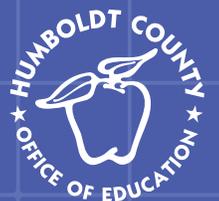


HUMBOLDT COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

2026 Annual Update to the Community





Message from the Superintendent

Michael Davies-Hughes, Humboldt County Superintendent of Schools

At the Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE), we believe our work is most powerful when it is connected; when every department, program, and partnership is aligned around a shared purpose: supporting the success and well-being of every student in Humboldt County.

This year, rather than publishing our usual “what we do” report, we’re inviting you to see HCOE’s work through a different lens — through the eyes of someone whose life has been shaped by it. Meet Jordan Alvarez, a lifelong Humboldt County resident, student, educator, and parent — whose story reflects the many ways our organization touches lives across our community. Though Jordan is a fictional character, the support they receive from HCOE is very real.

Jordan’s journey is, in many ways, our story. It’s the story of early learning and opportunity, of professional growth and innovation, and of the systems that quietly sustain every classroom and program in our Humboldt County.

Each chapter reveals how our Four Pillars of Organizational Excellence — preparing students for their preferred future, maximizing the impact of our resources, developing our people and our culture, and providing outstanding service— come to life through the dedication of HCOE’s teams.

As you read this year’s update, I encourage you to imagine the many “Jordans” across Humboldt County, the students, educators, and families who benefit daily from the commitment of our dedicated staff. Together, we are preparing our students for their preferred future, one story at a time.

Our Values

Trust

We align our words with our actions to accomplish shared goals. We model integrity, share transparently, demonstrate professional credibility, and follow through with care.

Respect

We create a safe place to learn, work, and serve others. We value input, listen to understand different perspectives, demonstrate empathy, and work to be helpful as a member of our team.

Collaboration

We value working together to achieve the best outcomes for those we serve. Our shared commitment is to increase communication, remove silos, reduce barriers, and problem solve effectively.

HCOE Pillars of Organizational Excellence

We strive for outstanding service.

Our educational community and partners access our services and recommend them to others. Programs and services are relevant and impactful. Our daily efforts are responsive, aligned, and consistent to those we serve using evidence to guide our decisions.

We develop our people and culture.

We respect our people and value their individual experience and perspective. Each member of our team is empowered and supported to grow professionally. We prioritize time to build trust, collaborate, learn, and contribute to a positive workplace.

We maximize the impact of our resources.

We build internal capacity to understand needs and stakeholder feedback. All staff work to align resources (people, money, time), and the impact of their efforts to improve efficiency and sustain value for those we serve.

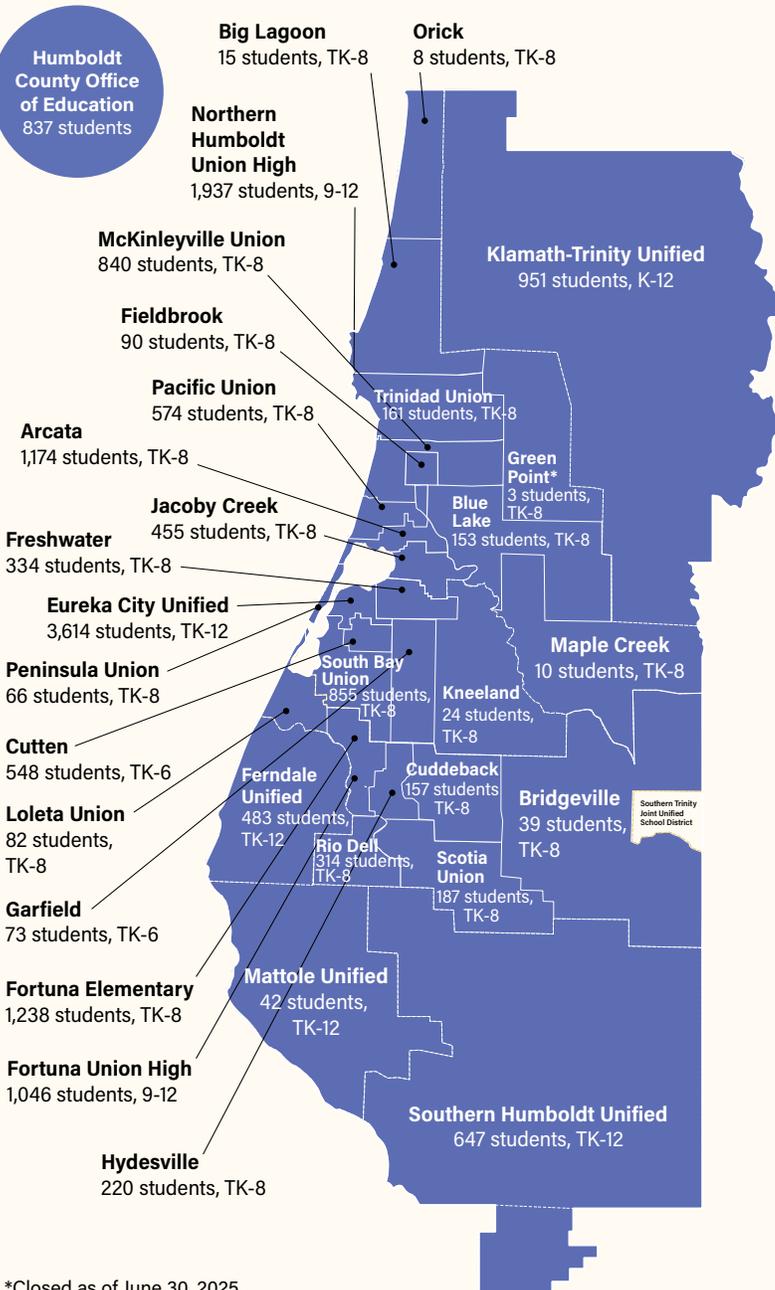
We prepare students for their preferred future.

