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Calafia Issue 5
Winter 2018

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Making a Difference One Voice at a Time

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Boyle Heights Beat
PULSO DE BOYLE HEIGHTS

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

VOICE WAVES
long beach
I am Victor Seguin from Merced, CA and graduate of Yosemite Valley High School. My wish for my community is to become more involved with itself. Right now I see a large disconnect between our elected officials, north side residents, and our south side residents. I enjoy reading, playing video games, and spending time with friends and family.

I am Sandy Garcia from Long Beach, CA and graduate of Renaissance High School for the arts. I am now attending Long Beach Community College. My wish for my community is for the rise of gentrification to stop as well as gang violence and school suspension. For fun I like to go out on weekends and cruise around the city with the people I love.

I am Ricardo Reyna from Fresno, CA and my wish for my community is to see it thrive and leave it a better place than when I was born into it. For fun I like to make music and write stories, songs and articles.

I am Yesenia Aguilar from a small town called Lamont in the Central Valley. I completed high school and now study at UCLA. My wish for my community is that it becomes a place where people want to grow roots, make a community and be proud of where they come from. On the weekends, I love to catch up on the many shows I watch and enjoy time with my family.

I am Olivia Rodriguez from Thermal a rural community in the Eastern Coachella Valley. I completed my Biology degree in 2015 from UC Berkeley. My wish for my community is that every single person is able to access healthy spaces where they feel comfortable to be who they are. For all of our stories to continue to be passed down so that we fully embrace our individual and collective identities, to fully realize our truths, and speak from the inside out. When I have time I love going to the park after work to play basketball.

OUR SCHOOLS! OUR LIVES! OUR FUTURES!

Editor’s Note

Throughout the state of California, young leaders and residents from all walks of life have been coming together to heal, support and build one another as well as their communities. It has culminated into a movement that has spread immensely; and continues to grow.

The passion they have to continue fighting for equitable education, healthy communities and united families continues to burn bright.

Whether the youth are coming together by the thousands to stand at the State Capital’s front door to demand justice for their peers being forced into the school to prison pipeline or marching through the streets to protest for their educational rights.

These determined young people have seen the greater sides of using their voices to speak for what they believe in and will not stop until they have completed their mission.

Young people understand that they are being stripped of their education and pushed out of their schools at an alarming rate. in exodus fashion. They understand that many of their families have come here to fight for their education and secure their futures, only to have it taken away from them.

They understand that no one else will do it for them, that they must stand together in solidarity. That they must be the ones who finally rise up as one to take back what is rightfully theirs.

To take back what is ours.
Our Schools!
Our Lives!
Our Futures!
Who’s leading the fight for sanctuary in California schools? Students themselves

By: Olivia Rodriguez - Coachella Unincorporated

SACRAMENTO – Eighteen-year-old Ms. Ruiz remembers when her youngest brother came to her in tears.

"Are we really going to go back home?" her brother asked her at their home in Santa Ana.

Despite her own worries, she reassured him, "Everything is going to be fine. We won’t be separated. We’re going to stand together."

Ruiz, who declined to give her first name because she is undocumented, was one of eight young people from across California who traveled to Sacramento in early May. Through support from the Movement Strategy Center, Advancement Project, and PolicyLink, the statewide youth team met with representatives from State Superintendent Tom Torlakson’s office.

Their goal was to ask the California Department of Education to publish a model resolution that expands sanctuary in schools.

Some schools in California already call themselves “sanctuary schools,” which generally means they don’t ask for or share information about students’ immigration status.

But the model resolution, called Safe and Welcoming Schools for All, would allow schools to take it a step further. It not only calls for protection of undocumented students, but for support and services to make schools safe and welcoming for all vulnerable students. These include students of diverse ethnicities and faiths as well as students who are LGBTQ, homeless, foster youth, English Learners, students with special needs and those who have been incarcerated.

The trip to Sacramento was also a chance to ensure that the State Superintendent’s office takes into consideration the views of students themselves.

As an undocumented student, Ruiz said it was important for her to tell her own story.

“I’m letting them know what’s really in the community from my personal experience,” said Ruiz. “Because I know they’re not living it. I’m the one living those stories. I’m here for my community, for myself, and my family too.”

“You shouldn’t feel like you’re targeted in a place that you’re learning,” explained 17-year-old Veronica Stevens from Richmond, right before she stepped into Tom Torlakson’s office.

As they took their seats in the State Superintendent’s office, the young people led the discussion, taking turns to share their personal experiences at school.

Twenty-year-old Napoli Shorty, representing Del Norte and the Tribal Lands, described an incident that happened on his reservation, where two young women were suspended for speaking their language at an elementary school.

“From my indigenous experience, I remember boarding schools and the policy was to ‘kill the Indian and save the man,’” he said. “We’re supposed to keep that language alive. For them to be suspended, that’s knowledge being excluded from the classroom. California, our home, has always been welcoming, so why not continue our unique California diversity? It’s what California is built on.”

Students who identify as LGBTQ said they noticed a change after the elections.

Fabiola Argueta, 17, said she felt targeted in her community in Boyle Heights. “I’m a queer person,” she said, “and after the elections people got this boldness. They think they have the right to say slurs to your face and put people down because of who they are and I personally don’t feel safe in my school anymore. That’s why I really feel like sanctuary schools are important.”

Students described a noted difference between sanctuary schools and those that do not have a sanctuary policy.
Seventeen-year-old Paola Hinojosa, whose school in Bakersfield is not a sanctuary school, said her teacher has disciplined students simply for speaking Spanish and having Mexican flags. “Our teacher tells them, ‘You can’t speak Spanish in here. You’re making other people uncomfortable.’ I shouldn’t have to hear close-minded ideas when I’m at school.”

But even in schools that are considered sanctuary schools, students said the definition of sanctuary needs to be expanded.

Troye Peters, 17, is part of the queer and trans community in Long Beach.

“It’s just so important for us to feel safe in our schools,” he said, “especially for queer students.”

