

Alternative Placement Support Structures

Executive Summary

*Prepared by Kathie Kanavel
Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services*

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of Trustees about our alternative placement options for students, the existing legislation regarding these programs, a student data profile of students who attend each program, the services over and above those of the comprehensive schools, and the successes and challenges that each program has identified.

For a variety of reasons, Santa Clara Unified School District's comprehensive middle and high schools do not meet the needs of some of our most at-risk youth. In order to have more options for students, there are several alternative placement programs, each unique in their structures and ability to focus on individual needs. At the district level, resources include but are not limited to a truancy officer, group counselor, Homeless/Foster Youth liaisons, wellness coordinators, counseling interns, licensed therapists, psychologists, and outside agencies such as California Youth Outreach, Center for Living with Dying and many more.

Currently, in our alternative placement programs and schools, we are serving the following student population:

There are 304 students in our alternative settings*:

- 54 (18%) are students with an IEP
- 192 (63%) are Hispanic
- 25 (8%) are homeless youth
- 9 (3%) are foster youth
- 213 (70%) are socioeconomically disadvantaged
- 61 (20%) are English Learners
- 116 (38%) are chronically absent

Most students have more than one of the above risk factors.

There are 7 programs available to our students:

Program/School	Location
Peterson Opportunity Program	Peterson Middle School
Gateway Opportunity Program	New Valley High School
New Valley Continuation High School	New Valley High School
Wilson Independent High School	Wilson High School
Alternative Placement Center (APC)	Wilson High School
Young Parent Center (YPC)	Wilson High School
Santa Clara Community Day School	Curtis Campus behind the Bond Office

The goal for our alternative programs is to continue to do all we can to support our students by providing additional district and site resources beyond what is provided at the comprehensive schools, focus our planning for the future of each program, and strengthen our outreach to community resources that might be unknown or untapped.

**Please Note: All data in this report was extracted on Monday, October 30th and changes on a daily basis.*

Peterson Opportunity Program

From the California Department of Education

Opportunity Education schools, classes, and programs provide additional support for students who are habitually truant from instruction, irregular in attendance, insubordinate, disorderly while in attendance, or unsuccessful academically. Opportunity Education schools, classes, and programs provide a supportive environment with specialized curriculum, instruction, guidance and counseling, psychological services, and tutorial assistance to help students overcome barriers to learning. Opportunity Education should not be viewed as a holding place for resistant learners, but as an intervention to ensure student success. It provides comprehensive academic programs that facilitate positive self-esteem, confidence, and personal growth with the goal of helping students return to traditional classes and programs. The laws specific to Opportunity Education are in California Education Code sections 46180 and 48640 et seq.

Program Description

Peterson Opportunity is located on the Peterson Middle School Campus, however students are reported under Wilson Independent Study High School. It provides a small, supportive environment with specialized curriculum, instruction, guidance, and counseling to help students overcome barriers to learning. It serves up to 15 middle school students grades 6-8. Students are referred to the program by their middle school counseling staff. It is a program of choice, meaning students must agree to attend. In some cases, students are placed administratively as a result of disciplinary hearings. The ideal student profile for the opportunity program are those that have major struggles academically. Opportunity functions like a self-contained classroom, where students staying with the teacher except for one elective period per day. During the elective, they stay together as a class and travel to another teacher. Students enter the program for at least one quarter and preferably for a semester before being considered for a transfer back to the traditional middle school environment.

Staffing

The Opportunity staffing consists of one classroom with one teacher and one paraprofessional. The maximum student to teacher ratio is 15:1. Counseling is offered 3 days a week and a Wellness Coordinator is on site 4 days per week. Group counseling is held each week with Jon Malloy, our district-wide at-risk youth counselor. California Youth Outreach provides gang intervention services and is on site at Peterson 1 day per week. Rob Griffin, Coordinator of Attendance and Discipline oversees Opportunity as the program administrator. The Peterson Middle School administrators supervise the Opportunity program on a daily basis.

Who Are The Students?

14 students
1 homeless youth
0 foster youth

57% boys
7% students with IEP
93% socio-economically disadvantaged
86% Hispanic
43% English Learners
36% Chronic Absenteeism

Successes

The program has improved over the past two years with the focus shifting from students who are removing them from their middle school site due to behavioral issues, to one that is focused on improving the academic standing of the students who are struggling with their course work.

