

BUILDING RESILIENCE AMONG EDUCATORS

*A Continuation High School Shares Strategies
with its District to Address Compassion Fatigue and
Secondary Traumatic Stress among Teachers and Staff*



by Liz Newman with Joseph Antonelli

Teachers and administrators support students to thrive as learners in their classrooms. But when students experience trauma or stress in their lives, educators may be faced with the additional challenge of supporting students to address extremely difficult social and emotional situations. This can lead to secondary traumatic stress—indirect exposure to their student’s traumatic experience—and/or compassion fatigue. The latter is the exhaustion that builds over time from attempting to help those who are undergoing trauma. Both terms refer to the “experience of being affected by others’ pain” (Van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009, p. 6). Either can contribute to educator burnout, “characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment” (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011).

JANUARY 2022

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While the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness of this dynamic, it is not new, especially not in alternative schools, where many students find themselves precisely because they and/or their families experience significant trauma or stress that affects their academic progress.

This brief begins with a review of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma in the literature. Next, it offers an overview for addressing compassion fatigue in education settings. Finally, it shares the story of one continuation high school's efforts to support its teachers, and to leverage this journey in support of its district's efforts to address mental health issues more broadly.

BACKGROUND

First entering the lexicon in a 1992 nursing magazine (Figley, 2002), the terms compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress reflect a growing recognition in the available literature that professionals who care for those experiencing trauma in turn experience trauma themselves.

Charles R. Figley describes compassion fatigue as follows (1995, p. 2),

The professional work centered on the relief of the emotional suffering of clients automatically includes absorbing information that is about suffering.

Often it includes absorbing that suffering as well... hundreds of professionals, especially therapists... talk about episodes of sadness and depression, sleeplessness, general anxiety, and other forms of suffering that they eventually link to trauma work.

While this work originally focused on those in the caring professions, the description also applies to educators, especially those whose students are experiencing multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

As schools strive to address the needs of students who have experienced multiple ACEs, it becomes clear that the adults at these schools also need support to implement effective practices in an ongoing way. Thus, in a joint 2019 report, the National Council of State Education Associations and the NEA Center for Great Public Schools identified seven categories of recommendations for embedding trauma-informed practices in schools, including the need to "promote and support educator self-care activities as critical to ensuring educator success and retention in the profession" (NCNEA, 2019, p. 19).

Notably, these reports were published prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reportedly exacerbated the issue of compassion fatigue for educators in multiple ways (Hart & Nash, 2020).

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Ways the COVID-19 Pandemic Has Worsened Compassion Fatigue

Increased trauma and stress for students, educators, and their families

(e.g., illness, loss, hunger, homelessness, employment, etc.)

Strained educators attempting to find or re-engage students who have become disengaged or “lost” to the school system

Increased teacher awareness of the traumas that their students are experiencing

Reduced sense of agency among educators to support their students

Source: Hart & Nash, 2020

Although the mental health impacts of the pandemic focused attention on compassion fatigue in the education community, it is helpful to consider the broader context.

More than ten years ago, research by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky acknowledged the toll of having a powerful commitment to the care of individuals, groups of people, or the environment. Her work included many ideas for self-care, as well as an overarching concept about who is vulnerable to compassion fatigue that conceives of trauma-informed care as a generalizable best practice in public education (Van Dernoot Lipsky, 2009, p. 245).

We must open ourselves to the suffering that comes with knowing that there are species we can't bring back from extinction, children we can't free from abusive homes, climate changes we can't reverse, and wounded veterans we can't immediately heal.

We must also open ourselves to the hope that comes with understanding the one thing we can do. We can always be present for our lives, the lives of all other beings, and the life of the planet.

Being present is a radical act. It allows us to soften the impact of trauma, interrupt the forces of oppression, and set the stage for healing and transformation. Best of all, our quality of presence is something we can cultivate, moment by moment. It permits us to greet what arises in our lives with our most enlightened selves, thereby allowing us to have the best chance of truly repairing the world.

This view set the stage for an approach to compassion fatigue that acknowledges the importance of compassion satisfaction; that is, “the pleasure derived from helping others” (Dehlin & Lundh, 2018, p.95).

COMPASSION FATIGUE IN TEACHERS & ADMINISTRATORS

Empathy is a quality that enhances teachers' effectiveness, but it may also make an educator more likely to experience

compassion fatigue. Other characteristics that may lead teachers to experience compassion fatigue include "...excessive dedication, compulsivity, perfectionism," or being "achievement-oriented" (Sizemore, 2016).

