

COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

CS²*

CASE STUDY

CS² is a systems-change initiative that builds connections between schools and communities to help students progress successfully from elementary school through high school and subsequently make informed choices about post-secondary education and career opportunities. A team of Community Entrepreneurs act as change agents to help build capacity for school reform efforts in the host school system and surrounding community. The Entrepreneur Team is employed by three different entities: the city, the school district and Petaluma People Services Center, a local human services agency. Together the team catalyzes local educational improvement and school/community connections and work closely as 'authentic partners' on common goals and agendas.

Originally created in Massachusetts, CS² is being replicated in four sites in California—Petaluma, Sacramento, Yolo County and San Diego. Funding came from a variety of sources including local school districts, community resources, foundations and the California Department of Education (CDE).



CS² in Action

Sean McManus is a 7th grader at Kenilworth Junior High School in Petaluma, CA. “Sean was an Easter Seals baby,” his mother explains, “so he was in a Special Ed classroom with one teacher and only a handful of kids all through elementary school. He was mainstreamed in junior high and it was a big change for him. When the school staff called and told me about their after-school program, I thought it would be good for him. Part of what they do is academic. The teachers show him how to put things in separate folders and how to work on things one project at a time when he does his homework. He really enjoys it. Another part of the program is

*CS² is an initiative of New Ways to Work, a member of National Youth Employment Coalition.

giving service to the community. Sean’s class helped landscape the grounds of a senior center near the school. For Sean it’s a balance of fun and work. He says they tell jokes and play lots of games. I know the program also offers a life skills class and has a counseling (Marriage Family Therapist) intern on site. Last year, I told Sean that he didn’t need to go anymore. He had passed all of his classes and was going to graduate. They actually get 5 credits for participating. But Sean said, ‘No, I have to go to after-school!’ I really like that he enjoys going.”

The after-school program that Sean enjoys so much was one of the many initiatives developed by CS² in 2001. The role of the CS² team is to work collaboratively with school administrators and staff, community partners and youth to identify and address gaps in services to improve youth outcomes. The after-school program was designed to support Petaluma students who are not thriving in a traditional academic environment and are academically at-risk. Many of these students are low-income youth from diverse backgrounds, some of whom live in a variety of challenging family situations and in communities with limited options for constructive after-school activities.

The after-school program exemplifies CS² because it utilizes multiple components to support youth: academic success, youth development and career exploration. Through service-learning projects, life skills curriculum, on-site counseling and collaboration with community partners, students re-engage with learning and find a safe place to experience positive tutoring, develop leadership skills and become civically active.

There are many routes into the after-school program: students volunteer; parents enroll their children; counselors, teachers and administrators refer students they think will benefit. The staff engages in a variety of activities to promote the program to both students and parents. Their efforts have paid off because parents have responded very favorably. Parents support the program for a variety of reasons. It provides a safe haven for youth during after-school hours, supports academic success, and helps participants build important personal assets.



Key Components

- **Tutoring and Academic Support:**

In a setting more casual than the traditional classroom, youth get encouragement and support for doing their homework and managing academic projects. Staff build in fun, free time and rewards for hard work. Math and Language Arts standards are woven into the service-learning projects.

- **Life Skills:** Classroom instruction addresses values from an educational point of view. Students explore questions such as: What does it mean to be a leader?

What does it mean to be responsible? What are the consequences of bullying? What does it mean to live in a diverse society?

- **Service-Learning:** Youth play a leadership role and participate actively in every step of planning and implementing a service project. Each project 1) supports the academic curriculum; 2) provides a service to the community; 3) involves community collaboration; 4) utilizes students' voices; 5) promotes civic responsibility; 6) includes student reflection time before, during and after the project; and 7) utilizes evaluation tools to measure progress toward the learning and service goals.

- **Counseling:** Many participants have individual and family problems that inhibit their ability to learn. Counseling interns from local graduate schools gain experience and develop skills, while earning credit hours toward their licensure. Two of CS²'s community partners are licensed marriage and family therapists who provide clinical supervision. The program also supports the parents and teachers by providing workshops, semester events and informal counseling/referral.



What's unique about CS²?

Rather than an individual program, CS² is a systems-change initiative that uses a team of school/community entrepreneurs who work as catalysts to promote local educational improvement and school/community connections. New Ways to Work, a statewide capacity-building organization, provides implementation tools and materials, on-site coaching, planning retreats, evaluation support and other assistance. CS² entrepreneurs: 1) launch strategies; 2) design and pilot services; 3) leverage, link and adapt existing programs to meet local needs; 4) generate resources; 5) create and nurture relationships



between school and community partners; 6) encourage a focus on positive youth development both in schools and in the larger community; and 7) evaluate and communicate success.