Challenges

Currently, the Opportunity students are very isolated. The only time they are not with their teacher is during the one elective period, however, they are still only with their opportunity classmates. They are escorted to and from the cafeteria to get their breakfasts/lunches and then return to the classroom to eat. They travel together as a whole class to use the restroom. They eat lunch together in the back room or in the outdoor space behind the classroom. They do not interact with peers outside of those in the opportunity program.

Gateway Opportunity

Program Description

Gateway Opportunity is located on the New Valley campus, however, students are reported under Wilson Independent Study High school. Gateway Opportunity serves up to 60 students who are 14-15 years of age and provides a highly supportive learning environment in which students gain the skills they need to successfully transition to the comprehensive high school if and when they choose. The school is a program of choice, meaning students must agree to attend. In some cases, students are placed administratively as a result of disciplinary hearings.

Who Are The Students?

45 students

4 homeless youth

1 foster youth

76% boys

27% students with IEP

78% socio-economically disadvantaged

64% Hispanic

20% English Learners

44% Chronic Absenteeism

New Valley Continuation High School

From the California Department of Education

Continuation education is a high school diploma program designed to meet the needs of students sixteen through eighteen years of age who have not graduated from high school, are not exempt from compulsory school attendance, and are deemed at risk of not completing their education. California Education Code (EC) sections that provide for continuation education include sections 44865, 46170, 48400-48438, and 51055.

Program Description

New Valley Continuation High School serves up to 140 students from ages 16-18 who are credit deficient. The school is a program of choice, meaning students must agree to attend. In some cases, students are placed administratively as a result of disciplinary hearings. Students can decide to recover credits and return to the comprehensive site, or they can decide to graduate from New Valley.

Who Are The Students?

120 students
5 homeless youth
1 foster youth

68% boys
20% students with IEP
68% socio-economically disadvantaged
67% Hispanic
21% English Learners
58% Chronic Absenteeism

Program Details for New Valley and Gateway Opportunity

Students who are deficient in credits can recover credits at a pace that is more rapid than traditional semesters. They can meet graduation requirements at an accelerated pace, enabling them to graduate on time where that would not be possible at the comprehensive sites. All teachers are assigned to a group of students as an advisor. Each advisor monitors progress, provides guidance and encouragement, and intervenes when students need support. The school environment itself is small, with small class sizes, which average around 20 students per class. Between advisors, the full time academic counselor, and wellness staff, there is approximately one adult support person per 9 students. Students are free to return to the comprehensive sites when they choose, though we advise against such moves when a student's academic habits are not up to par with comprehensive high school standards. Decisions to return are made by students and families in collaboration with the student's advisor.

Staffing

New Valley & the Gateway Opportunity Program have a principal, vice principal, and a full time academic counselor. There are 9.2 teachers for New Valley, 5.6 teachers for Gateway, and 2 Special Education teachers, resulting in a 10:1 student to teacher ratio. There is a wellness coordinator on site 2 ½ days per week and a counseling intern 5 days per week. California Youth Outreach provides gang intervention counseling 2 days per week. The health van visits New Valley once a month to provide confidential medical care for students.

Successes

This year, students moved to a longer school day schedule. Both New Valley and Gateway Opportunity share the campus throughout the day instead of being ½ day schedules for each. Additionally, a credit recovery formula based upon competence vs. compliance was introduced, which enables students to recover credits while learning academic content. A very supportive learning environment enables students to overcome non curricular barriers to curricular success. Students experience positive transformations in our school, and graduate with confidence in their ability to achieve their goals beyond high school. New Valley and Gateway Opportunity are an academic community that harnesses the power of relationships in supporting students in achieving their goals. Strong community support has resulted in the ability to provide more scholarship money

per graduate than the comprehensive sites. In 2017, there were 53 graduates and \$43,000 in scholarships awarded.

Challenges

The campus is small and thus limited in its ability to provide a higher level of service from the courses offered, to the number of students that can enroll.