Compassion Fatigue Warning Signs

There are many warning signs that can flag the phenomenon for teachers and administrators, described in different ways across a range of publications (e.g., Lander, 2018; Walker, 2018; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011; and Woodbridge & Nakamura), including:

Cognitive

- Confusion, difficulty making decisions
- Rigidity, perfectionism
- Apathy
- Preoccupation with trauma; continually and persistently worrying about students outside of school
- Inability to listen, to concentrate, to embrace complexity
- Deliberate avoidance
- Dissociative moments
- Diminished creativity

Emotional

- Sadness, depression
- Emotional exhaustion, inability to empathize, numbing, helplessness, hopelessness
- Anxiety, fear
- Guilt, sense of inadequacy
- Isolation
- Unexplainable irritability, anger, cynicism
- Blaming others, feeling resentful, sense of persecution
- Inflated sense of importance at work

Behavioral

- Withdrawing from and/or avoiding friends and family
- Overeating or not eating enough, appetite changes
- Elevated startle response, hypervigilance
- Excessive media
- Increased substance use, addictions

Physical

- Sleep disturbances, chronic fatigue
- Rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing
- Teeth grinding
- Muscle and joint pain
- Frequent illness / physical ailments

Educators may be able to identify the onset of compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress in themselves, but it should not be their sole responsibility. Symptoms may build over time, and may be hard to self-diagnose. As Sizemore (2016) articulates,

...the pressure and demands of our jobs—including tight schedules, unrealistic expectations, lack of positive feedback or support—adds to our psychological loads. Without realizing it, we start feeling resentful rather than resourceful, detached rather than delighted, and exhausted rather than excited. Often, we are not even aware of what is causing these feelings.

Nor should compassion fatigue be addressed as a shortcoming or weakness. Teachers should not be made to feel inadequate; rather they should be supported to understand the direct link between compassion fatigue and the qualities of strong leaders. School or district leaders might support teams to take self-assessments, as part of a broader strategy of professional education on the topic. Assessments might take cues from practices of “reflective supervision... that fosters professional and personal development within the context of a supervisory relationship” (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2018, p.3). These mental wellness supports are particularly important as schools and districts face significant teacher and staff shortages.

INDIVIDUAL- & SETTING-LEVEL STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS COMPASSION FATIGUE IN SCHOOLS

Most analysts who study compassion fatigue have emphasized the importance of supporting overall wellness in the workplace. One relevant framework (Hettler, 1976) suggests six dimensions of wellness:

- occupational,
- physical,
- social,
- intellectual,
- spiritual, and
- emotional.

There are a wide range of preventive and responsive self-care strategies.

Individual Level

To prevent the onset of compassion fatigue, teachers and administrators need to have a strong understanding of what it is and what it is not, as well as the strategies that can impede its onset and minimize its impact. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, 2018, p.3),

As workers gain knowledge and awareness of the hazards of indirect trauma exposure, they become empowered to explore and utilize prevention strategies to both reduce their risk and increase their resiliency to secondary stress.

Teachers should not be made to feel inadequate; rather they should be supported to understand the direct link between compassion fatigue and the qualities of strong leaders.

In its one-page summary, "Taking Care of Yourself," NCTSN (2018) describes self-care as having three aspects: awareness, balance, and connection.

The first step is to seek awareness. This requires you to slow down and focus inwardly to determine how you are feeling, what your stress level is, what types of thoughts are going through your head, and whether your behaviors and actions are consistent with the who you want to be.

The second step is to seek balance in all areas of your life including work, personal and family life, rest, and leisure. You will be more productive when you've had opportunities to rest and relax. Becoming aware of when you are losing balance in your life gives you an opportunity to change.

The final step is connection. It involves building connections and supportive relationships with your co-workers, students, friends, family, and community. One of the most powerful stress reducers is social connection.

Recommendations abound for educators to strive for adequate rest, good nutrition, consistent exercise, and stress reduction (see, for example, Juarez, Becton, & Griffin, 2020). Those at risk of experiencing secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue are encouraged to find strategies that meet their own needs.

For example, it may be helpful to better articulate work-life boundaries; engage in a range of activities and relationships; participate in relaxation strategies such as yoga or meditation, journaling, or creative activities such as music or art; take an interesting class, read compelling articles, or research best teaching practices.

At the workplace, NCTSN suggests an array of preventative strategies that might include participation in peer support groups, adjusting work schedules, or engaging in a "self-care accountability buddy system."

