



WINTER NEWSLETTER

2025-2026

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OUR MISSION

The Santa Cruz County Career and Adult Learning Services (CALS) provides students with the opportunity to acquire academic, career, and technical skills and to prepare for life-long learning and success in the changing workplace.

Latest News

CTE Student Spotlight: Willow Ehrhart



At just 19 years old, Willow Ehrhart is already well on her way to building a future in the culinary world. Currently enrolled in a full course load that includes International Cuisine, Meat Cutting, Safety & Sanitation, Food Costing, and Anthropology. Willow credits the [CTE Culinary Arts](#) pathway with helping her clarify her goals and gain essential real-world skills.

Willow joined the CTE program after encouragement from their Star Community School teacher and a lifelong dream of becoming a chef. Through high school Willow attended an alternative school. Willow valued the opportunity to learn in person, connect with others, and get a head start on Cabrillo College's culinary program through industry-aligned coursework.

Through both Culinary Arts and Baking & Pastry classes, Willow discovered not only her passion for food but also the power of collaboration and community in the kitchen. While Baking & Pastry expanded her technical skills, it also deepened her appreciation for savory cuisine and how different culinary disciplines complement one another.

Today, Willow highlights strong people skills, time management, organization, food safety and knife skills as key takeaways that have prepared her for her current studies and future career. Looking ahead, she plans to graduate with an AA in Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management, pursue work in catering, and eventually relocate to a larger food scene to explore new opportunities.

Willow's journey is a great example of how CTE programs while in high school can inspire confidence, build practical skills, and open doors to meaningful career pathways.



CTE Programs



CTE Courses

CTE courses are an important option for high school students looking to discover potential careers within a wide range of career sectors. The COE's high-quality CTE courses provide students the opportunity to gain high school and college credit while meeting the UC A-G requirements.

With the 2026-2027 school year schedule process for classes beginning now, please share the following resources with your students about the wide range of opportunities the Santa Cruz COE has to offer within CTE. All courses are UC A-G approved and provide students the opportunity to earn college credit through our partnership with Cabrillo College.

Please visit the following websites for more information

- [Culinary Arts Career Pathway](#)
- [ICT Career Pathways](#)
- [Fire Technology](#)

Our CALS team works with counselors in all districts throughout the county to ensure courses will be added to student schedules.



Adult Education Program

Our Medical, Dental, and BTPA programs are off to a strong start with an amazing group of motivated students ready to take on the challenge of their new career path.



Dental Assisting Program



Dental Assisting Program Moving to South County – Centro Avance

We're excited to share that our Dental Assisting Program has relocated to a new South County facility at Centro Avance at 119 West Beach Street in Watsonville. Looking ahead, all future cohorts will also attend classes and training at this new location.

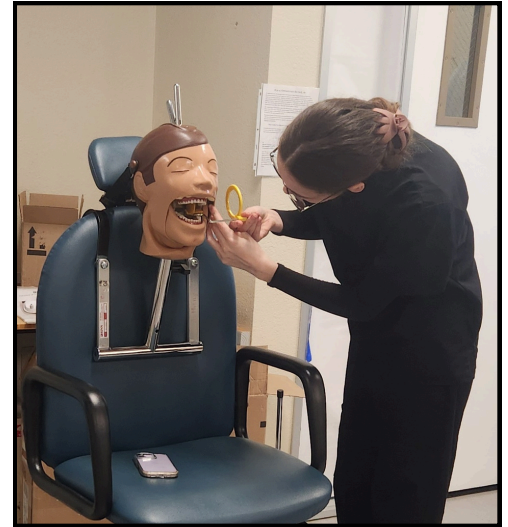
This move represents an important step in expanding access to high-quality, hands-on CTE programming in South County. We look forward to welcoming students to this new site and continuing to build strong career pathways in Dental Assisting for our community.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Adult Education Program



Dental Assisting Program



Dental Assisting Program

The Dental Assisting program is in its second semester! Apprentices are continuing to build their skills through on-the-job training at their assigned clinics, complemented by classroom instruction every other Monday at SCCOE. At the same time, students in the traditional pathway are completing their Dental Radiation Safety Certification in the classroom before transitioning to their externships in late February of 2026. Both groups are making great strides and are on track to graduate in late May 2026.

Applications for the 2026-2027 Dental Assisting program cohort are opening soon!