Wilson High School

From the California Department of Education

Independent study (California Education Code [EC] sections 51745–51749.3) is provided as an alternative instructional strategy, not an alternative curriculum. Independent study students work independently, according to a written agreement and under the general supervision of a credentialed teacher or teachers. While independent study students follow the district-adopted curriculum and meet the district graduation requirements, independent study offers flexibility to meet individual student needs, interests, and styles of learning. Districts can operate independent study as a program within a school or as a stand-alone alternative school of choice.

Program Description

Wilson High School operates an independent study program as a stand-alone alternative school of choice serving students in grades 9-12 and has the capacity for 178 students. Students are usually referred by their guidance counselor, however, some are by parent request. This is a school of choice and students can move between Wilson and the comprehensive high schools, although, once at Wilson, usually stay through graduation. Typically students are credit deficient when they come to Wilson. Because this is independent study, the ideal student for Wilson is one that is motivated to do well independently and/or needs 1:1 attention. Each student has an Individual Learning Plan.

Students attend class 1-2 days/week with 30 hours per week assigned to do outside of school. They are assigned to a primary teacher who manages their progress and meets with them weekly for one hour. Additional academic support is provided through subject specific labs during the week. “Wolverine Fridays” offer all students additional credits and support through career workshops, guest speakers, clubs, groups, and labs. Students may attend college classes, Silicon Valley Career Technical Education (SVCTE), Regional Occupational Program (ROP/Retail Sales), and High Tech Academy while they complete their high school diploma.

Young Parent Center (YPC)

As a part of Wilson High School, the YPC provides for young parents (male and female) and pregnant teens allowing them to continue their education in an independent study setting. The classroom has one teacher and two paraprofessionals. The YPC can accommodate up to 15 students, it is currently serving 4 students. The current student to teacher ratio is 4:1.

Staffing

Wilson has a principal, full time counselor, part time counselor, and 8 teachers. Each teacher is assigned a maximum of 8 students. A licensed therapist is on campus four days a week, a wellness coordinator is on site 1-2 days per week and group counseling is available on Fridays.

Who Are The Students?

113 students
10 homeless youth
6 foster youth

50% boys
11% students with IEP
63% socio-economically disadvantaged
52% Hispanic
14% English Learners

Successes

Students graduating that everyone else thought would never make it. Even if it took them 5 or 6 years! Staff has also worked very hard and been successful at getting students to school that were truant or making a break through with their mental health to allow them to access their education again.

Challenges

Getting students their senior year with no chance of graduating on time (too credit deficient) and then trying to motivate them to continue on. Getting students that are already chronically truant and trying to get them to come to school and do their work independently.

Alternative Placement Center (APC)

The “APC” was created in the Santa Clara Unified School District to help students who are suspended keep up with their daily coursework. It is also designed to keep suspended students off the streets and under close supervision.

The APC classroom is located on the Wilson High School campus and supervised by the Wilson High Principal, along with support from Rob Griffin, Coordinator of Attendance & Discipline. The maximum daily enrollment is 20 students, supervised by two adults at all times and may be closed down when two adults are not available. The classroom teacher and paraprofessional are there to provide additional help to the students with their coursework. The program is open every day from 8:15 am – 2:00 pm. Students are referred to APC by their school site administrator. At the beginning of the year, APC attendance is understandable very low. The attendance picks up later in the fall and again in the spring.

Successes

Suspensions are down. Students are not staying at home and missing coursework when suspended. School administrators report that APC is an excellent resource in addressing student misconduct

Challenges

It is the responsibility of the student attending APC to either come to the facility with school work or arrange with their home school to have work provided by the school of attendance. Students do not always show up to APC with work to do. Students will have access to school loop and are encouraged to contact their teachers for additional assignments. All work and assignments may be scanned/emailed or brought in by either the student or school staff member. Students lacking school work assigned by their school of attendance or the proper materials will be given supplementary assignments by APC staff.

Santa Clara Community Day School

From the California Department of Education

Community Day schools are operated by school districts and county offices of education. Community Day schools serve mandatory and other expelled students, students referred by a School Attendance Review Board, and other high-risk youths. The 360-minute minimum instructional day includes academic programs that provide challenging curriculum and individual attention to student learning modalities and abilities. Community Day school programs also focus on the development of pro-social skills and student self-esteem and resiliency. Community Day schools are intended to have low student-teacher ratios. Students benefit from learning support services that include school counselors and psychologists, academic and vocational counselors, and pupil discipline personnel. Students also receive collaborative services from county offices of education, law enforcement, probation, and human services agency personnel who work with at-risk youth. Community Day schools are supported by supplemental apportionment for community day school attendance, in addition to base revenue funding. Laws specific to Community Day schools are in Education Code (EC) sections 48660-48667.