All children and youth know they are cared for and belong. They are capable, supported, on track, and demonstrate positive relationships and aligned behavior.

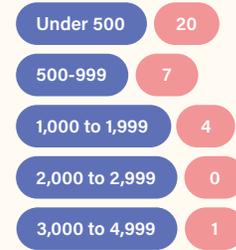
Our students grow in their independence. They learn to access and use community resources to advance their financial, social, emotional, vocational, military, and/or education transitions.

2024-2025 Demographics

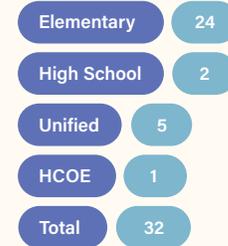
School Districts in Humboldt County



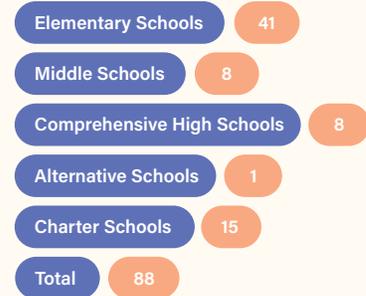
School District Size



Number of Districts



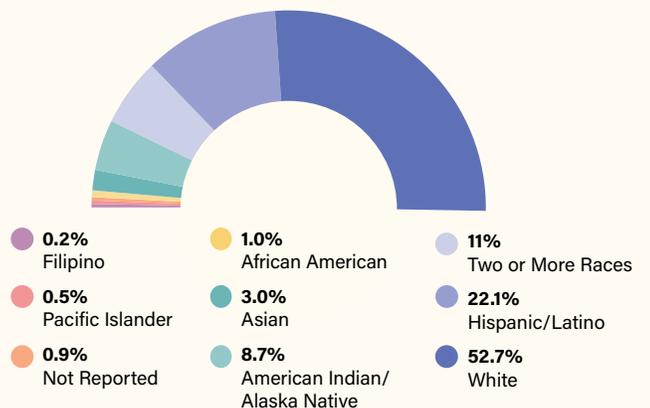
Number of Public Schools



Student Demographics by Group



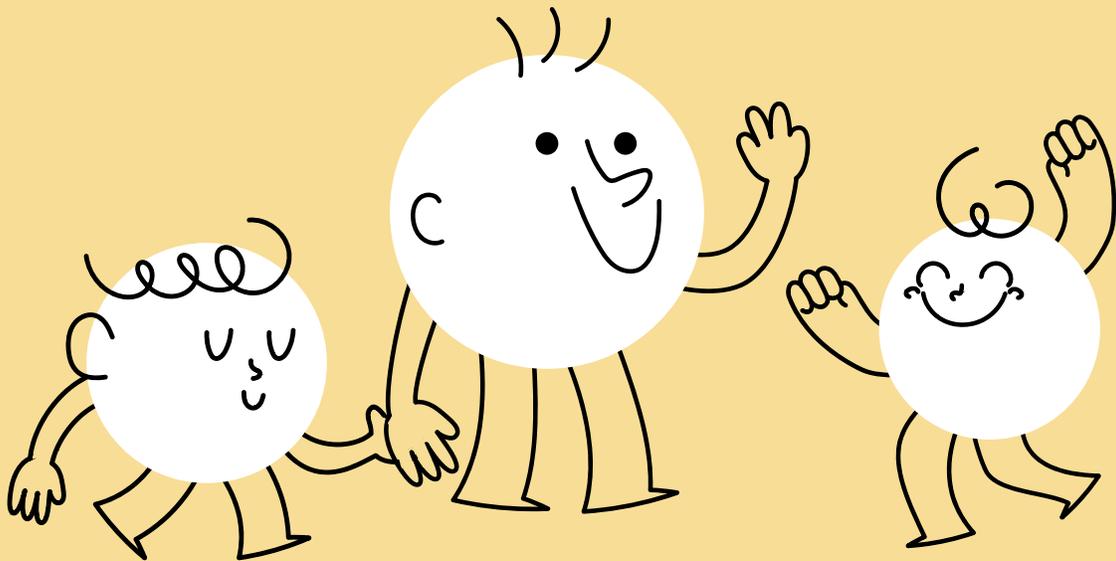
Student Diversity

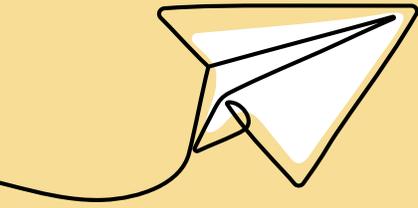


Total Enrollment
17,177

HCOE Annual Update 2026: **Jordan's Story** **A Lifelong Journey with HCOE**

My name is Jordan Alvarez, and I'm proud to call Humboldt County home. I've lived here my whole life as a student, a teacher, and now a parent to my son, Forest, and daughter, River. At every stage, the Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE) has been there, shaping my journey in ways I never imagined. This is my story.





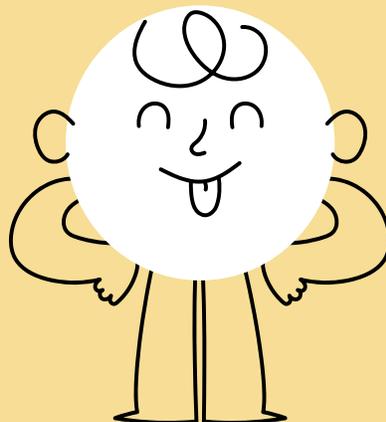
Finding Belonging: **Prevention and Intervention**

School used to feel like just another place I didn't belong. Things at home were unstable, and we were moving between places, basically houseless. I missed a lot of school, and when I did show up, I was either distracted and disengaged or getting in trouble. Nobody seemed to understand.

Then something changed. Through the School Attendance and Review Board (SARB), my parents got connected to resources and started understanding why getting me to school mattered. That provided the stability necessary for me to start showing up to school. Once I was there more regularly, things really changed.