Coronal Polishing Certification Course Offering

We are excited to offer a new standalone Coronal Polishing course for the local Dental Assistant community. This board-approved course by the Dental Board of California (DBC) provides dental assistants with a valuable opportunity to expand their professional certifications. At this time, we are planning for our upcoming Spring 2026 sessions. Please visit our [website](#) to complete an interest form and receive information on how to register.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Adult Education Program

Medical Assisting Program

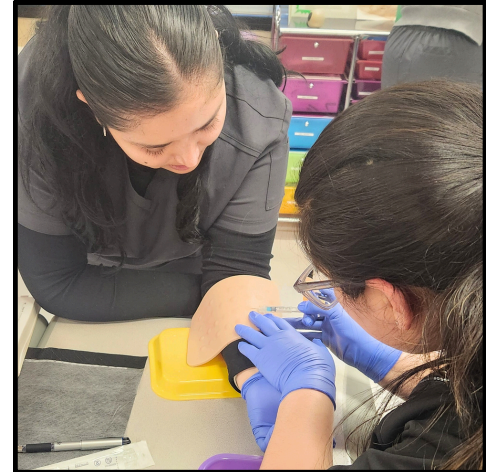


We are delighted to announce that our Medical Assisting program has officially commenced their clinical practice, taking another step in their educational journey. We are proud of our dedicated cohort of seventeen students who are actively engaging in this hands-on experience.

Our students are diligently practicing vital sign assessments, including blood pressure, and have begun honing their injection techniques, utilizing advanced skin models to practice intradermal injections, ensuring they are well-prepared for real-world applications.

Our students are eager to interact with patients, and are keen to expand their knowledge. As part of their clinical curriculum, they are preparing to conduct urine analyses, which will enable them to identify potential infections, glucose levels, and blood presence. This comprehensive approach to learning ensures that our students are well-equipped with the practical skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their future careers.

We are proud of the progress our students are making and are confident that their dedication and hard work will lead to successful outcomes in their professional endeavors.



The application for the 2026–2027 Medical Assisting program will open soon!

[LEARN MORE](#)



Adult Education Program

Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship

Building Trades in Corrections

In collaboration with the Santa Cruz Sheriff's Office, the CALS BTPA cohort is excited to carry on this program opportunity. Upon graduation and completion, these students are awarded a \$300 stipend along with work boots to help them thrive in the trades sector. Additionally, the CALS team offers personalized consultations, connecting individuals with local agencies to assist them in their job search.



This month, the Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship program launched its 7th cohort at the Rountree Facility. Seven students will complete 10 weeks of training in coursework in building trades, Multiple Course Curriculum (MC3) Pre-Apprenticeship, OSHA 10, and First Aid CPR. This valuable training will help support employment and success upon release.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Adult Education Program

Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship

Alumni Spotlight: Nico Schmidt (Class of 2022)

As a member of our very first BTPA cohort, Nico Schmidt holds a special place in our program's history. Since graduating in 2022, Nico has leveraged his training to build a thriving career in the solar and electrical industry.

Nico joined the Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship program with zero prior experience in the trades. Looking back, he shares that the specific training and certifications he received during the course were the key factors that "opened the door" for him, bridging the gap between curiosity and a professional career.

Career Progression at Sandbar Solar Immediately following his graduation, Nico was hired by Sandbar Solar in August 2022. He initially served as the Warehouse and Office Manager, a role that allowed him to master the logistical and operational side of the industry.

Nico is currently focused on the long-term path to mastery in his trade. His next goal is to complete the prestigious 5-year WECA (Western Electrical Contractors Association) Electrical Apprenticeship. Upon completion, he aims to achieve the rank of Journeyman Electrician.

We are incredibly proud of Nico's transition from our first class to the field, and we look forward to watching him advance through his apprenticeship!



[LEARN MORE](#)

Career Advancement Charter



The Career Advancement Charter (CAC) is an Independent Study program for adult learners to earn their high school diploma while gaining academic and technical skills that will lead to college and career readiness.

CAC Program Updates

A round of applause for our Winter 2026 Graduates!

We are proud to announce that we hosted two graduation ceremonies in January with a grand total of 65 graduates who proudly took to the stage! High school graduations hold immense significance, as they commemorate much more than the fulfillment of academic requirements—they celebrate resilience, courage, and transformation. For our CAC students, who range in age from 18 and up, graduation symbolizes a triumph over genuine life challenges, including work obligations, family duties, language barriers, economic struggles, interrupted education, and moments of self-doubt. Each cap and gown represents a story of perseverance, second chances, and unwavering resolve. This milestone reinforces the belief that it is never too late to dream, return to school, or invest in oneself. A CAC graduation is not merely an ending; it is a new beginning brimming with confidence, opportunity, and the powerful message that growth and success are attainable at any stage of life.



