

Poway Unified School District
STRATEGIC VISION
2008-2014

“College Readiness for All – Gateway to Our Students’ Future”

A Collective Sense of Urgency

The students of today will work through at least 2050 and live well into the latter part of the 21st century. As educators, our challenge is to prepare these students for a world we cannot fully anticipate. Further compounding an uncertain future is the expectation that the rate of change will continue to accelerate.

Looking ahead to 2050 and beyond, it is difficult to imagine the world in which our children will live and work. No one in 1950 could have imagined the changes we have experienced during the past fifty years. The world of work and the role of technology in our lives have led to dramatic changes in all aspects of our lives. The “flattening”¹ of the world and the global economy will require new skill sets, as well as more traditional skills. Our students will work and live in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world with political, social, economic, environmental, and health issues extending beyond national borders.

While we cannot fully prepare students for all of the inevitable changes they will experience during their lifetimes, we believe our graduates must have a strong foundation in literacy – reading, writing, and mathematics – as well as a strong knowledge base. We believe our graduates will not only change careers multiple times but also will need to continually update skills. Therefore, we believe that their ability to manage their own learning by developing “learning how to learn” skills will be essential. We also believe our graduates will experience successes as well as setbacks and, as a result, adaptability and resiliency will also be essential.

From this vantage point, we fervently believe that to earn at least a family living wage and contribute productively in our communities, graduates will need to pursue meaningful postsecondary education or training. We also believe that the quality of life is enhanced by pursuing personal interests and passions which are often further developed through education and training beyond high school.

Finally, we believe our American system of government will depend increasingly upon an educated citizenry. If our students are to take their places as integral

members of our democracy, they must be able to access and construct knowledge from a vast array of potentially conflicting sources of information and make informed decisions about the complex issues facing local communities, our state, and our country.

In this context the critical question is, “How should we organize and prioritize the educational experience Pre-K-12 to best prepare our students for their future?”

Vision – All Students Graduate “College Ready”

Poway schools must serve as the “gateway” rather than “gatekeeper” in creating powerful learning experiences that will prepare our students for future success. We share a moral imperative to have each student graduate “college ready” in order to pursue a full range of postsecondary options and be prepared for life beyond high school.

Serving as the gateway to our students’ future, we will open, not restrict, the range of opportunities and choices and prepare them for success as they pursue their interests and passions upon graduation.



We do not define graduating “college ready” as the anticipation that all students will attend college, but instead, as preparing all students to have a full range of postsecondary education and training options available

to them after high school. Serving as the gateway to our students’ future, we will open, not restrict, the range of opportunities and choices and prepare them for success as they pursue their interests and passions upon graduation.

At the heart of our commitment to “college readiness” is our responsibility to prepare each and every student for postsecondary success in life.

We manifest this commitment by:

- having a culture of universal ownership.
- understanding and taking responsibility for our role, as educators, to ensure high levels of learning for every student.
- fostering the joy of inquiry and learning.
- preparing all students for a full range of postsecondary options.
- personalizing education to develop student interests and skills for future success.
- never giving up on the individual learner – even when he or she appears to give up on himself or herself – by continuing to try new strategies and approaches

¹ The World is Flat, by Thomas L. Friedman

based on the individual's needs, interests, and passions.

- holding high expectations for each and every student and challenging students across the academic spectrum.
- preparing students to enroll and succeed in college or other postsecondary training opportunities without requiring remediation

Our vision and collective commitment to accelerate the achievement of all our students – especially those not on target to leave PUSD college ready – compel us to have a sense of urgency to embrace the challenge of moving this fine public educational system to the next level of excellence.

Taking the Next Step – Preparing Our Students to Graduate “College Ready”

At the base of our collective leap forward is a requirement that the UC and CSU system college entry standards known as “a-g courses” become the default curriculum for all students in Poway schools. Starting in the early elementary grades and then through middle school and into high school, students should participate in rigorous studies to ensure a full range of postsecondary options, with the majority of graduates attending college.