After listening to the students, Gordon Jackson, director of the California Department of Education’s coordinated student support division, said it was important to hear how school climates have shifted since the election. “I wasn’t on a school campus for pre- and post-election,” he said.

I’m currently working at a packaging company where my parents also work. We get up every day at 5 a.m. to get ready for the nine-hour workday. I usually work five days a week unless the machines break down, because when that happens it usually takes a few days to fix them.

Every morning, I help my mom serve coffee to drink with our Mexican bread for breakfast. We also prepare our lunches, which usually consist of chicken salad with saltine crackers and pickled chiles, or bean and chorizo burritos, or shredded chicken tostadas.

After the morning routine, I hop in the car with my parents and head over to the babysitter to drop off two of my little brothers. We then bring my other brother Juan to school.

I feel happy for my two little brothers because they will never have to fear going outside. That’s because they were born here and have all of the protections that come with being U.S. citizens. They will be able to go to college and get a better education. They will be able to get a better job than mine, and they will be able to travel to another state and even outside of the country.

As soon as I get home from work, I check my bike and sometimes go ride it. I also hang out with my girlfriend sometimes. We meet at McDonalds or a park to talk. Even then, while I’m sitting with my girlfriend, I question whether safe spaces for undocumented immigrants actually exist. I’m always looking over my shoulder.

I didn’t apply for Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) because when I found out about it I didn’t have the nearly $500 needed to apply. DACA is a program that offers some temporary relief for undocumented immigrants who were brought over to the U.S. as children. It gives temporary relief from deportation, and it even gives the opportunity for someone to obtain a work permit.

In addition to not having the money, I was also worried that my information would be used by the Trump administration, and I wondered whether he would end the DACA program or just allow it to expire.

But if Kern were to become a safe haven, I would have the ability to go to college, expand my knowledge and get a better job.

I know that I would do this in a heartbeat.

Not only is this fear of ICE a problem for me but for so many other people in my community as well. We need to be able to feel safe in the place that we call home, and in the community that we contribute to.

Before our current president got elected, I was able to go out with friends to the movies, go out to eat, and spend time at parks without being afraid. Right now, I can’t do anything but work and stay home, all the while trying to think of ways to better myself and find opportunities to become successful.

If my city became a safe haven, it would be life-changing for me and my family. I could go out without having to constantly look over my shoulder. Instead of being stuck, I could plan for my future, just like most other responsible 19-year-olds are doing.

Teenage Farmworker: What it’s like to work the fields as a youth

By: Rosa - We’Ced Youth Media
Growing Up on the Edge of Homelessness

By: Komenan Armand Brou - Richmond Pulse

My first time working in the fields was last summer with my mom. I had been asking her for money to buy school supplies, and we both knew it was a way for me to have a little pocket money and also help out.

Around my hometown of Merced, I know other kids who work in the fields during the summer as well, so there’s no stigma attached to it. It’s kinda expected. Still, getting ready to go work out there for the first time last year, I was nervous. I knew it would be a heavy job. It’s hot and the work is very physical. I asked my mom what I was in for, and she told me I’d know what it was like once I was there. And she was right — it’s something you have to experience to understand.

We wake up really early — 5 a.m. — which is hard for me since I’m used to sleeping in. I put on lots of layers — a long-sleeved sweater, a hat, boots, and a bandana. It gets hot, but we need to wear it all in order to protect ourselves from sunburn later in the day. We have to bring our own food and water. In the mornings, mom packs lunch for both us (usually sandwiches and beans) and then we head out together.

The shifts start around 7 a.m. and go until 4 or 5 p.m. Last year, I was too young to pick anything, but there are lots of other jobs to do out there, like clear sticks and brush to make it easier for workers to move. At one point, my job was to get rid of pests: I think they were gophers. I used a shovel to throw poison into their holes and cover the opening with a mound of dirt. I felt weird because I like animals and I don’t like the idea of killing them. I did it because it was part of the job.

My friends who regularly work in the field do it because they want to earn money and they don’t like school. But I work because I love school. It’s a way to make my education possible. I earn money for books and supplies. Going to school is first on my mind. My mom thinks about it, too. She says she works in the fields year-round to make it possible for my siblings and me to do something better.

Working in the fields for the first time was hard. I was exhausted at the end of the day. But by the same time, I enjoyed it. I like the sounds of the fields, hearing people speaking Spanish and the radio blasting ranchera tunes. It sounds like my childhood. I find it comforting. Being out there, I feel more connected to my community. And I’ve recently started getting involved in politics to advocate for immigrant and farmworker rights.

Even though I could get a job doing other things, I like being out in the fields with my mom. I feel like I understand her better now that I know what she goes through every day.

Most of the kids I grew up with and went to school with are dead, doing life in prison or in gangs. I feel really blessed to be alive and accomplishing my goal of going to college.

For a while, I wasn’t sure if I was going to make it. I was born and raised in Oakland, but I am originally from the Ivory Coast in West Africa. My parents were born in Africa and came to the United States separately in the 1990s to live a better life. They got married through an arranged marriage and are now divorced.

When I was three years old, I went to the Ivory Coast with my older brother for five years to visit my family on my mom’s side. My oldest brother and I had a lot of bad experiences living in Africa, from health issues to being scared for our lives living there in the wartime. Living in Africa with my brother was hard because we were away from our parents who were in the States.

When my brother and I came back to the States, we moved in with my mom who was living in Hayward. I was eight years old and my oldest brother was 13. The neighborhood was quiet and there was rarely any trouble. On days we didn’t have school, we played video games with friends in the neighborhood and basketball in the park.

My mom worked two jobs to take care of us. She made sure we had food, a place to stay, clean clothes, entertainment and an education. My mom figured public schools were a distraction for me and my brother so moved us to a private Christian school in San Leandro and that school was like a family to us. The times we didn’t have food to eat at home, the school gave us food. And the times my mom couldn’t pay for our tuition, the principal let us go to the school for free.

We lived in Hayward for about two years. Then we got kicked out because my mom couldn’t pay the rent.

We ended up living with her friend William from Ghana. He lived in what was known as “Deep East Oakland,” one of the most dangerous parts of town due to gang violence. Living in that neighborhood was tough because there was a lot of crime.