In addition to launching this after-school initiative, the CS² team was able to reinvent the city's youth employment program. It is now a One-Stop Teen Center that has streamlined the work permit process and provides a central location for connecting youth to employers and arranging career exploration opportunities, such as job shadowing. Teens with a work permit who fall below the GPA requirement of 2.0 receive tutoring, mentoring and other support services. These efforts have been highly effective: 85% of students referred for support services rebounded to earn at least a 2.0 GPA by the end of the year, and most did so within 6-12 weeks.

“ A couple of years ago, we had a young girl who was job shadowing with the police department and she ended up on a call with a young person who had overdosed. It completely opened her eyes to another world. In the past she had partied a lot with friends, but seeing the paramedics take this girl out on a stretcher changed her life. It also made her rethink where she wanted to go with her career. She had planned to work in sports medicine but decided she wanted to become an EMT or paramedic and help people at that level. ”

Donnie Frank, Youth Services Coordinator, City of Petaluma

Goals and Desired Outcomes

The goals of the entire CS² initiative are broad, including benchmarks such as systems development, resources generated, school transformations, transitions between middle and high school, workforce connections and student academic performance.

The Research Design

The evaluation of CS² was conducted by Patricia O’Driscoll and her team at Public Works, Inc. in Pasadena, California. The design incorporated three strategies: 1) collecting data from a set of statewide measures agreed upon by all CS² sites (listed below), 2) an annual self-assessment carried out by the Petaluma CS² team and project staff and 3) site visits and interviews by Public Works, Inc.

STATEWIDE MEASURES

MEASURE 1	Petaluma schools will reach or exceed their Academic Performance Index (API) growth target (a target set for each school in California through the state’s high stakes accountability system).
MEASURE 2	Petaluma schools will rank higher on the "schools with similar characteristics" rankings (as defined by API) than on the API. California generates a “similar schools” rank for all of its schools based on performance compared to schools with similar characteristics.
MEASURE 3	Increased number of students meeting the A-G requirements (college prep course work) for qualification to the University of California and California State University systems.
MEASURE 4	Passing rates on the California High School Exit Exam.
MEASURE 5	An increase in the number of Career Pathways offered and the number of students enrolled in them.
MEASURE 6	An increase in student participation in Career Development activities.
MEASURE 7	All or part of the Healthy Kids Survey, especially the resiliency module.
MEASURE 8	An increase in dollars raised by CS ² Entrepreneurs.

Although there was an attempt to track long term quantitative outcomes through the Statewide Measures identified above, much more was learned via qualitative methods and through the use of data teams.



Making a Difference!

The Petaluma CS² after-school program collected data about participants that demonstrated the following outcomes:

- The average attendance for the 2001 – 2002 after-school programs was 94%.
- Program participants' GPA's rose by .05 points from January to June 2002 and .15 points from January to October 2002.
- The scope of the after-school program was expanded to include the district's other middle school and its two elementary schools. The program has inspired the district to re-design its summer school offerings.
- The California Department of Education commended the Petaluma district for developing an unusually high number of school community partnerships.

“It’s helped my grades—in physical science I went from a D-minus to a C. In math I went from an F to a C-minus.”

“The after-school program has helped show me what I can be. I can get straight A’s and I can actually do stuff and not be a lazy bum.”

Quotes from After-School Students

Program Tips

- When aiming for systems change, honor what is already in existence. The CS² team went into the school district very carefully and asked honest questions such as: What is already being done that can be enhanced? What needs to be in place to meet your goals? When you come in wanting to change everything, you are likely to meet resistance.

- Pay attention to the qualities and behaviors youth say they appreciate in after-school program staff.

“They know what they’re talking about.”

“They treat us with kindness and respect.”

“They can be silly sometimes, laugh, and have a sense of humor.”

“They’re more laid-back after school and don’t take things so seriously. They allow us some freedom to walk around, talk to friends, and maybe toss the football.”

- Consider offering the after-school program in a different time frame. Students interviewed for this case study thought the 2-hour format, Monday through Thursday, was too long. They said they would prefer the program to be 5 days a week for only one hour or just two days a week for 3 hours. What they seemed to want was at least one other afternoon in addition to Friday to pursue their hobbies and interests.

- After-school and summer programs also offer staff the freedom to work creatively with at-risk students. According to marriage and family therapist Charles Wattenberg, one of the Petaluma CS² community partners, “Offering the program during the after-school hours allows us an opportunity to add exciting components like service-learning, life skills education, and counseling. Since we serve an at-risk population, this extra support helps students create new avenues for achievement. Our goal is to help youth gain the skills they need to move into high school with heightened self-esteem and improved chances of success.”