Teachers trained in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) used data to figure out what help each student needed. We did restorative circles where we talked about how we were feeling. At first, I thought it was weird, but people actually listened without judging. I realized I wasn't the only one struggling. The classroom started feeling like a place where it was okay to take risks and a place where I belonged.

Even tough things, like lockdown drills, felt less scary because I knew staff were prepared. When teachers noticed I was having a hard time, they invited me into small groups to work on managing stress and communicating better. I connected with a wellness coach who helped me set goals and practice coping skills.. Having people notice I was struggling, and do something about it, changed the trajectory of my life.





Statistic: In the 2024–25 school year, approximately 17% of 11th-grade students in sample California districts reported experiencing chronic sadness or hopelessness in the past 12 months.

Why it matters: This identifies a critical window for intervention. Chronic sadness is a leading indicator of future depression and academic disengagement; school initiatives targeting this demographic can prevent long-term clinical disorders.

Source: [California School Staff Survey / CalSCHLS 2024-25 District Reports.](#)



Statistic: California has invested over \$4.7 billion into the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) to reimagining mental health, including placing Certified Wellness Coaches in schools.

Why it matters: This represents a shift from “referring out” to “bringing in.” By funding non-clinical wellness coaches, the state is lowering the threshold for help, allowing students to talk to a professional before a crisis occurs.