CAC Graduation Cap Decoration events!

In preparation for graduation, we had the privilege of hosting Cap Decorating events for our graduates. Students from both our North and South County sites came together to celebrate their hard work, perseverance, and dedication.

The events provided a meaningful opportunity for reflection on the journey it took to reach the finish line, while also allowing students to express their creativity and personal stories. Supplies were provided, and students were also encouraged to bring their own materials to make their caps uniquely their own. Graduates spent the evening decorating, sharing stories, and celebrating this important milestone together.

[LEARN MORE](#)



CAC Building Trades Celebration

On December 11, 2025, we proudly celebrated the completion of a 10-week Building Trades program led by Mark Lewis, honoring the dedication and hard work of our CAC adult students. This celebration recognized the commitment, perseverance, and hands-on skills our students developed throughout the program. Through practical training and real-world learning, participants gained the foundational knowledge needed to pursue entry-level careers in the Building Trades industry sector opening doors to stable employment and long-term growth opportunities. This milestone reflects CAC's mission to empower adult learners with meaningful pathways toward career advancement and a stronger future for themselves and their families.



[LEARN MORE](#)



CAC Program Updates

Cabrillo Dual Enrollment Workshops

In efforts to support our adult high school learners in transition into higher education, the Career Advancement Charter hosted Cabrillo College Registration Parties and we are proud to announce they were a big success!

In these workshops we provided students with an understanding of Cabrillo College's values, career academic pathways, the differences between earning a certificate vs a degree, as well as transfer pathways to universities. Additionally, we provided financial aid information for students who are close to graduating and wanting to consider their financial support options.

Through hosting five workshops in both North & South county schools sites, we supported 23 students in registering and preparing to start the spring semester. In an effort to support student success in their Cabrillo courses, Transition Specialists and teachers will be collaborating to monitor student progress and provide coordinated support. We hope that in the support we provide our students, that they may find the enthusiasm and dedication in pursuing their career goals through local colleges, technical training programs, or other career preparation opportunities.

Introducing the CAC Student Hub!

In continued efforts to support student success starting January 12, CAC students in South County are invited to stop by our new one-stop student hub, a dedicated space for in-person support and connection.

Join us!

Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday from 3:00pm-7:00pm
Fridays from 3:00pm-5:30pm.

We are located at the Sequoia Schools facility on Green Valley Road, in Room 130. Students will be able to use the space for studying and receive support services such as tutoring, career coaching, and group workshops.

We hope this new project encourages students to be more present on campus, build community, and receive the support they need to stay on track and thrive.

For more questions contact Xitlali Cabadas at xcabadas@santacruzcoe.org

A colorful flyer for the Career Advancement Charter Student Center. The title 'STUDENT CENTER' is in large, bold, teal letters inside a white cloud shape. Above it, 'Career Advancement Charter' is written in a smaller font. The flyer is decorated with illustrations of books, a graduation cap, and a star. Below the title, it asks 'Need help with your studies? Have questions about careers? Are you curious about college classes?' and lists 'WHAT WE PROVIDE' with four bullet points: Academic Support, Group Workshops, One-on-One Coaching, and Career Exploration. At the bottom, it specifies 'ROOM 130' and the schedule: 'MONDAY, TUESDAY & THURSDAY'S 3:00PM-7:00PM' and 'FRIDAY 3:00PM-5:30PM'. The contact email 'xcabadas@santacruzcoe.org' is also provided. An illustration of a student sitting at a desk with a laptop and books is in the bottom right corner.

Career Advancement Charter
STUDENT CENTER

Need help with your studies?
Have questions about careers?
Are you curious about college classes?