By the term “default curriculum,” we mean that the entire teaching and support staff and programs are focused on strategies to help every student successfully meet the “a-g” curriculum requirements. Only parents of students, after an extensive review process, could opt their child out of the “a-g” core curriculum. We believe this should only happen in the rarest of cases.

In elementary grades, a student will be on track to complete the “a-g” course requirements if he or she scores at the “Proficient” or “Advanced” level on the California Standards Test (CST). In addition, the successful elementary student will be developing habits of mind, including critical thinking skills and good study habits. In middle school, the above-mentioned benchmarks continue to be critical bellwethers of future success in meeting the “a-g” requirements. By high school, an academic grade of “C” or better is required in the “a-g” courses to meet the college entrance requirements:

High School – “A-G” Coursework Requirements

To satisfy these requirements, students must complete the 15 year-long high school courses detailed in the addendum. At least seven of the 15 year-long courses must be taken in the last two years of high school. The courses students take to fulfill the subject requirement

must be certified by the University as meeting the requirement and must be included on the school's UC-certified course list.

The “a-g” coursework requirements serve as a baseline for possible acceptance into a California college or university or many other colleges and universities across the country. In determining admission, colleges and universities review the rigor of course work, academic grades, and the overall academic reputation of the high school. In addition, entry level tests (including the SAT and ACT) and scores on AP exams tied to individual classes are considered in the admissions decision. Colleges and universities also look for depth in one or more extracurricular and co-curricular areas, including leadership activities, sports, music, and community service. Community colleges, military, and technical/trade schools have unique entrance requirements, and all would see a strong grounding in the “a-g” courses and good grades as helpful.

Therefore, meeting the “a-g” course requirements serves not only as the baseline for consideration in college admissions, but also provides a solid grounding to prepare students for a full range of postsecondary options. According to many recent national studies on the future workforce needs in the United States, the literacy skills, critical thinking skills, and the attitudes and

behaviors for success in college or other postsecondary training look very similar to the skills needed for success in the workplace.²

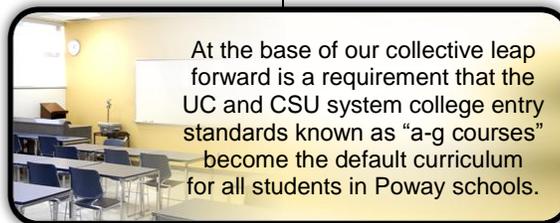
In essence, setting the expectations for all students at meeting the “a-g” course

requirements with the accompanying habits of mind and strong study skills, along with the commitment to provide the necessary academic support structures, are essential ingredients in fulfilling our commitment to prepare our graduates for their future.

The Educational Foundation for Our Students to Meet the A-G Course Requirements and Graduate “College Ready”

We believe that utilizing the framework of *Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships* will allow us to ratchet up our ability to prepare all students to graduate “college ready.” Realizing this vision will involve hard work and doing some things differently. The **3Rs** individually do

² “How to Build a Student for the 21st Century,” Time magazine cover story December 18, 2006; and “Tough Choices or Tough Times,” Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the Workforce, December 2006



not represent a magic bullet, but taken together and with a depth of commitment, they will help us accelerate our improvement efforts and help many more students realize their hopes and dreams.

Rigor

We are committed to fostering a universal commitment to develop a pervasive college-going culture, starting in preschool, to ensure all students graduate “college ready.” This requires that we fundamentally believe all students can learn at rigorous levels. It will require that we rethink our work as educators and draw upon best practices to be successful, not only in helping students reach their potential, but also in preparing them for a future that does not mirror the world we grew up in and understand. Students will rise to the expectations we set, particularly if we create scaffolding both in the classroom and across the school to support student learning.