The way to survive in a tough neighborhood is only leaving your house when you have somewhere you have to go, and then going straight home. Also don’t make yourself too known because you might attract the wrong people. That’s how I survived. I only came out of the house to go to school and run errands.

William took me and my brother under his wing like a second dad. We went fishing, played basketball, went out to eat and he even took us to school every morning. We lived with William for about two years. Then he couldn’t support us anymore, so we went to live in a homeless shelter in Richmond called the Bay Area Rescue Mission.

It was one of the worst things I’d experienced in my life. My mom, my brother and I had to share a tiny room. The bathrooms were moldy, the people were crazy, the food was old and surrounded by flies, and at 7:30 in the morning everyone had to go to Bible study for two hours and listen to a pastor sing and talk about God. By 6:00 pm, everyone had to be inside the shelter or else you got locked out for the rest of the night.

What I learned from living in homeless shelters is that you have to work hard to better your situation. And it keeps you humble when you do become successful.

My mom tried to put my brother and me in schools in Richmond, but my godmother got us into schools in El Cerrito instead because they were safer.

In school, the only problems I had was speaking English. When I went to Africa, I only spoke French because that was the language my friends and family spoke. I had to relearn how to speak English.

By the time I got to middle school, we’d gotten kicked out of the Bay Area Rescue Mission on the Fourth of July for having alcohol. It was my fault, because I gave some to a kid that I thought was my friend, and he ended up telling his mom, and his mom told the shelter, and we got kicked out. I was only 11 years old.

We ended up moving to another shelter in Richmond called CRIP, and stayed there for a while. Then we got kicked out because my mom got into a fight with a lady there. Then we moved to a shelter in Berkeley called the Harrison House. The only good thing about living there was that it was close to my school. We stayed there for a few months and then we got kicked out for not following the rules. My mom ended up finding a room in Central Richmond on 1st and MacDonald Avenue.

It was a rundown building next to a church and the building was owned by a pastor. He made all his tenants go to his church. The bathrooms were dirty, the beds were old and covered with urine stains, and the neighborhood was a ghetto. My mom and the pastor looked out for us. They never wanted us walking around the neighborhood because it was filled with thugs, crackheads and prostitutes. We stayed there for about a year. Then my mom moved to San Pablo and rented a room from a lady she met at the pastor’s church because the pastor was raising the rent. The lady’s name was Vanessa but we called her Sister Vanessa because everyone that was part of the church was like a family.

When we first moved into Vanessa’s house she treated us normally. Then after a few months, her true personality came out. She started using my mom for her car and ate the food that my mom bought for me and my brother. She used the church as a business to get people to rent rooms in the house she lived in. It turned out the house

Rosa is a youth reporter at We Ced. To protect her identity, we have used a pseudonym. This article was originally created in collaboration with YouthRadio for The New York Times.
One morning we woke up and everything in the house was gone and the water and electricity were cut off. We had to quickly take our stuff and get out. We never heard from her again.

When I was 14, my mom found a studio apartment in Richmond by the BART station. I remember going a day without food in the house and I had to steal to get something to eat. I started smoking weed with classmates that I thought were my friends. We met playing basketball at school and then we created a little dance group called “Zero Gravity Entertainment,” and we posted dancing videos on YouTube and battled other dance groups. After that we gave up on dancing and changed the group name to “Money Gang Mafia.” We started skipping school and hanging out with gang members. All we did was smoke weed, steal and hang out on the streets.

By the time I got to high school, I stopped hanging out with them and started playing football. When they saw me taking school seriously they started picking fights with me. I got fed up and started fighting back and got kicked out of school.

I tried out a series of continuation schools, charter schools and home schooling programs. The schools didn’t work because I started smoking, skipping school, and fighting again. Online classes didn’t work either, because it took the teacher three business days to reply.

Then I started going to a continuation school in East Oakland. My mom was worried about me going to that school because of all the stories she had heard about East Oakland, but I insisted on going there. Every morning I woke up at 5:30 am and took two buses, the 57 and the 46.

To avoid conflict, I got some advice from therapists near my school at the Eastmont Wellness Center. I started seeing them after I ended up in a psychiatric hospital in Concord called John Muir for having a panic attack. The therapists prescribed medication for me and taught me how to react calmly in stressful situations.

It helped me a lot because I learned coping skills, and it helped me be happy and comfortable with myself. I stayed focused at school by coming to school on time, avoiding drama and doing all of my work. After all the hard work, I graduated and I am now in college at Merritt in Oakland. My goals are to graduate from college and get a certificate as a radiology technician. Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to work in a hospital and I’ve seen my family members working as doctors.

Living in all those neighborhoods was tough because there were a lot of times I was pressed into doing illegal activities with the people I was hanging around with. My way of staying out of trouble was staying home, watching television and playing video games. I did that until I moved out of those neighborhoods. Although I was in a really negative environment, the reason why I never gave up or joined a gang, is because I had hope. I knew one day my situation would get better. My mom always told me to just go to school and get an education. And that’s what I’m doing.

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**Should System-Engaged Youth Have “Reasonable Access” To The Internet?**

*By: Natalie Bettendorf - Youth Radio*

Youth in California detention centers, like juvenile hall, are not guaranteed access to technology. Even in the foster care system, there is nothing in writing that gives youth rights to access technology of any kind.

California Assembly Bill 811, which was introduced by state Assemblymember Mike Gipson earlier this year, aims to change that.

The bill would help ensure that youth in out-of-home placements, including the juvenile justice and foster care systems, would have “reasonable access to technology.” Bill 811 is being set to be voted on the Senate floor this September and is being backed by Facebook and the Youth Law Center.

Youth Radio’s Natalie Bettendorf spoke to Lucy Carter, the policy advocate for the Youth Law Center, about what it would mean for youth to have “reasonable access” to the Internet.

*The conversation has been lightly edited for clarity.*

Natalie Bettendorf, Youth Radio: What is the current policy for accessing technology in youth detention facilities and youth in the foster care system?