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Academic Support
- Group Workshops
- One-on-One Coaching
- Career Exploration

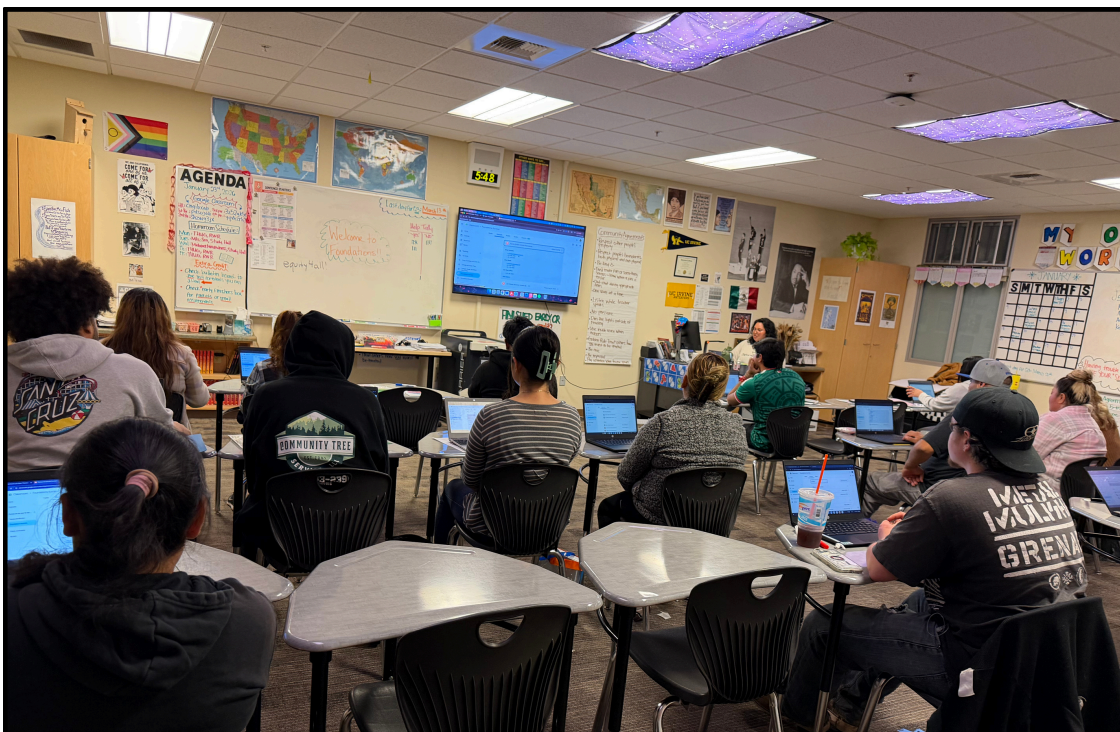
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xcabadas@santacruzcoe.org

[LEARN MORE](#)

CAC Foundations Success Class:

Foundation Success Class

To ensure that newly enrolled students have a smooth transition into our program, the CAC continues to provide the Foundations Success class which builds a learning community and offers guided support with digital, academic, and professional skills needed for success in education and beyond.



Cohort Updates:

As we continue the school year we have noticed a significant increase of student engagement which includes taking enrichment classes in the evenings, scheduling appointments with transition specialists, and an interest in Dual Enrollment. Overall, the Foundations Success Program is a fantastic starting point for new CAC students, helping them feel more prepared, supported, and confident as they begin their Independent Study journey. The momentum is strong, and we're thrilled to continue building a program that helps every new CAC student start their journey on solid ground.



Adult Learning Enrichment Opportunities: All students enrolled in the CAC have the opportunity to participate in a variety of evening courses, ranging from Culinary Arts, to math tutoring, to ESL support classes. CAC students also have the option to pursue Dual Enrollment or non-credit career education classes at Cabrillo College. Additionally, we are pleased to share that we continue to offer work-readiness and job skills certification opportunities to our students through Certiport.



Student Orientation: In an effort to better serve our students, the CAC has implemented a student orientation, registration and enrollment process. New students attend an in-person orientation session designed to inform them of all the services and community partnerships the CAC offers. CAC South County Orientations take place on a bi-monthly basis at our Sequoia Schools site. Orientation is designed to help students be successful from day one and beyond.

During the orientation, students complete registration and assessment activities. Following orientation, students engage in the CAC Foundations Success Program that spans five weeks. The Foundations Success Program is designed to help students learn essential skills that will support their transition into our Independent Study high school diploma program.



Evening Childcare (ECC): In an effort to support our adult learner parents, we offer childcare services four days a week at our South County school site. Our childcare center operates Monday through Thursday from 3pm to 7pm on a weekly basis. Our staff engages with children in a variety of learning and enrichment activities.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Sueños Program



The **Sueños Program** supports teenagers and young adults (ages 16 to 24) to develop workplace skills that will prepare them to enter and thrive in an increasingly competitive labor market. Sueños is a Santa Cruz COE program in partnership with the Workforce Development Board of Santa Cruz County.