1. Literacy is at the bedrock of our work.

In keeping with the belief that a strong grounding in academic skills remains at the center of student work, we must continue to teach literacy skills with emphases on critical reading in both fiction and non-fiction, and developing writing in a full range of genres across disciplines. In addition, literacy education for the 21st century must include strong oral communication skills and information literacy — including managing, analyzing, synthesizing, and creating information from various sources — and should begin in Pre-K/kindergarten. In the area of math literacy, we must continue to prepare students for success in algebra, geometry, and higher level mathematics, as well as more applied studies such as statistics and probabilities. Ultimately, students must have a solid grasp of basic operations as well as a conceptual understanding of mathematical thinking and the ability to apply mathematics to a variety of fields of study and real-world problems.

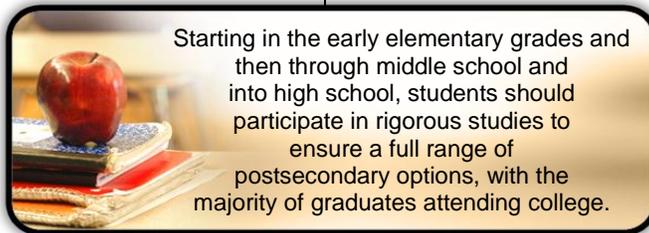
2. Content knowledge and ways of thinking are critical to student preparation.

A strong grounding in English, math, science, social science, physical fitness and health, arts and the humanities, career and technical, and world language is foundational to content knowledge for the future. At the center of this work is understanding the “big ideas” and mastering the literacy skills specific to each field of study. In addition, we must help students see the intersection of real world issues and the connections across disciplines. Furthermore, it is important to link the academic disciplines to each other and apply learning to real world issues. Too often our students see little or no purpose in what they are studying. Therefore, our task as educators is to bring the

material to life and make it relevant and meaningful. We must recognize that when something is meaningful and purposeful, students pay greater attention and learn the material in greater depth.

3. Cultivate the habits of mind, attitudes, and behaviors supporting college readiness.

Students need more than literacy skills and content knowledge to be prepared for success in the future. They need to possess a full range of habits, attitudes, and behaviors that are embedded in key content knowledge and will support lifelong learning, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity and ingenuity, and foster resilience. Students from the earliest grades should have a full range of opportunities to develop knowledge about college and be encouraged to pursue college. Students in late middle school and high school should have opportunities to explore a broad range of colleges and universities as well as other postsecondary education and training options.³



Starting in the early elementary grades and then through middle school and into high school, students should participate in rigorous studies to ensure a full range of postsecondary options, with the majority of graduates attending college.

a. Develop habits of mind (key cognitive strategies)

Embed habits of mind in PreK-12 student work, focusing on what we often call critical thinking skills. Habits of mind create a capacity for meaningful lifelong learning by developing such habits of mind as analytic reasoning, inquisitiveness, precision interpretation and evaluation, and problem solving, as well as the synthesizing and creative side of students.

b. Foster behaviors and attitudes

Foster the behaviors and attitudes our students need for future success. At the heart of this work is developing resiliency in our students. Resilient individuals take responsible risks, accept criticism, and recognize that hard work pays off. They can adapt to different cultural and social environments. They build on their strengths and successes and can handle setbacks, failure, and disappointment and become better because of those experiences.

Some examples include:

- Viewing change as a normal and healthy part of life
- Responding critically and constructively to feedback
- Becoming skilled in time management
- Developing successful study skills

³ [Five Minds for the Future](#), by Howard Gardner; [A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age](#), by Daniel Pink; [College Knowledge](#), by David Conley

- Directing personal learning through initiative and self-direction
- Recognizing that effort and persistence matters
- Participating successfully in work teams and possessing strong interpersonal skills
- Cultivating initiative
- Fostering a commitment to lifelong learning

c. Develop a thorough understanding of college and postsecondary options.