Source: [California Department of Health Care Services \(DHCS\) - CYBHI.](#)

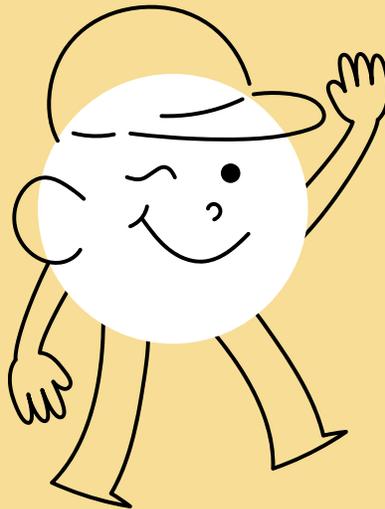


A Second Chance: **Court and Community Schools**

My time at Court and Community Schools (CCS) didn't just change my life - it saved it. When I needed help finding my path forward, the CCS team showed me I wasn't alone. With three campuses across Humboldt County and a program at juvenile hall, the staff met me where I was. There was no judgment, just genuine support.

Having smaller class sizes, wellness staff, and student support teams helped create an environment where I finally felt seen. Because of HCOE's commitment to higher adult-to-student ratios, I gained the confidence to believe in myself again.

Community School opened doors I never imagined. I played Coast League sports, explored horticulture at Humboldt Hydrofarm's greenhouse, and learned construction skills through HCOE's Trades Academy. Those experiences gave me purpose and helped prepare me for a future I had not yet imagined.





Statistic: In a 2024–25 survey of California non-traditional schools, nearly 71% of students reported having high levels of “caring adult relationships” on campus.

Why it matters: For youth in court and community schools, a single stable connection with a teacher or counselor is the strongest predictor of resilience. Instead of focusing on past trauma, these initiatives leverage the student’s ability to form deep, transformative bonds with mentors.

Source: [California Healthy Kids Survey \(CHKS\)](#) / [CalSCHLS 2024-25 Reports](#).

Statistic: California Community Schools have shown a 30% greater reduction in chronic absenteeism compared to traditional schools by utilizing asset-based family engagement.

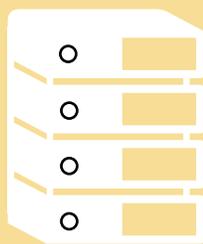
Why it matters: This identifies “attendance” not as a compliance issue, but as a reflection of belonging. By treating families as partners rather than problems, these schools create environments where students want to show up, directly improving their mental well-being through social consistency.

Source: [Learning Policy Institute \(LPI\) Study on CCSP \(2025\)](#).



Discovering New Possibilities: **Information Technology**

As a student at Eureka Resource Center, I visited HCOE's Information Technology department and was fascinated by the world of cybersecurity. Touring the data center, I saw the servers and systems that keep our schools connected and safe. I learned how firewalls block thousands of threats every day and how staff monitor phishing scams to protect students and educators.



Support Behind the Scenes: **Human Resources**

When I decided to return to education as a substitute teacher, I felt overwhelmed — until I connected with HCOE's Human Resources team. They guided me through credentialing, background checks, and training, making me feel valued every step of the way. Their support turned a daunting process into a welcoming experience. As a result of my positive experiences with the HCOE Substitute Consortium, I decided to become an elementary school teacher. Today, I'm not just teaching; I'm part of a community that cares.



Statistic: Approximately 79% of high school students express interest in work-based learning (like IT internships), while 8 out of 10 students now see Career Technical Education (CTE) as an “opportunity mechanism” rather than a secondary track.

Why it matters: This highlights the agency and ambition of the current generation. Students aren't looking for “help”—they are looking for “access.” IT initiatives capitalize on this high internal motivation to succeed in the modern economy.

Source: [Strategos Group / American Student Assistance \(2025\)](#).

Statistic: California districts spend an estimated \$25,000 to recruit, hire, and onboard every single new teacher.

Why it matters: HR's focus on retention-as-an-asset is a fiscal strategy. When COE HR departments implement wellness programs or flexible scheduling that keeps a teacher from leaving, they aren't just supporting a person; they are “saving” \$25,000 that can be reinvested into student mental health or IT labs.

Source: [Learning Policy Institute \(LPI\) / EdCal Retention Analysis \(2025\)](#).

Planning for the Future: Career and College Resources

During my high school years, I had no idea what I wanted to do after graduation. HCOE changed that. Field trips organized by Career and College Resources introduced me to industries and college campuses. I attended the Career and College Expo, met representatives from all different kinds of organizations across the County, and got help with financial aid through Cash for College and Cal-SOAP coaches. Those experiences led me to enroll at Cal Poly Humboldt and earn both my degree and my teaching credential.

Now, as a parent, I'm grateful for programs like WorkAbility, Transition Partnership Program, and Career Exploration that help my kids discover their strengths and prepare them for the future. My daughter is excited to apply for the Healthcare

Exploration Summer Institute, where she will have hands-on experiences in real-life healthcare settings, and I couldn't be more proud.