Lucy Carter: Well, there aren’t formal policies in place. So it’s very site-specific and family-placement-specific. So, for example, one foster youth might have ongoing access to [the] Internet in their family but another foster youth who is in a group home might not have any access to the Internet when they are home. Making it very difficult for them to do their homework and get their homework assignments done. So if you’re in a group home that doesn’t have a computer with Internet access then you have to go to a library or not get your homework done.

NB: There’s definitely a stigma with adolescents and screen usage. What do you say to people who push back on the idea that Internet access is a basic right?

LC: It’s just fundamental to how we live in today’s society. If we don’t help young people learn technology skills, we are not preparing them to be in the world of work. I mean, we use technology every day in our work lives, and if they do not have those skills then they are behind. They already face challenges in being able to have good educational outcomes and to have good careers and to thrive, and the last thing we want to do is take [access to technology] away too. We need them to have the opportunities to learn the technology skills they need to have to survive in today’s work world.

NB: What does “reasonable internet access” mean?

LC: So “reasonable” is left up to the caregiver to determine. So for example a grandparent who’s caring for a grandchild in foster care might not have the means because they’re living on Social Security to buy the latest technology for their grandchild. Reasonable access to technology in that case might mean going to the library twice a week so that their grandchild can get online and get homework assignments completed. Another example would be in the juvenile justice setting with youth who are detained. We aren’t saying that they should be able to communicate with everybody. We are saying that they need to have monitored communications to maintain healthy connections, but we’ll leave that up to probation to determine for each youth.

NB: What’s the financial feasibility of this bill, and how is the state going to fund an increase in access to technology?

LC: We know that there are ways to do this cheaply. The technology is not that complicated. San Diego County’s juvenile hall is using Skype as a way for the young people who are detained to have online visits with their parents. It’s not expensive technology to access. A lot of the court schools have laptops already, but they’re only being used in limited ways and they’re not being used to maintain connections with family. They’re used in very limited educational ways, which isn’t good [use of the resource]. So in some cases they have the technology already in the building, they’re just not using it as they could be.
That incident happened just when Stokes was struggling with responsibilities at home, including having to look after her twin baby brothers on mornings when her mom wasn't home or needed her help.

Stokes says her dad didn't help much. She also describes her home life as "not very caring." The police would constantly come to the house and her family had several social worker cases that meant Stokes and her three younger siblings were in danger of being put in foster care.

"Home doesn't really feel like home," Stokes describes. "My family is always arguing and we barely get along. My family has had several social worker cases and me and my little brothers are in danger of being put in foster care. Well, now that I'm 18 I don't have to worry about it but I still have to worry for my baby brothers."

All of that made it tough for Stokes to keep up with her school work, but it wasn't what she says kept her from graduating. In her junior year she was placed in geometry, even though she had not passed algebra the year before. Geometry also happened to be the class where she had the most absences and she says her teacher didn't offer to help. "When I would ask for help my teacher would say, 'You should be paying attention,'" Stokes recalls.

She felt discouraged and she felt picked on by the teacher. Stokes believes the school should've offered more resources and reached out to her. She is now in continuation school and working towards graduating.

Mayra Gonzales is a youth organizer with Californians for Justice - Long Beach, which advocates for things like bettering school climate and educational equality.

The graduation rate for Long Beach Unified in 2015-2016 was 84 percent, up from the year before and higher than the state average of 82 percent. But the district still had a dropout rate of almost 10 percent for the school year, and according to a 2016 study by The Children's Defense Fund, while suspensions dropped by 53 percent in Long Beach Unified from 2011 to 2015, black and special education students in LBUSD were still suspended "well beyond the rate of any other subgroup of students."

The study noted, "Black students are also disproportionately pushed out of comprehensive schools to alternative settings."

Gonzales says, "Even though the district says it's not as bad as other districts, this is not a good enough standard. We should not have school pushout at all."

For Stokes, her experience with her unsupportive teacher has become an ironic source of inspiration.

"Looking back on my experience I can now see that it has helped me grow as a leader and an achiever," she says. "I refuse to step down to her low expectations for me because I'm better than that."

I would advise other students that experience discouragement from teachers, staff, or anyone to use that as motivation to strive forward and excel, to show people that they are way more than the standards."
14 Back-to-School Self Care Tips
By: Juliana Taboada - Coachella Unincorporated

With school starting so soon, I feel that as students it’s very easy for us to forget the importance of prioritizing our well-being. I know for me, personally, I tend to forget that I am a human being who needs as much attention as my school work does. In fact, I probably need more. It seems like when it comes to educational institutions, self-care practices are never in the picture. In fact, many of us may not even know what self-care means.

If this is your first time learning about what self-care is, it is the practice of taking care of yourself and your well-being. In other words, it’s about doing what makes you feel good both mentally and physically.

Self-care is a revolutionary act. Being able to step back and take time for yourself is one of the strongest things anyone can do. The idea that taking care of ourselves is selfish is ignorant and negative. Don’t allow this view to change your need to take care of yourself.

I believe the more attention I give to my body, the more successful I am in everything. Keep in mind, self care isn’t a one time act. Self-care is a constant activity that helps balance the mind, soul and body. So, here are my favorite tips for helping you start off the school year or everyday life on a brighter note.

**SELF CARE TIP #1**
**SLEEP**
As students, we tend to not sleep due to amount of work we receive. Change that and take a nap every so often!

**SELF CARE TIP #2**
**EXERCISE**
Take a walk, run, swim, dance! The options are limitless!

**SELF CARE TIP #3**
**JOURNALING**
Writing is a safe place to just rant for hours. Utilize it!

**SELF CARE TIP #4**
**SPEND TIME OUTSIDE**
Being outside is calming for both your soul and mind. Whether you’re feeling down or happy, nature helps calm and clear your mind.

**SELF CARE TIP #5**
**UNDERSTAND YOU DON’T HAVE TO PLEASE ANYONE**
It’s impossible to please everyone and make anyone happy. Focus on making yourself happy!