Students in all grades develop contextual skills and awareness for college and other postsecondary options, which include:

- Encouraging students to develop areas of interest and passion and pursue postsecondary options that best match their hopes and dreams
- Understanding how colleges operate as a system and culture and the range of college options and entrance requirements
- Deepening student awareness of four-year colleges, two-year transfer and technical degrees, and other postsecondary training options
- Providing career awareness and various postsecondary options that can help students realize their interests
- Providing opportunities for students to gain greater insight into college choices, admissions, tuition costs, and financial aid
- Building a college-going culture for all students

d. Foster citizenship and civic engagement.

To ensure future success, students must develop the skills to be civically engaged in a democratic society. Students must be prepared to live in an increasingly diverse and global society, requiring greater understanding of differences and the ability to navigate through complex and intertwined relationships in a civil and respectful manner. It is essential for future success that students develop personal character by gaining an ethical understanding of the implications and personal responsibility for what they say and do.

This is characterized by:

- developing an appreciation for our democratic society and the responsibility we share to be engaged as active citizens.
- understanding one's role in the community, state, nation, and the world (including global awareness, i.e., culture, history, geography, and languages from around the world).
- developing a respectful mind that prepares students for an increasingly diverse and

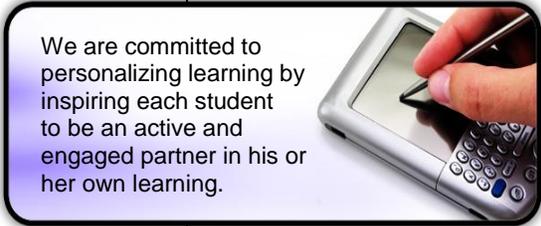
interdependent world of ideas, beliefs, and people (including cultural literacy, religious tolerance, and understanding of the important role diverse views and diversity have played in our history and the world).

- fostering character development, leadership, and individual responsibility.

Relevance

Students learn best when they are highly engaged in a task. Building on individual student interests and discovering meaning in their coursework is at the heart of engagement. Students in strong learning environments interact cognitively and even emotionally to the content, skills, or problems being presented. When we do not “reach” students, very little real learning transpires and students may become bored, disengaged, and sometimes disruptive.

Therefore, we are committed to personalizing learning by inspiring each student to be an active and engaged partner in his or her own learning. We must foster the joy of inquiry and learning by sharing our own enthusiasm for what we teach and by making connections in our classrooms and across our schools to our students’ personal worlds, the world around them, and the future. We must solicit student voices in making learning more relevant and making our educational programs more valuable and meaningful.



In the classroom, we must:

- Make learning more meaningful to students by engaging them in setting their own learning goals and encouraging them to develop and pursue emerging interests and passions.
- Make learning more about connections across disciplines and real world issues and future concerns.
- Implement new strategies, choices, and approaches based on individual student needs, interests, and passions.
- Provide additional pathways that challenge students to learn new applications through career and technical options, as well as other broadening learning opportunities and settings.
- Make learning more engaging through individual and team projects: problem-based learning, career and technology pathways, research projects/short papers/alternative presentation modes, online learning and course offerings, virtual classroom learning experiences accessed through the web, internships, simulations, cross-disciplinary studies, senior projects, Socratic and inquiry-based discussions, creative activities fostering out-of-the-box thinking and diverse views, and community service.

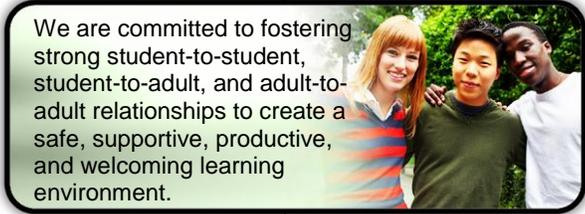
- Provide just-in-time, in-person and online tutorial services to students at all levels of achievement.
- Scaffold learning in the classroom to provide the needed individual academic support to help ensure student success for all.
- Make learning more powerful by embedding technology throughout the instructional process to personalize learning and serve as a catalyst for inquiry, deeper understanding, and increased student engagement and achievement.