Statistic: California students who are “CTE concentrators” (completing a sequence of courses in a specific field) have a graduation rate of approximately 95%, significantly higher than the statewide average of roughly 87%.

Why it matters: This identifies purpose as a key driver of academic success. When students see a clear connection between their classroom learning and their future career, their engagement naturally increases, turning “school” into a launchpad rather than a requirement.

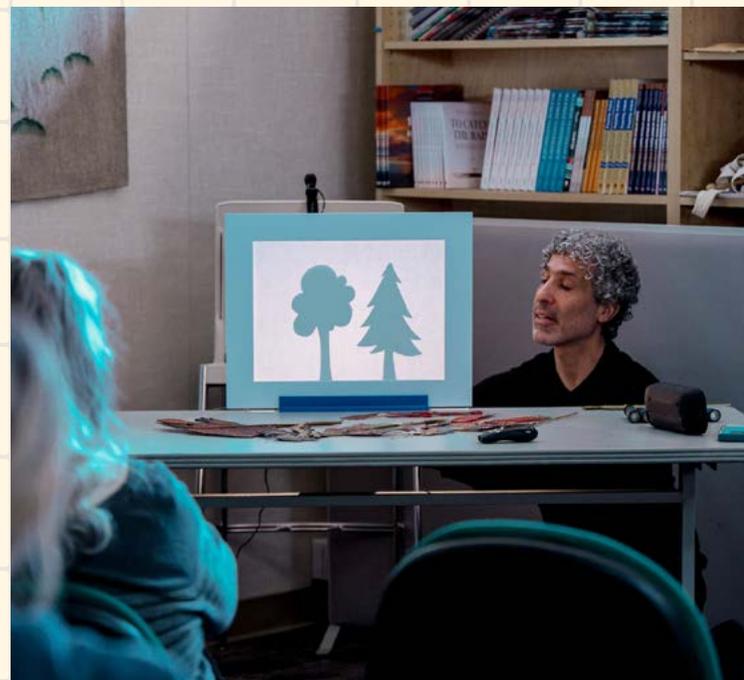
Source: [California Department of Education \(CDE\) / CTE Fact Sheet \(2024-25\)](#).

There are over 15 recognized industry sectors in California CTE, with Arts, Media, & Entertainment and Health Science being the most popular, accounting for over 40% of all pathway completers.

Why it matters: This shows that students are naturally gravitating toward the “Creative Economy” and “Healthcare”—sectors where California is a global leader. This alignment turns the student’s personal interests into marketable expertise before they even graduate high school.

Source: [Policy Analysis for California Education \(PACE\) / CDE 2025 CTE Programs Summary](#)



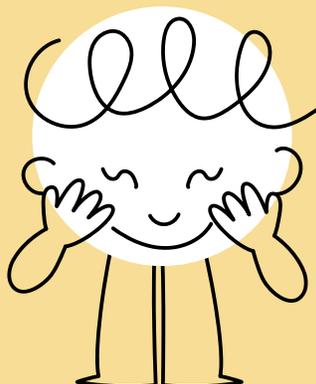


Growing as an Educator: **Learning Support Services**

Years later, as a teacher, my classroom became a space where creativity thrived thanks to HCOE. Through the ArtSEL grant, I blended art and social-emotional learning into lessons. Students tasted local persimmons from Harvest of the Month and expressed their reactions through watercolor -a beautiful mix of sensory and emotional exploration.

After attending HCOE's summer professional development on the science of reading, I started ordering boxes of books from the HERC library. My students' excitement when the courier arrived was contagious. I joined an HCOE book club, explored culturally relevant lessons for my Yurok students, and saw firsthand how translation services at IEP meetings helped families feel included.

Balancing professional growth with parenting isn't easy, but HCOE made it possible. While I learned, my child thrived in afterschool programs, working on History Day projects, exploring science in the school garden, and enjoying fresh local milk. Knowing they were safe and engaged gave me peace of mind and space to grow.





Statistic: In 2024-25, “Ever-English Learners” (current ELs plus those who have successfully reclassified) make up approximately 33% of the total student enrollment in California, and they account for 40% of all students who earn the State Seal of Biliteracy.

Why it matters: HCOE is reframing multilingualism as a superpower rather than a barrier. By focusing on the “assets” of home language, COEs help districts transition from “English-only” models to Dual Language Immersion, where being bilingual is a measurable academic and career advantage.

Source: [Public Policy Institute of California \(PPIC\) / CDE 2025 Reports.](#)

Statistic: Approximately 64% of California school districts are now working with COEs to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks to support diverse learners, including those with disabilities.