**SELF CARE TIP #6**
**ALLOW YOURSELF TO FEEL WHATEVER YOU’RE FEELING**
It’s okay to be sad. It’s okay to cry. It’s okay to be happy. Let yourself feel all these emotions.

**SELF CARE TIP #7**
**KNOW THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION**
It can be hard to see the difference between a sad moment and a constant depressed feeling. Learn the signs for your benefit and reach out for support.

**SELF CARE TIP #8**
**DECLUTTER YOUR SPACE**
It can be as simple as cleaning out your backpack or room. Decluttering helps gives a sense of control when it’s sometimes lost.

**SELF CARE TIP #9**
**LISTEN TO MUSIC AND DANCE**
Dancing and dramatically singing along to your favorite song is one of the best things to do relieve stress!

**SELF CARE TIP #10**
**LISTEN TO YOUR BODY**
Your body is a lot smarter than you think and can talk to you through levels of pain or odd feelings. Listening to your body, can help you acknowledge feelings you didn’t know about.

**SELF CARE TIP #11**
**DRAW OR COLOR**
Even if you think you aren’t an artistic person, just putting a pen or brush to paper can help relieve stress and awaken your creativity.

**SELF CARE TIP #12**
**DRESSING UP**
If dressing up helps boost your confidence, then do it! Sometimes just dressing up can help bring a lighter mood.

**SELF CARE TIP #13**
**HANGING OUT WITH LOVED ONES**
Hanging out with people you love is one of the best ways to feel better! Whether they are your family or friends or partner.

**SELF CARE TIP #14**
**AFFIRMING YOURSELF**
Understand that we are people, and we can’t do everything. Our effort is enough. We are enough.
Early Childhood Education: A Matter of Access

By: Yesenia Aguilar - South Kern Sol

For Blanca Casillas, the choice to keep her young children home with her mom instead of sending them to preschool wasn’t an easy one.

The Bakersfield mother of two tried to enroll both her children into preschool, but “the same thing happened with both,” Blanca states. “For my second child, I tried community action, but I was put on the waitlist for a long time and they never called me because we need to meet prerequisite criteria and one of them was if you were a single mom, so I was put on the waitlist and then never called back. For Ivan, my first child, I was called back by community action where they help you with a certain percentage, but I didn’t qualify because of my income.”

In Kern County, if a parent does not meet the income guidelines to enroll the child into public preschool the next option is private preschool education, which can cost parents more than $7,000 a year.

Casillas who holds a B.A. in psychology from Cal State Bakersfield shared that her income pushed her over the income eligibility threshold to qualify for state funded preschool, but her income was not enough to pay for a private high quality preschool either.

“Children across Kern County are facing the issue of accessibility to early childhood education and this results in impacts later in life.

According to First 5 Kern’s annual report, “a child’s brain develops more in the first five years than at any other time in their life. How children are nurtured and cared for during their first five years influences their emotional, physical and intellectual environment and has a profound impact on how the brain is organized. The relationships and contacts a child has with parents and caregivers significantly influence how a child will function in school and later in life,” and more than half of children here in Kern County are missing out on the opportunity of attending preschool.

Casillas has seen the effects of her children not attending preschool. She says “No, I don’t think they’re ready for kindergarten because she [her mom] doesn’t really do school stuff with them. I think if they would’ve gone to preschool they would have worked more on their social skills and made friends and they would have learned structure and how to be ready for kindergarten.”

Christine Lollar, the communications specialist at First 5, says that there is an issue with accessibility in Kern County because we have a shortage of spots, there’s not enough child education spots for as many children as Kern County has. There’s not enough childcare, there’s not enough transitional kindergarten spots, there’s not enough in home care preschool slots.

Additionally because Kern County is composed of several rural communities, poverty is a problem when families have to enroll their children into preschool.

Low-income parents might find preschool a burden because of lack of transportation and undocumented parents might not enroll their children in preschool for fear of of being deported or it counting against them in future immigration hearings.

Additionally because Kern County is composed of several rural communities, poverty is a problem when families have to enroll their children into preschool.

As of 2014, 49.2% of children ages 3-5 in Kern County were not enrolled in preschool or kindergarten compared to the California average of 39.6%.

According to Kidsdata.org, in Kern 33.6 percent of children live in poverty and Latino’s have a poverty rate of 36.7 percent. Poverty rates for African American children living in Kern were not available, but the state poverty rate for African American children is 36.5 percent, compared to the state average of 22.7 percent.

Availability and poverty aren’t the only issues regarding access to childhood education, in Kern County. Advocates also say a significant lack of early education teachers means centers are understaffed, resulting in less placements available.

“We have a shortage of people that are going into the early childcare field, Lollar said. “It’s not known as a high-paying job, many child care workers make $12 to $14 an hour.”

Tammy Burns, the coordinator of Early Childhood Council of Kern agrees with Lollar, “centers require staff to have college level units and so for the amount of training and education that’s required, the pay hasn’t really kept up, so what we’re fighting is there are fewer people going into the field and those that continue on the education field, oftentimes move into elementary education and get their teaching credentials especially since transitional kindergarten came along.”

Child care providers who educate and nurture children through the early stages of life are making nearly the same as someone who works in fast food. The fact that there are not enough facilities for children and that those facilities are not paying teachers enough, makes college students not want to delve into the early child care field.

Despite the many issues regarding access to early childhood education in Kern County, Lollar asserts that things are improving. The more investment we make into the child, we are proactive, we are investing into their future so if we do that now, when these children are adults they’re going to be more stable and have a more balanced mental health.”

The Early Childhood Council of Kern has taken up the issue of the lack of access to early childhood education in Kern County to legislators, “we have been working diligently to bring awareness to legislators about the issue and encourage them to create legislation that would improve Childhood Services for Families,” Burns states. “There has been a lot of focus on improving the quality of the existing programs, we haven’t done a lot of capacity building, but we do have a lot of programs that are addressing and improving the quality of those programs.”

First 5 is helping children across Kern learn even though they might not be enrolled in preschool, if parents go online, they can access songs, poems, coloring pages, handouts and online books. Lollar suggests that parents can even “reach out to United Way, [they] give at home libraries and [parents] can get those in Spanish.”