Sizemore (2016) recommends engaging with others who are positive influences, to "keep company with those who can laugh and share gratitude with you."

She continues,

Force yourself to be with others, even if you do not feel like you can. Approach your administrators, your counselors, your colleagues, your friends, your spiritual advisor, or anyone who will listen to you. Keeping these emotions inside you will only make things more difficult for you and your students. Others may be experiencing the same feelings, and together you can find support. If you feel like you are not able to get back to the "normal you" in two or three weeks, seek professional help.

If wellness strategies are not sufficient, and secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue set in, there are many ways that educators can address the situation.

NCTSN (2018) offers a checklist, making clear that each person should determine which combination of strategies makes most sense for them. That could mean:

- seeking professional help, including cognitive behavioral or mindfulness therapeutic strategies;
- engaging in support groups with peers encountering similar experiences;
- working with supervisors to adjust job duties or work schedules;
- setting job goals, and
- collaborating/problem-solving with peers to enhance sense of agency.

Setting Level (Schoolwide and District-Level Strategies)

School administrators can play a critical role in developing organizational and supervisory strategies that reduce the impact of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma by increasing staff resiliency. While these interventions are aimed at supporting individuals, they cannot happen without aligned school or district policy, practice, resource allocation, and culture.

Individuals cannot be expected to take on the work of taking care of themselves; without support from the school, self-care is just another task on one's "to do list," perhaps causing more stress rather than alleviating it. These approaches support preventative actions and ensure appropriate intervention by creating a culture of wellness and community care. The strategies combine schoolwide policies and practices with resources for individuals with specific needs.

Site conditions and resources. School leaders can build awareness and ensure the availability of support and resources for teachers, acknowledging the importance of self-care, vacation time, and mental health, stressing that taking care of oneself is not selfish, but rather critical to the school's mission. Schools may offer the services of psychologists, social workers, or other mental health professionals trained to provide trauma-informed prevention and intervention services to students and staff (NCSEA, 2019). School leaders should "walk the walk" by offering professional development related to self-care; encouraging the use of available counseling resources; and creating time and space for staff collaboration and teamwork. They can also take steps to define realistic expectations and provide meaningful opportunities to engage in decision-making.

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Peer support. Administrators can create time and space for colleagues to engage with one another and with mental health professionals, as part of preventative strategies or as interventions. Opportunities should be structured to be safe spaces for teachers and other staff to understand that they are not alone in their experiences of secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue, and that there are accessible ways to address the issues. Opportunities for peer engagement should take place regularly and offer educators the chance to connect and to learn about effective strategies, which may include coping skills, building resilience, or cultivating hopefulness.

Administrator support. Teachers who face stress in their own lives may be more susceptible to secondary trauma or compassion fatigue. Administrators who are aware of these issues and are trained to notice symptoms in their teachers are better positioned to offer support. For example, administrators can watch for teachers who do not participate in opportunities to engage with peers. They can proactively address issues that they see, while also ensuring that teachers feel safe in asking for support. Further, administrators who know of students who are experiencing trauma may support them and/or their teachers in addressing the issue, thus reducing the ongoing impacts on both the teacher and the student.

Trauma-informed practices. A schoolwide approach to trauma-informed practices can build educators' capacity to support students,

which in turn clarifies the educators' role in addressing students' needs and provides the resources for them to play this role effectively. While the focus is on "...supporting the emotional care and wellbeing of students, trauma-informed schools, by their nature, foster communities where educators have the understanding and tools to recognize and address STS (secondary traumatic stress) in themselves and each other" (Lander, 2018). Teachers are supported to establish "...a welcoming, engaging, and nurturing classroom, as well as the tools, strategies, and professional learning needed to proactively identify, respond to, and work with students experiencing trauma" (NCSEA, 2019, p.15).

Restorative discipline practices. Schools can combat compassion fatigue by enacting discipline policies and practices that support educators to deal effectively with student behavior in ways that avoid secondary trauma. Administrators can also prioritize professional development that supports staff to de-escalate conflict in volatile situations.

Staff appreciation and a "culture of awareness." School leaders can ensure that staff are recognized for their positive impact on students and families, acknowledging their strengths and accomplishments.

As Jessica Lander (2018) suggests, "School leadership should consider ways to appreciate staff both publicly and privately—not just by recognizing great work, but also by acknowledging that the work is difficult."

As these strategies illustrate, addressing compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress cannot be the sole responsibility of the educator experiencing the impacts. Rather, school and district leaders should take proactive steps to build a shared understanding of compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress, and to prioritize support for school personnel who experience these conditions.