Why it matters: UDL assumes that “variability is the norm.” Instead of creating a lesson for the “average” student and then “accommodating” others, C&I departments help teachers design flexible lessons from the start. This removes the stigma of “special education” and treats every student’s unique learning style as a valid pathway to mastery.

Source: [California State PTA / ERIC 2023-2025 Survey Data.](#)



Ensuring Every Student Thrives: Therapeutic Learning Classroom

As an experienced teacher, I am accustomed to students with some level of behavioral or emotional challenges being in my classroom. However, one year I became a bit anxious when I was told that a student from the Therapeutic Learning Classroom (TLC) would be joining my class. I was unsure what to expect and if I would have the needed support in place to help them be successful. It turns out that I had nothing to worry about as the student came with an entire team to support them, as well as support me as their teacher.

I've been so grateful for the support provided by the Humboldt County Office of Education, including the school nurse that assists with the student's health plan, the occupational therapist that supports their sensory and fine motor needs, the school psychologist that completed the psycho-educational assessment which helps the student's entire team have a better understanding of his learning and emotional needs, and the TLC teacher that supports me with the best learning strategies and ideas of how to support this student and others. Having this particular student as part of our class has been an amazing experience! They bring so much to our classroom community. Moreover, I am a better educator for having this experience, and am grateful for seeing firsthand how the direct instruction and careful integration of students into the general education setting can have lasting positive impacts on them and their peers.



Statistic: In year-end surveys of California wellness and therapeutic spaces, 96% of students reported that these environments improved their sense of safety and well-being.

Why it matters: Safety is the biological prerequisite for learning. By prioritizing a “nurturing environment” over punitive discipline, TLCs deactivate the “fight or flight” response, allowing the student’s executive functioning (the “learning brain”) to re-engage.

Source: WestEd / [California Safe and Supportive Schools \(2022-2025\)](#).

A Hub for Possibility: **Sequoia Conference Center**

The first time I walked into the Sequoia Conference Center (SCC), I was struck by its design. It's a space built for growth. Over the years, at the SCC I've attended workshops and watched students shine at science fairs and spelling bees. Now, as a parent, I see my own kids experience those same moments. Sequoia isn't just a building, it's a hub for belonging and inspiration.



Keeping Us Strong: **Business Services**

Behind every success story is a foundation of support. As a teacher, HCOE's Accounting Team helped me navigate tax season and understand my benefits. My school's Superintendent-Principal shared with me how the External Business Services team at HCOE guided her through complex compliance reports with patience and expertise. Their partnership ensures our schools stay financially strong—so we can focus on students.



Statistic: Research highlighted by the CDE shows that students and educators in "21st Century Environments" (flexible, well-lit conference and learning spaces) can see a 5% to 17% increase in test scores compared to those in substandard, rigid environments.

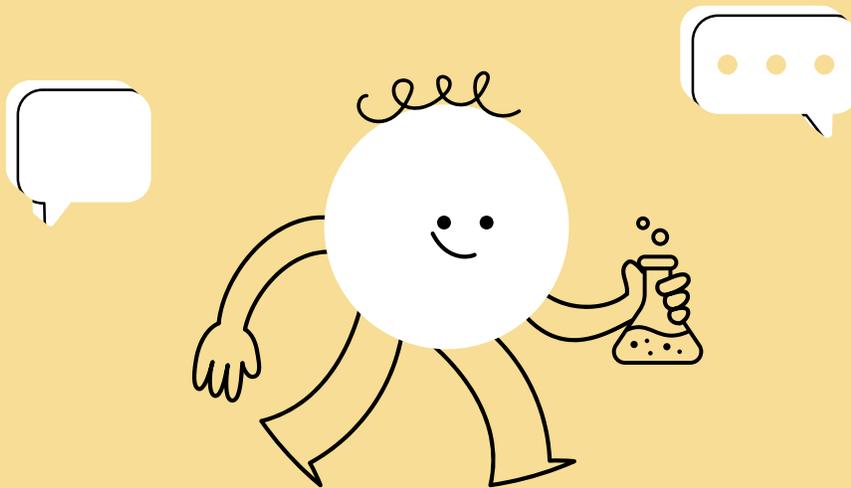
Why it matters: The physical space is a "silent teacher." By investing in high-quality, flexible community conference centers, COEs signal to educators and families that they are valued professionals. These spaces facilitate the "fluidity" needed for modern, project-based professional learning.

