, who



The Hephaestus Robotics Team won 3rd place in its division at the 2024 MATE ROV World Championship.

met weekly to develop their skills in programming, engineering, and robotics. Under the guidance of 14 volunteer mentors, students gained hands-on experience in the fields of software programming, electrical, and mechanical engineering.

The Santa Cruz COE X Academy Robotics Clubs program is a partnership with nonprofit the X Academy, founded by Tim Sylvester and Barbara Meister in 2014. With chapters in Watsonville and Santa Cruz, the program is available at no cost to all high school students in Santa Cruz.



Find out more about the Robotics Clubs.
sccoe.link/robotics

Career Technical Education

Career Technical Education Magnet courses are a vital option for high school students exploring careers across diverse sectors. The COE’s high-quality courses allow students to earn high school and college credit while meeting UC A-G requirements.

In 2023-24, CTE Magnet courses offered by the Santa Cruz COE included **Fire Technology**, **Culinary Arts**, and **Information, Communications and Technology (ICT)**. Students had the opportunity to earn a non-credit

Career Skills Certification through Cabrillo College, build professional portfolios through our new Career Highways partnership, and showcase their work at the end-of-year Student Showcase.

Additionally, the Santa Cruz COE received a Golden State Grant to expand an engineering pathway with makerspaces and CTE exploration and strengthened ties with the local tech industry by co-hosting the AI and ME ThinkBig! event in Spring 2024.

EMPOWERING EQUITABLE ACHIEVEMENT

Stuff the Bus Provides More than 2,000 Backpacks



Stuff the Bus raised more than \$25,000 to provide more than 2,000 backpacks filled with essential supplies to students facing significant hardships.

behind academically, socially, and economically. Backpacks are also distributed throughout the year on an as-needed basis. In the 2022-23 school year, for instance, hundreds of backpacks were distributed to students in the Pajaro Valley who were impacted by the winter floods.

The Santa Cruz COE would like to thank the many volunteers, partners, sponsors and donors whose generous support enables Stuff the Bus to meet our community's needs.

The Santa Cruz COE and United Way of Santa Cruz County once again partnered to host **Stuff the Bus**, a campaign to ensure all students have the backpacks and supplies they need to succeed in the classroom. In its 14th year,

More than 2,800 students in Santa Cruz County face homelessness and other significant hardships, making it challenging to have the necessary supplies when school starts later this summer. These children are at risk of falling



Find out how to get involved with Stuff the Bus.
sccoe.link/stb

Youth Led Leadership Alliance



The **Youth Led Leadership Alliance (YLLA)** empowers high school students across Santa Cruz County to lead change in their communities through advocacy, project-based learning, and civic engagement. Established in 2020, YLLA brings together six groups focused on key issues: Youth for Environmental Action, Youth Artists Taking Action, the Countywide Black Student Union, Queer & Trans Youth Council, Youth Mental Health Leadership Council, and Multilingual Youth Taking Action. Representing students from every county high

school, YLLA's model allows students to set their own agendas, vote on initiatives, and collaborate across diverse identities and backgrounds to address issues they are passionate about.

YLLA has already made a significant impact, including influencing local policy. Through advocacy from Youth for Environmental Action, the Santa Cruz County Board of Education adopted a climate action resolution in 2021, demonstrating how YLLA's grassroots, student-led model fosters real-world change. YLLA participants also develop crucial skills like critical thinking and civic responsibility, which not only benefit their academic and career readiness but help bridge access gaps by creating inclusive, equitable leadership opportunities for students across the county.

Student Trustee Academy

The **Student Trustee Academy** is a summer workshop provided by the Santa Cruz COE that aims to prepare high school students from across the county to step into the roles of student trustees on their respective school boards — or simply deepen their knowledge of the functioning of district governance and how to amplify student voice.

Students participate in six sessions to study topics such as the Brown Act, Robert's Rules of Order, public speaking, ethics, and more under the direct mentorship of Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Faris Sabbah. Students then address the Santa Cruz County Board of Education to share their experience and goals as student leaders and advocates.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Our Goal: The education system in Santa Cruz County is cohesive, effective, and equitable.



BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Honoring Outstanding Educators

The Santa Cruz COE is proud to honor the **2024 Santa Cruz County Educator of the Year Award** recipients, recognizing educators who embody the values and dedication of our school community. Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Faris Sabbah and the Santa Cruz County

Board of Education presented these awards at the May 16 County Board of Education meeting.

The selection committee reviewed nominations based on criteria including passion for learning, high student expectations, collaboration, integrity, professional ethics, subject expertise, and community

commitment.