Additionally, Burns says that Child Development Centers advertise their programs through social media, especially the subsidized programs, so that families who are income eligible can apply.
Should Schools Implement Calm Rooms to Lessen the Rate of Willful Defiance?

By: Jazmine Justice-Young - Access Sacramento

Regardless where they are, one thought plagues the minds of most aspiring principals in the nation: How can I improve my school by decreasing out-of-school suspensions?

Unlike other suspendable offenses, are as difficult to define as willful defiance. Carl Pinkston, a member of the Sacramento-based Black Parallel School Board, summarizes willful defiance as to "Willfully defy(ing) an authority (e.g., teacher, principals, SRO’s and school personnel) to perform their duty."

"A student comes into class late, wearing clothing that displeases(s) the school official, non responsive to a question, make off with eyes, dropping of pencil etc., explains Pinkston. "In fact, it's a question of implicit bias of authority view of a student and the failure of classroom management."

While the subjective nature of willful defiance continues to confuse school administrators across the country, one New Jersey school seems to have found their own creative solution.

The Yokshir Family School in Camden, New Jersey has restructured some classrooms into "calm rooms"—typically used as safe spaces for anxious students—a type of group counseling room where students who are sent out of class on grounds of willful defiance can communicate their problems and learn how to better handle their frustrations in the classroom.

"After looking at the number of students being suspended at such a young age, sent home for misbehaviors in the classroom and decided that we weren't approaching the whole child," Linda Brown-Bartlett said in an interview with NewsWorks. "So we created this calming room which is a safe space where students can come ifthey're anxious or agitated (or) starting to loose control...we've changed the question when they come into the calming room as to not 'What did you do?' but 'How did this happen? What’s going on?' and trying to make it a little more personal for the child."

So if one school was able to decrease suspensions with this method, should California schools implement calm rooms as well?

Mariachi Conservatory Sets the Tempo in Boyle Heights

By: Joshua Solis - Boyle Heights

A full voice can be heard singing La Cucaracha, while little hands strum decorated guitars.

The simple and cheerful melody played by 7-16-year-olds fills the room.

Parents watch as director Richard Mata leads their children. There is a productive feeling in the air as the 13 students in an intermediate class at the Mariachi Conservatory work hard at learning and understanding the music.

The students are taking part in a tradition that is close to the hearts of many, especially Mata, who, along with his wife, Esperanza, began the non-profit conservatory in 2007 because of his love for mariachi music. Mata, who also teaches music at Salesian High School, and his wife and two daughters give beginning to advanced mariachi lessons throughout the week.

"The music of my people"

"I've just always enjoyed music and wanted to learn," says Carlos Cruz, 17, who has been playing with the Conservatory for the past three years. "It's the music of my people, and I find it important to know about my culture. I have a lot of family that played mariachi as well, so that pulled me into wanting to play more."

Students can learn vocals, guitar, guitarrón, trumpet, harp or violin in classes held Tuesdays through Thursdays. Mata often has students play a section of a song, after which he provides extra explanation and guidance to those who need it. His wife, and their daugh-

ter, América, guide a violin class for six or seven students in a room next door.

Classes cost a nominal fee of $10, which Mata says he reinvests in the program. He and his wife donate their time because they love what they do.

As Mata says his love of music led him to mariachi at age 14. He played in a program at Belvedere Middle School called "Mariachi Olimpico" which was started by the leader of Los Camperos de Nati Cano, a Grammy Award-winning Mariachi group.

Mata and his wife have been playing mariachi music together since 1996 in Mariachi Voz de América. Today, his daughters also play with the band. "All four of us belong in the same band we established when Angie was one-year-old," says Mata. "Now they're playing professionally and earning their own income."

The husband and wife team started the Mariachi Conservatory because so many music programs in the state are underfunded, and Mata wanted to offer instruction year-round. They began with only seven or eight students, but now have close to 100.

"The seriousness started to emerge as soon as our students were at the advanced level, and they began to perform very well," he says. "When students take it to that level, they see those results up on stage. Our program has shifted in a positive way."

Confidence-building

Cruz, who plays in the advanced group, says that in addition to teaching him music, the program has helped him personally. "It's given me more confidence from having to just get out there and perform, and it might benefit me in the future career-wise," he says.

Louis Espinosa, father of a 9-year-old student, is happy with what his son has gained. "Learning the music has actually helped his Spanish. He speaks more Spanish and more clearly, and he also has more comprehension of the language," says Espinosa.

For others, learning and playing the music helps them feel more connected to their roots. "This music itself was introduced to me by my grandma," says Mia Castro, 43. "I didn't speak the language at all, but the music speaks for itself. It's very passionate. Even if you don't speak the language, you just kind of feel a connection to it."

The Mariachi Conservatory performs with some other organizations, such as the LA Opera's Zarzuela Project, and at various events. Mata says that the group only performs for organizations that benefit local communities.

Mata says mariachi helped him find his own identity, and he hopes to help others carry on the tradition.

"A lot of the songs talk about the history of Mexico and what they value. And a lot of it was beautiful, because they valued the land, the love they have for other people, especially family," he says. "You begin to see all these elements in the songs once you begin to listen to it."
Should School Days Start Later?

By: Jannai Simmons - VoiceWaves

The first day of school is easy. That I know. The clothes are already laid out, my shoes are at the end of my bed with my cute, fresh socks tucked in them neatly. None of my siblings got any sleep last night even though we all went to bed at 9:30 p.m. But I mean, how could we? We’re too nervous about this school year. Still, we wake up an hour earlier to arrive on time and proceed on our day, nervous yet still floating with excitement. Like I said, the first day is easy. However the rest of the school year might not be so smooth.