Program Description

Santa Clara Community Day School is located on the Curtis campus. There are 3.5 portable buildings located between the bond office and teacher housing. The school has shared use of a large soccer field and softball diamond and their own basketball and foursquare courts. Santa Clara Community Day exists to help students who have been unsuccessful in traditional school settings overcome obstacles, learn new skills and habits, and move on to succeed in their next school setting. We realize that most of our students have experienced multiple traumas prior to reaching us which have not been adequately addressed. Each has his/her own individual strengths, needs and goals. The goal of our small trauma-informed school community is to help each student to become happy, healthy and successful.

The “best fit” student is a student who has made one or more serious adverse decisions such as committing a crime or expellable offense or not attending school which has led to his/her involuntary transfer to this school. Students who have been victims of trauma such as child abuse or neglect and have become wards of the court can also benefit from our therapeutic, case management approach. The ability to benefit is often indicated if the student has not given up completely on earning a diploma and can still develop trusting relationships with adults. Ideally, the student/teacher ratio would not exceed 12:1 in each of our two classrooms, one serving grades 6-8 and the other serving grades 9-12.

Students can be placed at any time during the school year for one or two semesters and are usually on a one-year rehabilitation/disciplinary contract. If a student violates the terms of his/her contract, continued placement here is in jeopardy. The goal is for students to meet the terms of their contracts and return to either a comprehensive or an alternative education site in the district having learned how to overcome obstacles, manage stressors and be successful students.

Staffing

Community Day School has a vice-principal as the administrator, with support from Rob Griffin, Coordinator of Attendance & Discipline. The staff includes two teachers and two paraprofessionals. Currently, the student to teacher ratio is 6:1. Community Day also has many part-time staff including one therapist, one wellness coordinator, one resource teacher, and one school

psychologist. The district truancy officer and homeless/foster youth liaisons work closely with students as well as other community service providers and community volunteers. Here are other resources that are provided:

- 1) Individual intake meetings with student, staff, family
- 2) Therapist on site daily providing students with individual/group therapy and crisis intervention; works with families as appropriate
- 3) Wellness coordinator weekly providing support for the “grown-ups”-- and students as needed; co-leads groups; crisis intervention; referrals to outside providers
- 4) CA Youth Outreach counselor on site weekly providing gang/substance abuse/violence intervention
- 5) Trauma-informed, personalized case management approach to student support
- 6) Group counseling
- 7) Close relationships with truancy officer, probation officers, county social workers, school liaisons, agency service providers, volunteers from the community
- 8) Constant supervision by staff of each student
- 9) Predictable, consistent six period/day schedule: no minimum days, early outs or late starts
- 10) Semi-individualized academic program administered by highly qualified teachers
- 11) Several bilingual (Spanish) staff members
- 12) Exceptional paraprofessionals experienced with at risk populations
- 13) Behavior modification program including a level system (Behavioral staff supported)

Who Are The Students?

12 students
10 homeless youth
1 foster youth

83% boys
42% students with IEP
100% socio-economically disadvantaged
100% Hispanic
42% English Learners
75% Chronic Absenteeism

Successes

Experience over the last several years has shown us that the earlier students are sent to us, the better the chances we can help them. We have also observed that the longer a student is with us, overall, the better his/her chances are of succeeding in the next school setting. We believe that this is a result of the multiple layers of intervention we provide along with the personalized approach to addressing individual issues, and the isolation from many of the distractions which get in the way of students being able to hone in and focus on their own needs.

Challenges

One of our frustrations is that students get to us too late for us to help them. We serve some of the most at-risk students in the district. For many of them, the risk of incarceration and even death often by suicide overshadow the more common risk of dropping out of school. Several of our former students are now incarcerated as adults for committing violent felonies. Others have dropped out and live in poverty, often in unhealthy relationships, and some have become parents in their teens. Many have been hospitalized after failed attempts to end their lives.