Honorees received plaques acknowledging their service to Santa Cruz County, and their names will be engraved on the Educators of the Year perpetual plaque displayed in the Santa Cruz COE foyer.

2024 Educator of the Year Award

Teacher of the Year



Russell Bryan Love
Lead Teacher, New School Community Day School, Pajaro Valley Unified School District

Counselor of the Year



Soledad Hess
Social Emotional Counselor, Mission Hill Middle School, Santa Cruz City Schools

Administrator of the Year



Cristal Renteria
Director of Alternative Education, Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Classified Employee of the Year



Jennifer Konicke
After School Program Coordinator and Classroom Aide, Pacific Elementary School, Pacific Elementary School District

Community Partner of the Year



Woodstock's Pizza



BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Budgeting and Business Services

The **Business Services Division** is responsible for managing the Santa Cruz COE's financial activities and provides business support services to local school districts. In addition to our state-mandated services of school district budget review, fiscal oversight, and pupil attendance accounting, we help school districts save money by providing regional services such as information technology services, payroll processing, vendor payments, data compilation and other countywide financial support services.

Funding Formula

School districts receive funding from different sources: state funds under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), other state funds, local funds, and federal funds. LCFF funds include a base level of funding for all local educational agencies (LEAs) and extra funding — called “supplemental and concentration” grants — based on the enrollment of high-needs students such as foster youth, English learners, and low-income students. In 2022-23, the most recent year for which all budgeting information was finalized, the COE received \$60,418,083 in revenue, 54% of which came from the Local Control Funding Formula.

Where Funds Come From

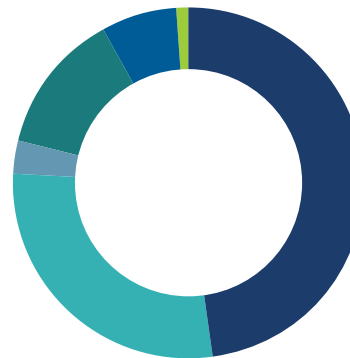
Total: \$60,418,083



- 54% LCFF Revenues
- 20% Other Local Revenues
- 15% Other State Revenues
- 11% Federal Revenues

How Funds Are Used

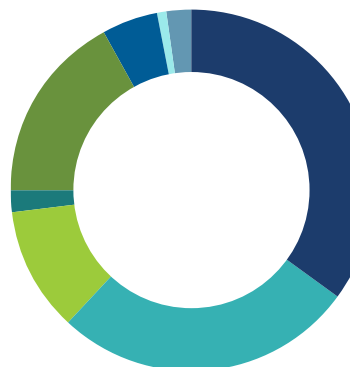
Total: \$56,519,621



- 48% Salaries
- 28% Employee Benefits
- 13% Services
- 7% Other
- 3% Books and Supplies
- 1% Capital Outlay

23-24 Proposed Expenditures by Program

Total: \$56,509,408



- 35% General Unrestricted
- 27% Alternative Education
- 17% Local Programs
- 11% Restricted Categoricals
- 5% Charter Schools
- 2% Routine Restricted Maintenance
- 2% Child Development
- 0.1% Adult Education



Learn more about district and financial services.
sccoe.link/business

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Pathways for Educators

The **Educator's Professional Advancement and Teaching Hub** (ed.PATH) is an initiative launched by the Santa Cruz County Office of Education in the 2023-24 school year. Its mission is to create an educational ecosystem that inspires and engages each student toward academic success, providing educators with access to professional advancement regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. This initiative aims to ensure that educators are highly effective and remain passionate about their profession.

ed.PATH offers various resources and opportunities, including:

- **Santa Cruz Classified Employee Grant (SCCEG):** A scholarship program for classified employees of Santa Cruz County school districts to pursue a teaching career.
- **Professional Development:** Access to free or low-cost programs and communities of practice to enhance professional knowledge and skills.
- **Roadmap to Teaching:** Guidance on the steps to become a credentialed teacher in California, with support from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) Education

Career Counselors.

- **Wellness Resources:** Emphasis on teacher wellness as a crucial component of creating a nurturing and effective learning environment.

Additionally, ed.PATH publishes a monthly newsletter featuring the latest news, financial opportunities, and professional development resources for educators.



Learn more about the ed.PATH initiative. sccoe.link/edPATH

New Teacher Project

Operated by the Santa Cruz COE, the **Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project** (SC/SVNTP) is a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing-accredited Induction program for both general education teachers and education specialists holding a preliminary credential.