Throughout past school years, I noticed I become more groggy, cranky, and an all-around monster at the sheer thought of school as the months pass by. This is because my sleep was snatched from under me like a thin carpet! BOOM! It’s next Wednesday! I’m well into school now and the routine is already imprinted in my brain. Wake up an hour earlier, get dressed, brush my teeth, comb my hair and the rest of my time is spent looking for that one shoe I said I’d look for this morning. It was 2 a.m. last night when I lost it, because I was barely finishing that 10-page essay my lunatic teacher thinks I have the time for. The school year is further in now and a full eight hours of sleep is laughable.

It’s no secret that people should get a full night’s sleep in order to be their best selves for the next day. But when teenagers have at least two hours of homework each night and are expected to be involved in sports, extracurricular activities, volunteer work, have a job and still maintain a social life, it becomes evident how quickly we forget about the importance of sleeping well.

According to a 2014 National Sleep Foundation poll, sleep deprivation affects about 90 percent of American high school students, as they get far less than the recommended eight to 10 hours, and the amount of time we sleep is decreasing – a serious threat to our health, safety and academic success. By definition, sleep deprivation is the situation or condition of suffering from a lack of sleep, and according to sleep researcher Wendy M. Troxel in a TED Talk, she called the problem of tired teens a “public health epidemic.” It increases the likelihood that teens will suffer a variety of negative outcomes, such as the inability to concentrate, poor grades, car accidents, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts, the researcher argues.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, a health and research organization, recommends that middle and high schools delay the start of class to 8:30 a.m. or later. Doing so will align school schedules to the biological sleep rhythms of adolescents, whose sleep/wake cycles begin to shift up to two hours later at the start of puberty.

I asked a couple of 18-year-old Long Beach Polytechnic High School seniors about their opinions on school start times and to my surprise, I got a lot of mixed answers. I asked all of them the same two questions: How has the school’s regulation of early start times affected you and do you think you would do better with later start times?

“I think I would be less stressed,” Jackie Lopez said. “Sometimes I feel like I’m rushed and when I’m rushed, I don’t put out my best work.” She went on to explain the high expectations as a student in the Program of Additional Curricular Experiences (PACE) – the highest and most vigorous academy at Polytechnic High School – and how that contributes to stress as well.

Next was Kendra Viloria. She didn’t mind waking up as early as we do. “If it started later, I would probably do the same [routine],” Viloria said.

Some might think that starting school later would be a regression. One theory is that this new schedule could push the entire day back and that kids would still go to bed later. Although this sounds plausible, it is highly unlikely to come true. The time in which we turn in to bed would be the same because only the wake-up time would change. The majority of school officials think of adolescents as being lazy and having no ambition, and it’s this one-sided point of view that is the root of many problems in our school systems.

In summation, the next time the topic of how adolescents are moody and aggravated pops up in conversation, know that it is because the ridiculous school system deprives us of sleep. It just straight-up sucks.
The conversations are beyond disturbing and have many weighing in on what should be done to combat this kind of ignorance. The reporters of The kNOw had their own thoughts on the issue, read below to find out what they had to say.
Learning to learn: Young Men From Across California Come Together to Heal, Honor the Earth and Each Other’s Growth

By: Ricardo Reyna - The kNOW Youth Media

Imagine enduring a bus ride for 8 hours into the Sierra Nevadas, in the middle of the summer's heat, then being told to wake up at the crack of dawn to participate in a water ceremony the next day. Sounds a bit ridiculous right? But it was quite the opposite. As 150 youth of color and adult allies made their way down on a Monday morning to a nearby pond to take part in a Native American water ceremony normally held by women. The purpose of the ceremony is to show respect to and honor water and acknowledge its importance to the life it gives us.

This ceremony was a teaching not many of the young people had been a part of before. It opened up a new way for all of the people in attendance to learn about how critical it is to respect the Earth and show appreciation for all it provides us. It also brought to light a few of the personal experiences, as well as dilemmas, with water that many people around the world experience.

Standing in a circle, youth from across California shared their stories while presenting a sample of water from their hometown that was then poured out into the nearby pond to be filtered back into Mother Earth.

One of the strongest stories that stood out to me was from an individual who is a member of the Hoopa Valley Native American tribe, known better amongst themselves by their endonym, Natinixwe, which translates to “People of the Place Where the Trails Return”. It was when this man shared his story that I truly got to see things from a different perspective. He talked about remembering being a young boy and being told to go talk to, and listen to the water if ever he was having troubles.

At first, he thought the elders that were suggesting this to him probably didn’t know what they were talking about. Yet after facing various struggles throughout his life, he realized that his elders were right all along. One day as he sat by the water, not knowing what to do with his situation at hand, he took a moment to listen to the smooth currents of the moving water. He found that the water had shared with him a song in his native language of Hupa (an endangered Athabaskan language of California, part of a larger family of indigenous languages throughout North America) that he then proceeded to share with all of those who were attending the ceremony.

Although many, if not all of us, could not translate what was being sung, you could hear and see the emotion and passion that flowed through him as he sang away. After finishing his song, he shared with us how, after living and experiencing this for himself, he believes water can speak to you and teach you things that no one else will be able to.

His story truly inspired me that day and showed that no matter where we are from, we may all face similar obstacles in life. That if we open our minds up to new ways of learning, it could have a great impact on our lives and the lives of those around us.

As I stood there watching the rest of the water ceremony unfold, I started to wonder. Why did we have to travel such a far distance to learn this kind of information? Why have we never been taught these practices in school? Why is it so hard for students to understand these concepts inside of a classroom?

To answer that, we must first examine and try to understand the seven different learning styles that people use to attain information.

These seven learning styles include:
- Visual (spatial): You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural (auditory-musical): You prefer using sound and music.
- Verbal (linguistic): You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.
- Physical (kinesthetic): You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical (mathematical): You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems.
- Social (interpersonal): You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.
- Solitary (intrapersonal): You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

A study from Learning Styles Online states that everyone has a different combination and mixture of learning styles that they use. You may use a specific learning style more than others and your preferred way to learn may vary based on your environment and surroundings. There is no perfect mixture, nor are these methods fixated or set in stone. You may even find over time that you better develop a style that you use less often, or strengthen one that you may already prefer to use.