In the school, we must:

Provide a full range of high quality of co/extracurricular activities to develop skills, character, leadership, teamwork, competition, knowledge, and understanding. We must create a wide range of opportunities to foster widespread participation at every grade level. Middle schools and high schools should have every student engaged in some activity beyond the classroom.

Relationships

We are committed to fostering strong student-to-student, student-to-adult, and adult-to-adult relationships to create a safe, supportive, productive, and welcoming learning environment. We know that at the heart of good teaching or coaching is a caring and respectful relationship. We all recognize and attribute much of our success to individuals who touched our lives and challenged us to be our very best. Students without strong, supportive relationships often become alienated



We are committed to fostering strong student-to-student, student-to-adult, and adult-to-adult relationships to create a safe, supportive, productive, and welcoming learning environment.

and disenchanted with school. We must ensure that every student has at least one adult on campus who acts as his or her mentor and champion.

As an educational community, we must work collaboratively to:

- Ensure every student has at least one adult on campus who looks out for his or her welfare, seeks to inspire the individual to new heights or take on new challenges, and acts as his or her champion.
- Provide ongoing social and emotional support to each and every child and provide intensified support to individuals in greatest need or in a time of crisis.
- Create a culture of universal ownership for each and every student.
- Establish a consistent culture of tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect.
- Create a culture where we never give up on a child and continue to seek new strategies to help all students obtain high levels of achievement, even when the child appears to give up on himself or herself.

To help ensure a high level of success for each and every student, it is essential we attract, support, and retain a caring, committed, and diverse staff – a staff that believes from the bottom of their individual hearts that each and every child can achieve at high levels of academic performance in an environment of high expectations, relevancy, and caring relationships.

Addendum

REQUIRED "A-G" COURSES – UC AND CSU SYSTEM
<p>a) History/Social Science – 2 YEARS REQUIRED Two years of history/social science, including one year of world history, cultures and geography; and one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government.</p>
<p>b) English – 4 YEARS REQUIRED Four years of college-preparatory English that include frequent and regular writing, and reading of classic and modern literature. No more than one year of ESL-type courses can be used to meet this requirement.</p>
<p>c) Mathematics – 3 YEARS REQUIRED, 4 YEARS RECOMMENDED Three years of college-preparatory mathematics that include the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra and two- and three-dimensional geometry. Approved integrated math courses may be used to fulfill part or all of this requirement, as may math courses taken in the seventh and eighth grades that your high school accepts as equivalent to its own math courses.</p>
<p>d) Laboratory Science – 2 YEARS REQUIRED, 3 YEARS RECOMMENDED Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in at least two of these three foundational subjects: biology, chemistry and physics. Advanced laboratory science classes that have biology, chemistry or physics as prerequisites and offer substantial additional material may be used to fulfill this requirement, as may the final two years of an approved three-year integrated science program that provides rigorous coverage of at least two of the three foundational subjects.</p>
<p>e) Language Other than English – 2 YEARS REQUIRED, 3 YEARS RECOMMENDED Two years of the same language other than English. Courses should emphasize speaking and understanding, and include instruction in grammar, vocabulary, reading, composition and culture. Courses in languages other than English taken in the seventh and eighth grades may be used to fulfill part of this requirement if your high school accepts them as equivalent to its own courses.</p>
<p>f) Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) – 1 YEAR REQUIRED A single yearlong approved arts course from a single VPA discipline: dance, drama/theater, music or visual art.</p>
<p>g) College-Preparatory Electives – 1 YEAR REQUIRED One year (two semesters), in addition to those required in "a-f" above, chosen from the following areas: visual and performing arts (non-introductory level courses), history, social science, English, advanced mathematics, laboratory science and language other than English (a third year in the language used for the "e" requirement or two years of another language).</p>