In 2023-24 we partnered with 38 districts, charters and private

schools across parts of 5 counties (SC, Santa Clara, San Benito, Contra Costa, and San Mateo). In Santa Cruz County we supported 147 teachers through Induction and 430 as a program. Surveying of participating teachers demonstrates the project's positive impacts, including:

- 92% of Participating Teachers

agree their mentor helps them develop strategies that foster resilience and help them find joy in the profession.

- 91% of Participating Teachers are satisfied with their Induction experience.
- 92% reported that their teaching improved with the support of their mentor.

Focus on Family Engagement

The Santa Cruz COE is dedicated to fostering strong, collaborative relationships between families, schools, and communities. Grounded in the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships and inspired by the work of Dr. Karen Mapp, our Family Engagement program aims to empower families involved in COE programs, enrich the broader

community, and provide districts with comprehensive support in implementing best practices.

In 2023-2024, the COE created the position of Family Engagement Coordinator to lead these efforts and facilitate the **Family Engagement Collaborative**, which serves as a hub for professional development and resource sharing. This Collaborative brings

together 30 family engagement specialists from across the county to strengthen equitable partnerships between families, educators, and the community.

The Collaborative developed a 5 Essential Components for Transformational Family Engagement framework and met regularly to share resources and support professional learning.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Supporting Sustainability in Classrooms

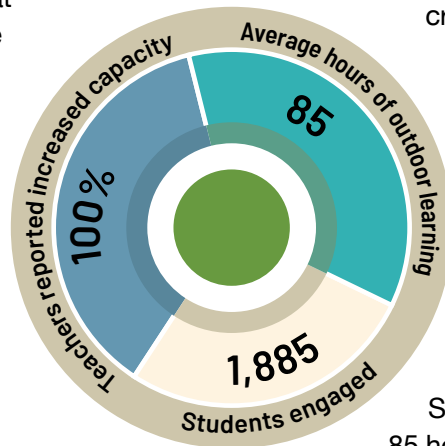
The **Teacher Leadership Institute for Sustainability** (TLIS) at the Santa Cruz COE is a pioneering professional development program that empowers TK-12 teachers to integrate environmental sustainability into their classrooms. Through TLIS, teachers gain skills to guide students in creating impactful, community-centered action projects focused on real-world environmental issues.

In the 2023-24 school year, the program engaged 1,885 students across Santa Cruz County in projects that benefited over 5,000 community members. These initiatives spanned several focus areas:

- **Restoration and Stewardship:** Students conducted trash audits in local wetlands, installed rainwater catchment systems to conserve water, and built pollinator gardens to enhance biodiversity. Projects also included plastic pollution reduction and campus landscape rehabilitation.
- **Promoting Sustainable Choices:** To build a culture of sustainability, students explored connections between food, health, and the environment. Initiatives aimed to reduce food and packaging waste in school lunches, instilling lifelong

environmental habits.

- **Community and Civic Engagement:** Students created trail maps and field guides for community use and developed Environmental Impact Reports on local school construction, presenting actionable recommendations to school boards. They also identified urban heat islands and shared mitigation strategies, addressing local environmental justice issues.



Students engaged in an average of 85 hours of outdoor learning, while 100% of participating teachers reported increased capacity to integrate sustainability across curricula. Teachers also strengthened partnerships with local environmental organizations, bringing expertise and resources into classrooms.

The TLIS program demonstrates how student-driven projects can benefit schools and communities alike by fostering sustainable practices, enhancing campus green spaces, reducing waste, and promoting the health benefits of nature. Through TLIS, Santa Cruz COE is cultivating a generation of environmentally conscious students equipped to lead positive change in their communities.

Youth for Environmental Action

Youth for Environmental Action (YEA) is the first student leadership group founded as part of the Youth Led Leadership Alliance (p. 1). Its goal is to elevate the voices of students in order to transform the school system to be more sustainable. YEA supports students in developing the skills to bridge the gap between adult decision makers and youth, to work together toward common goals for environmental and climate action in schools.

In 2023-24, YEA conducted

its second annual Survey of Environmental Action in Schools, collecting data from 1,115 high school students and staff representing schools countywide. Results of the data are shared publicly on the YEA website and used to inform plans for YEA advocacy and projects.



Find out more about Youth for Environmental Action.
sccoe.link/yea

YEA leaders presented to school boards, sharing their data and recommendations with school leaders. They were interviewed on KSQD radio and wrote press releases and articles for print media.

In addition, YEA hosted an annual Environmental Action Summit for 250 high school students, school leaders and community based environmental organizations to collaborate on efforts to increase environmental sustainability in schools and communities.



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