In an environment where hundreds of young people are being taught at once, schools often form a general standard of how students are taught. Which can make it difficult for students to grasp what is being taught to them.

California education officials talked proudly about the seventh year in a row where they saw improvements in the state’s graduation rates. An article on EdSource stated that California reached 83.2 percent in the year 2016, which was 0.9 percent greater than that of the previous year. From afar, this number may seem like growth. But it’s not even a full percent of improvement. What about the other 16.8% of students who did not graduate?

To find out more, I asked twenty eight campers who attended the water ceremony how they felt they learned best (using the seven different learning styles listed above) and if they felt they learned better inside or outside of a classroom.

Out of twenty eight campers:
- 4 felt they learned Physically.
- 8 felt they learned Visually.
- 3 felt they learned Aurally.
- 4 felt they learned Verbally.
- 5 felt they learned Socially.
- 2 felt they learned Logically.
- 2 felt they learned in Solitary.
The number of campers who prefer to learn outside is nearly twice as high as those who prefer to learn inside.

Of the ten students who preferred to learn inside a classroom, Joshua Barrientes, 22, said, “I guess it’s because I’ve been in a classroom setting for so long that it’s nothing new and it’s a bit more structured.”

When asked how he felt about learning outside of a classroom for the week, in the unfamiliar circumstances of Portola CA, he said, “One thing I’ve learned from camp this previous year is that when your life seems to be getting cluttered or out of control, take a step back and relax a little bit. Clear your mind of worries and when you return to the responsibilities you will approach them more confidently, and know how to accomplish these barriers. At least that’s how I helped myself into learning.”

Still, the other 18 preferred to work outside of a classroom because they felt the environment was set for learning through experience rather than a set curriculum. The believed that physically working together to accomplish something as challenging as a ropes course helped them learn far greater than any paper test or workbook ever could.

Chao Xiong, 19, said, “The learning experience was great. Each obstacle was about facing certain fears. I wish that there was more team bonding because it’s important to understand your team in order to achieve more.”

When asked how he felt about the water ceremony that took place that morning, Chao said “The water ceremony was great. I learned that there were all kinds of people, from all different places, with different hardships that they need to conquer. It feels like we became one at that ceremony.”

I couldn’t agree more.

My time spent at camp that week and my participation in the water ceremony showed me that, with the awareness of different learning styles and openness to how others experience the world, young men of color from 15+ communities across California - all with different cultures and languages - can come together with respect and unity. And with this as a foundation, the goals we set together can be achieved faster and with an even greater impact.

Depression and anxiety, high schoolers share whoas on accessing mental health care

By: Victor Seguin - We'Ced Youth Media

When we think of schools we think of our education and the learning skills of our next generation; however we don’t always think about the mental wellbeing of those in our schools. We know education is important, but the students in these schools won’t be able to focus on their education if they’re not in the right mindset. How do we get the students into the right mindset? How do we help them? These are all questions with no definitive answer. What works for one person might not work for someone else. So then what should we do? One small way to help that I can see is to hire a professional who is trained in helping people with mental health issues.

A major issue is that a high school student who’s dealing with depression or anxiety is usually sent to the nurse or told to speak to the counselor. This doesn’t always work and in some cases its handled with far less care than it should be.

Erendira Reyes, 19, described her experience with her former high school, Livingston High, dealt with her depression, anxiety, and panic attacks. When she would have a panic attack or a very depressing day she would cope with it by crying in a bathroom or ditching school to be alone. When the school found out, the vice principal gave her a card that allowed her to leave class to go be alone and deal with her depression or anxiety. After transferring to a Yosemite High School she was told by school officials about a therapist on campus who she could speak to, but sadly that therapist was only available on Wednesdays.

This isn’t just one person’s experience though. Chase Bertotto, 19, also dealt with depression caused by “everything” as he explained to me. Just like Erendira he chose to skip class as a way to cope with his depression. After transferring to Yosemite High School and learning of the therapist he chose not to speak to them.

“I don’t like the idea of talking about my problems with a stranger,” said Bertotto.

Instead he chose to walk with staff members when he would feel depressed because that’s what gave him comfort. “Walking usually helps my anxiety more than talking.”

Another case is Marquis Carrillo, 20, who dealt with depression brought on by school and family issues.

“All the stress from testing every week and all of the bullying piles up on you and causes this depression and anxiety for me.”

He had no way of coping with his feelings and chose to hide them from everyone in hopes they would go away. Additionally Carrillo mentioned he could not afford to see a therapist and that he didn’t know that there was one on his school campus.

“I think that if I would have known about the therapist I would have gone to them and would have hopefully been able to deal with my emotions better.”

We have heard from students, but what does high school staff think about mental health in their schools? According to the 2013 California School Climate Survey by the California Department of Education, only 3.9% of high school staff say mental health is a “severe” issue for students. Another 17.1% see it as a moderate issue, 60.5% see it as a mild issue, and 18.4% see mental health as not an issue at all.

A 2014 study done by UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, showed that 20.8% of California youth ages 12-17 reported needing mental health services for feelings of sadness, anxiety or nervousness. In Merced County alone 24.8% of youth in that age group reported needing mental health services.

A 2012 study done through Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, showed that an average of 62.7% of youth aged 2-17 received the care they asked for whereas sadly in Merced County only 54.3% of that same age group received care. That’s about 1 out every 2 youth who got the care they needed and that’s not right in my eyes.

After seeing all the data and finding out that only half of Merced students actually receive care, our schools need to do more to help our youth who have to deal with these mental health issues. A small percentage of educators and staff see mental health as an issue in schools, but our young people are saying otherwise.

We can’t expect students of any age to be able to excel in their education when they also have to deal with depression or anxiety caused by an number of things happening both in school and out. We must make sure that there are mental health services available to all students so that schools can be a place of learning.
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“I didn’t think I could make a difference in my community but by being a youth reporter at Coachella Unincorporated I learned how to bring my community together through the power of storytelling.”

Karla Martinez’s experience as a youth reporter for Coachella Unincorporated helped her strengthen the writing and communication skills she needed to advocate for positive change in her community.