As Dr. Shashank V. Joshi explains,

We really need organizational strategies that attend to our shared sense of wellbeing. As a site leader, one thing you can do is offer framing. The goal isn't to eliminate stress or fatigue. These are part of life. What you want to do is build capacity for resilience.

ONE DISTRICT'S JOURNEY TO ADDRESSING COMPASSION FATIGUE

Corona-Norco Unified School District is one of 23 districts in Riverside County, California, and serves more than 52,000 students in the cities of Corona, Norco, and Eastvale. In 2021, the district unveiled a new strategic plan that highlights staff and student mental health as one of four priority areas.

Orange Grove High School is one of the district's two continuation high schools, receiving students in grades 9 through 12.

Students come to Orange Grove for behavioral reasons, attendance issues, and credit recovery. A common theme among their students' stories is that their histories of academic struggles and behavioral issues are related to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Recognizing that academic readiness and behavior are intertwined, the school strives to embed Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into its approach, working to create a safe, supportive, hope-filled environment so that students can learn.

Orange Grove High School has been addressing adult wellness for more than a decade. School leaders recognize that the adults on the school's campus could not meet the needs of students—who experienced significant trauma before arriving at the school, and who likely continue to face some level of adversity—without addressing their own needs first.

Corona-Norco Unified School District—spurred by new leadership with a background in student services and the COVID19 pandemic—has recently focused attention on adult and student well-being, academic outcomes, and equity. Recognizing the ongoing and exemplary efforts at Orange Grove, Corona-Norco Unified began to work closely with the school's leadership to learn from their experience and to share its wellness practices districtwide.

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At Orange Grove High School

Orange Grove High School staff work to understand the root causes of students' challenges, aiming to offer the emotional and academic support that they need. The level of trauma that many of these students have faced in the past, or continue to experience, is significant. As Joseph Antonelli, Assistant Principal, reflects on his decade-long journey at Orange Grove,

We found that as our staff became more trauma responsive, they were not doing well. Honestly, it's a lot easier to be angry and be a jerk to kids who are challenging you than it is to let them in, start to see what's driving the behavior. And again, these are horror stories that they're coming with... There is not a student who has been sent here with behavior issues who probably doesn't have at least four to five ACEs... and biggies too.

Antonelli goes on to explain how this impacted staff in the school and the district, some of whom took extended leave due to mental health issues.

The staff started showing compassion fatigue, which turned into more of a hardness. There were a lot of tears, followed by pushback... 'I don't want to hear any more of this. Let's just have them do what they have to do.'

This growing awareness led school leaders to increase counseling staff for students, and to support teachers more intentionally so that compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress would be kept in check. Antonelli and the team at Orange Grove have worked tirelessly to build a culture that supports adults at the school, so that they can in turn meet the needs of their students, explaining,

It's the oxygen mask approach, right? You've got to put it on yourself before you can put it on the other.

Describing the impact on teachers and the school's approach, Antonelli shares that Orange Grove:

...has a very clear lens of 'this is what can happen when we open our hearts to the kids and listen to their stories.' You need to be strong. You need to be able to have the protective factors in place that will help you get up tomorrow morning and come to work and not spend twenty minutes crying in the parking lot before you walk in the gate.

Antonelli has established credibility as a longtime educator, starting his career in traditional school settings before spending more than a decade as an administrator in a continuation high school. He has played a key role in bringing about wholesale change to a school where at one time "teachers were screaming at kids and kids were screaming at teachers" to a place where visitors are surprised at the sense of calm they experience on campus.

His credibility is amplified by his commitment to rooting his proposed changes in a defensible philosophical stance. Likewise, he knows the importance of leading by example, with honesty and humility; and building trusting relationships with students and adults on campus.

Antonelli describes the importance of relationships among colleagues in his own experience, in particular the relationship between teachers and administrators.

It comes down to 'do you care about the people who you are leading, and do they know it?' If the answer to those things is 'yes,' there is a lot of ground you can cover. You can get through a lot...

So much comes down to the principal... the principal sets the tone for what is emphasized, where resources go, how safe the staff feels. Are they able to take risks? And the principal is largely responsible for creating a community of belonging among staff. Even if that principal isn't part of that community... you have to have enlightened leadership. Without that, I don't see lasting change happening.

These efforts have led other schools and districts to seek Antonelli's advice and counsel, sometimes in the form of professional development that builds understanding of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma.