Source: [California Department of Education \(CDE\) / School Facility Design Research.](#)



Celebrating Community: **Outreach and Engagement**

One of the things I've come to appreciate most about HCOE is how deeply they invest in celebrating educators, students, and families. When I was nominated for an Excellence in Teaching Award, I was nervous about being in front of a camera, but the Communications team made the experience comfortable and meaningful. The awards ceremony wasn't just elegant; it felt like a true celebration of the hard work happening in classrooms across Humboldt County. The videos they produced gave families and community members a glimpse into what makes each honoree special, and that recognition mattered. From Excellence in Teaching Awards to live-streamed graduations, HCOE celebrates educators and students in ways that matter. Their Communications team creates yearbooks for small schools, runs events like History Day and Science Fair, and keeps families connected through accessible websites and livestreams. Their work reminds us that education is a shared effort, and that every voice matters.





Statistic: Research shows that the strength of a school's family engagement is a stronger predictor of chronic absenteeism rates than a community's poverty level. Schools with robust outreach saw a 30% greater reduction in chronic absenteeism compared to schools with standard communication.

Why it matters: This reframes "missing school" as a connection issue rather than a lack of motivation. When COEs facilitate "high-touch" engagement—like personalized texts and positive home visits—they treat the family as a valuable partner in the student's success, which is the most effective way to bring students back to the classroom.

Source: [Harvard Graduate School of Education / Learning Policy Institute \(2024–25\)](#).



Statistic: Schools that utilize digital storytelling and asset-based narrative branding see measurable increases in student engagement (88% or higher) and higher levels of "emotional commitment" to their learning environment.

Why it matters: In a digital world, how a school is "seen" impacts how a student feels. When Outreach departments highlight student voices and cultural assets—such as local Native American Studies or student-led tech projects—they build a sense of belonging and agency, which are proven precursors to academic achievement.

Source: [Cognia Student Engagement Survey / UNI Digital Storytelling Research \(2025\)](#).



Jordan's Perspective as a Parent

Early Education: **A Foundation of Care**

When I think back to my son's early years, the memories come in waves - some clear, others blurred by emotion. My son is an incredible young man who lives with profound autism and intractable epilepsy. His journey began with home visits from Special Beginnings staff, and later, time in the pilot PALS program SDC class. Those early supports were lifelines for our family.

Certain faces stand out even now - like one of his aides, whose warmth and joy made every day brighter. Her genuine care left a lasting impression, and we've stayed in touch over the years. That connection reminds me that these programs aren't just about education, they're about relationships that endure.

Statistic: Every \$1 invested in high-quality early childhood education in California yields an average return of \$7 to \$9 through increased future earnings and decreased social service costs.

Why it matters: This identifies the youngest learners as California's greatest economic asset. COE Early Ed departments manage "Quality Counts California" (QRIS) programs to ensure that this investment translates into high-quality environments that maximize a child's natural potential.

Source: [Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis / ReadyNation California \(2024-25\)](#).

Statistic: California's expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is on track to serve nearly 400,000 four-year-olds annually by 2025-26, making it the largest universal preschool program in the nation.

Why it matters: UPK is an equity accelerator. By providing free, high-quality early education to all, COEs are leveling the playing field before the first day of Kindergarten, ensuring that a child's zip code doesn't determine their brain development opportunities.

Source: [California Department of Education \(CDE\) / UPK Implementation Data \(2025\)](#).

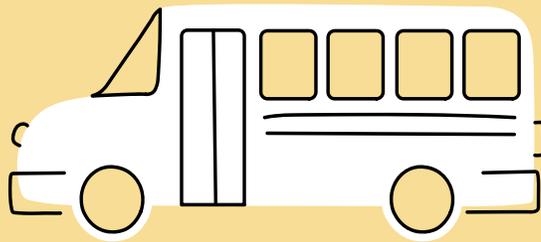
Safe Journeys: Transportation That Matters

One part of our story that often goes unnoticed is transportation. For families like mine, the bus isn't just a ride—it's a lifeline. Every morning, I watched my son wait by the window for that bright yellow bus. When it arrived, it brought more than transportation—it brought calm and consistency.

The HCOE Transportation Department made those rides safe and reassuring. Drivers greeted him by name, waited patiently for him to settle into his favorite

seat, and made sure he felt comfortable before pulling away. That kindness mattered more than they probably realized.

Behind the scenes, I learned how much effort goes into maintaining those buses and training staff to ensure safety. Those routines gave my son a sense of belonging and gave me confidence that he was in good hands. They didn't just take him to school - they helped him start each day with trust and security.



Statistic: Students who use school-provided transportation have a record of better attendance, with some studies showing that school bus access can reduce chronic absenteeism by up to 25% for low-income and rural students.