Sueños Secures Another Four Years of WIOA Youth Funding

Congratulations to SCCOE and the Sueños Team for winning the four-year WIOA Youth contract for Santa Cruz County once again! This award, funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and overseen by the Santa Cruz County Workforce Development Board, ensures youth will continue gaining paid Work Experience (WEX), career coaching, training, and supportive services that help them succeed in school, work, and life. Sueños' success reflects the team's hard work and commitment to empowering our community's young people! .

Paid Work Experience: Building Skills, Helping Others

Sueños' Paid Work Experience (WEX) gives youth hands-on, real-world job training while making a positive impact in their community. Through WEX, participants gain practical skills, build confidence, and develop professional experience that prepares them for long-term career success.

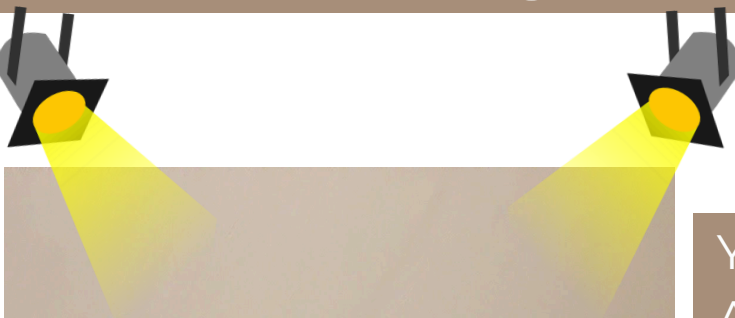
Many WEX placements connect youth with organizations that serve the community, such as Second Harvest Food Bank and Pajaro Valley Loaves & Fishes, where participants support vital programs that provide food to families in need. These experiences teach valuable workplace skills, including teamwork, communication, and time management, while fostering a sense of social responsibility.

By engaging in WEX, Sueños youth not only gain career skills and financial independence, but also contribute to meaningful work that strengthens their community. It's a program that empowers youth to grow personally, professionally, and socially, all while giving back.



[**Sueños Pre-Screening Application**](#)

Sueños Program



Youth Success Spotlight: Alejandra

Alejandra successfully completed her Sueños Paid Work Experience (WEX) at Arte Del Corazón in Watsonville and was hired part-time as an Instructional Aide and Event Organizer. She also works part-time at Radcliff Elementary through PVUSD, serving as Yard Duty and Instructional Aide. These roles align perfectly with her love for working with children and her passion for supporting their growth and learning.

Balancing three part-time jobs alongside family responsibilities, Alejandra has shown exceptional time-management, dedication, and adaptability. She is pursuing her long-term goal of earning a degree as a Behavioral Technician, reflecting her commitment to advancing her career in behavioral and educational support.

Through the Sueños program, Alejandra gained hands-on experience, career guidance, and the confidence to succeed in multiple roles. Her perseverance, strong work ethic, and passion for working with children have helped her achieve financial independence, build professional skills, and continue supporting her family—making her accomplishments truly remarkable.



[Sueños Pre-Screening Application](#)

Earn While You Learn

Program Benefits

- Earn Cash Through Incentives
- Job Shadowing
- Unpaid/Paid Work Experience
- Professional Clothing
- Public Transportation Assistance
- Job Preparation Skills
- Career Exploration
- Academic Assistance

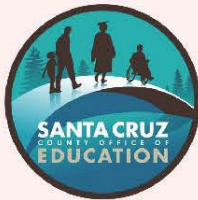


Who Qualifies?

- **16-24 year old**
- **Resident of Santa Cruz County**
- **Be income eligible**

Contact Information:

229 Green Valley Rd.
Freedom, CA, 95019
(831) 466-5672
wioasuenos@santacruzcoe.org



Interested? Complete the Pre-Screening Application OR use the QR code!

WIOA Title 1 is an equal opportunity program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Funded by the Workforce Development Board of Santa Cruz County and the County Board of Supervisors.