Why it matters: The bus is a stability asset. For families with unreliable personal vehicles or working parents, the school bus provides a guaranteed, safe bridge to the classroom. The driver acts as a “trusted adult” who sets the emotional tone for the student’s entire day.

Source: [National Association for Pupil Transportation \(NAPT\) / American School Bus Council \(2024\).](#)

Statistic: California is leading the nation with over \$1.8 billion in grants (such as the HVIP program) to transition school fleets to Zero-Emission Vehicles (ZEVs). As of 2025, California has more electric school buses than any other state.

Why it matters: This turns the fleet into an environmental asset. Electric buses eliminate diesel exhaust, which has been linked to higher rates of asthma and cognitive fatigue. Cleaner air on the ride to school directly correlates to better respiratory health and improved test scores for students.

Source: [California Air Resources Board \(CARB\) / EPA Clean School Bus Program 2025.](#)

Glen Paul School: **A Second Home**

My son eventually found his place at Glen Paul School, and for 18 years, it became his second home. Glen Paul is more than a school - it's a community where students with special needs receive specialized academic instruction, speech therapy, and life skills training.

He thrived there. From making the swings and bocce court his stage to rocking out in music class, Glen Paul gave him joy and confidence. Sports days, art projects, and even simple routines like taking coffee orders for teachers through WorkAbility taught him independence and pride. He loved being the "Glen Paul barista," delivering drinks with style and sometimes earning tips! Little victories meant the world to him.

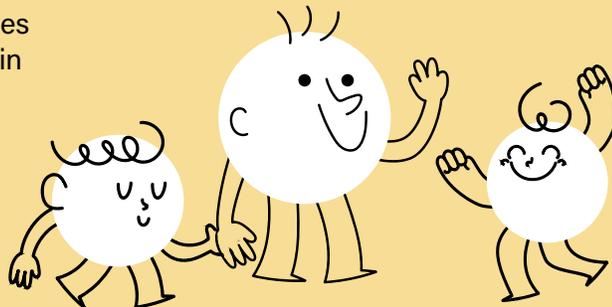
The teachers and staff didn't just teach - they laughed with him, encouraged him, and believed in him. For a parent, that kind of support is priceless. Glen Paul gave my son a safe space to grow, and it gave me peace of mind knowing he was surrounded by people who cared.

Looking Ahead

Today, my son has graduated from his school-based programs, marking the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. As a parent, I'm deeply grateful for the people and programs that shaped his journey - from early intervention to specialized education, from safe transportation to life skills training. HCOE didn't just support my child, they supported our family. And now, as I watch him step into adulthood, I know those experiences have given him the tools to thrive in his preferred future.

Closing Reflection

Through every chapter of my life, HCOE has been there, lifting me up, opening doors, and reminding me that education is about more than academics. It's about belonging, opportunity, and community. Today, as a parent and educator, I see those same values shaping the next generation. And that gives me hope for Humboldt County's future.





Statistic: Statewide, students in intensive special education programs who utilize Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs) see a 25% increase in their ability to perform independent living tasks by age 22 compared to those without integrated transition services.



Why it matters: Glen Paul focuses on “Functional Life Skills.” By treating every student as a future participant in their community, the school leverages a student’s existing strengths to build the skills needed for the “least restrictive environment” possible in adulthood.

Source: [California Department of Education \(CDE\) / Special Education Division Transition Data 2024.](#)



Statistic: California youth with significant disabilities who participate in WorkAbility I programs (like those at Glen Paul) are twice as likely to find and maintain employment after graduation.

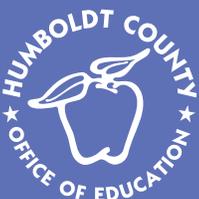
Why it matters: This reframes students as contributors to the local economy. Through the “Adult Transition Program,” students work in local businesses, proving that their reliability and unique skills are an asset to Humboldt County employers.

Source: [California WorkAbility I Impact Report / CDE Special Education.](#)

Humboldt County Office of Education Equity Statement

HCOE is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging. We believe that the circumstances children are born into should not predict their access to the resources and rigor necessary for success. We strive to create a work environment and schools that cultivate a sense of belonging; grounded in safety, dignity and respect. We are committed to building a culture of connectedness, allowing us to grow and learn better together.

We see and celebrate the range of human differences as a source of strength. We welcome the unique contributions that each person brings. We recognize that inequitable systemic barriers exist, and that our work, individually and collectively, is to eliminate these opportunity gaps that result in disparate educational outcomes for our most vulnerable students. We accept that our equity work is a journey and not a destination.



Humboldt County Office of Education

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