All telephone numbers on the flyer and website may be reached by a person using TTY/TDD equipment via the California Relay Service (CRS) by dialing 711 or 1-800-735-2922



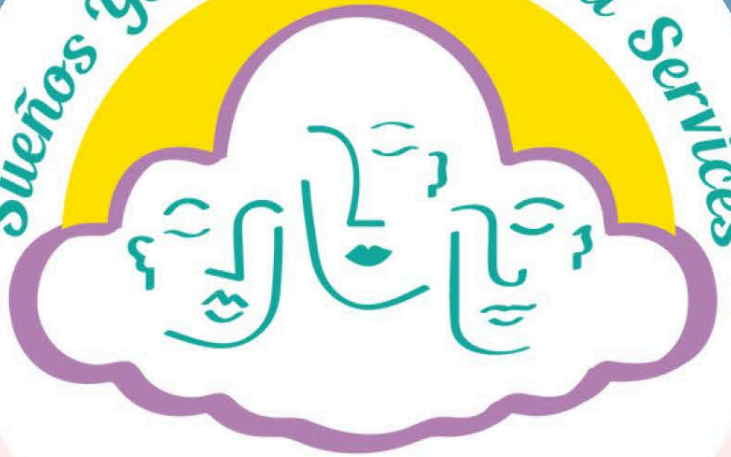
Gana Mientras Aprendes

Beneficios Del Programa Sueños

- Gana dinero a través de incentivos
- Observación de profesionales
- Experiencia laboral
- Ropa profesional
- Asistencia de transporte público
- Habilidades de preparación laboral
- Exploración profesional
- Asistencia académica



Sueños Youth Employment Services



Equal Opportunity Program

¿Quién Califica?

- **De 16 a 24 años**
- **Residente del condado de Santa Cruz**
- **Elegible a través de ingresos**

Información de contacto:

229 Green Valley Rd.
Freedom, CA, 95019
(831) 466-5672
wioasuenos@santacruzcoe.org

¿Interesado/a? ¡Complete la Solicitud de Preselección o usa el Código QR!

El título I de WIOA es un programa de igualdad de oportunidades. Las ayudas y servicios auxiliares están disponibles a pedido para personas con discapacidades. Financiado por la Junta de Desarrollo de la Fuerza Laboral del Condado de Santa Cruz y la Junta de Supervisores del Condado. Todos los números de teléfono en el volante y en el sitio web pueden ser alcanzados por una persona que use equipo TY / TDD a través del Servicio de retransmisión de California (CRS) marcando 711 o 1-800-735-2922.



Early College Credit: Dual Enrollment / Articulation



Cabrillo Dual Enrollment Updates

- New [Video Resource!](#) – How students check grades and transcripts.
- Process for [Waitlist](#) for classes
- [Add/Drop](#) Period for Spring 27, Jan 26-Feb 7

Additional Early College Credit Information [Linked Here](#)

Scholarships / Financial Aid



Cabrillo Cash for College Workshops

Feb-Apr 2026

The Cabrillo Financial Aid Office for "Cash for College" from 4–7pm at the Aptos Campus (Room SAC West 202) on 2/17, 3/12, and 4/14, or at the Watsonville Center (Room A 350) on 2/26, 3/18, and 4/23 to get expert help unlocking scholarships and grants for your education.

Additional Apprenticeship / Internship Information [Linked Here](#)

Work Based Learning



AHSC Internship Program's Impact on Local Businesses

A look at how the first cohort of interns are transforming local orgs through fresh skills, digital innovation, and meaningful contributions. [Article link](#)

Additional Apprenticeship / Internship Information [Linked Here](#)

For more information about CALS, please visit our [website](#).

Conferences / Continuing Ed / Professional Development



Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) Regional Training

20 April 2026

Maximize your college's CPL impact through the MAP Platform and elevate your institution's visibility to adult learners. In the sessions, participants will gain hands-on experience with real-life CPL scenarios and review best practices from the field. Colleges are encouraged to bring 5-10 members from their MAP/CPL Team. [Info link](#)



CSEA Paraeducator Conference

10-12
March 2026

- Ontario Convention Center
- Open to all CSEA Member
- [Registration Link](#)

Information on Additional Conferences, Continuing Ed, & Professional Development [Linked Here](#)

Ongoing Resources / Curricula



Santa Cruz Educator Pathway Program

The Santa Cruz COE is expanding its highly effective [teacher residency model](#), which integrates clinical preparation and classroom practice alongside a mentor, to include Multiple Subject and Single Subject candidates starting in the 2026-2027 school year. Email [InJin Jun](#) for more info

Information on Additional Resources and Curricula [Linked Here](#)

Legislation



2025 Chaptered Legislation Guidance Report

[This document](#) serves as a notice to districts of new laws which will take effect on January 1st, 2026 unless otherwise indicated. A total of 77 bills directly impacting California Community Colleges or higher education were signed.

Information on Additional Relevant Legislation [Linked Here](#)

For more information about CALS, please visit our [website](#).