The Answer Is: It's The Colleagues

Relationships among adults are understood to be critical, as Dr. Joshi explains:

We know from the literature in medicine that palliative care specialists have the most longevity of any physicians in the field. Why might that be? They're engaging with patients and families at the end of their lives in incredible situations, with incredible stories.

When I give talks, I ask the audience: Do you think the palliative care specialists stay in it for the long haul because of the intellectual stimulation? Or is it because of the patients and their stories? Or is it because of the colleagues who they work with? Or is it something deep inside that maybe they can't put their finger on but it just pulls them in? Most people pick the last one—it's their calling—or they pick something about their patients' stories.

In reality, the answer is: it's the colleagues.

The patients will come and go. They will cross over to the other side. The colleagues will continue to sustain you. The same is true for educators and students. Some students get back to us, some write us letters, some make gratitude visits, but most don't. Hopefully they think of us at some point, but we remain here for each other.

Across the District

The strategies and trainings that Orange Grove High School's leadership team have developed over the past decade, continually honed to reflect the knowledge and attitudes of new and continuing teachers, are now being embraced by the District as it elevates mental health to a priority position for the next five years. These trainings include a full-day session prior to the academic year, followed by a series of half-day sessions conducted by Thriving Youniversity.

In addition to staff trainings focused more broadly on social and emotional wellness, the district has turned to Antonelli to implement a series of workshops centered squarely on mental health. Having done presentations on trauma and behavior for schools whose principals or assistant principals requested them, Antonelli will work with the district to, for the first time, offer monthly seminars for any district employee who would like to attend. The seminar topics are responsive to needs that school administrators have identified, starting with compassion fatigue and stress management.

Not all educators are interested in moving past a strict focus on academics, so Antonelli starts sessions with the neuroscience of stress. He states: "... you can argue your opinions. You can argue your feelings. But it's really hard to argue brain science..."

The district's student services department is encouraging staff to participate in Antonelli's adult wellness seminars, tasking the district's communications department to create a series of "commercials" to advertise the workshops. An important objective: even those who do not attend the seminars will receive the message that they are not alone in experiencing mental health challenges.

The first session focuses on compassion fatigue, with topics such as how trauma affects people neurologically; how toxic stress (i.e., stress without solutions) is one byproduct of being exposed to individuals with trauma; what compassion fatigue and secondary trauma look like and feel like (i.e., symptoms); and ideas for reducing the effects of compassion fatigue without falling into apathy.

By combining a review of definitions, available research, warning signs, and actionable strategies, the session aims to build understanding, combat negative biases, reduce self-recriminations, and support educators to find the solutions that are right for them. Participants shared their appreciation to learn that their reactions to stress did not reflect weakness, but rather an expected and appropriate brain function. This approach emphasizes how self-care will ultimately make staff more effective in supporting students across the district.

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While the district is hopeful that the sessions will make a difference for teachers, they know that this is just one element needed to build a culture and site-specific strategies that effectively support adult wellness at all schools. Indeed, Antonelli envisions district leadership playing a critical role, where board members see their responsibility as not just leading but taking care of the superintendent, allowing the superintendent and board members to feel safe with one another.

This culture of safety could then permeate downward through assistant superintendents and the district office to principals, resulting in a culture of support for adults and resources that prioritize adult wellness. This is especially important because many of the strategies fall on the shoulders of administrators and leaders, who themselves may experience secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. With a strategic plan that prioritizes mental health for students and adults as one of four critical strategies for the next five years, districtwide, the stage is set for success.

In addition to optional seminars and ongoing trainings, the District has created opportunities for peer support among principals during districtwide meetings, shifting breakout sessions from being driven by specific content to allowing for open discussion on issues they are facing.

As described by Dr. Milisav Ilic, Director of Instructional Support,

They were supporting each other. They weren't complaining, they were just saying this is the way life is right now and that it's difficult. They found out they are not alone, that their colleagues are doing the same thing, and they don't talk about this outside this group. They were being very vulnerable with each other.

Individual schools are also adapting strategies that reflect their unique cultures and needs. Some schools have created mindfulness rooms, for use by students and adults who may use them during lunch, prep periods, or other free time. In addition, all employees, students, and their families have access to mental health support. These services are advertised through District communications and can be requested anonymously.

Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, it hit educators hard. Yet, continuation high school leaders were often better prepared to address the challenges, with many reporting experience with trauma-informed practices and less traditional classroom environments. That said, there were enormous new challenges associated with virtual schooling.

Many strategies fall on the shoulders of administrators and leaders, who themselves may experience secondary trauma and compassion fatigue.

As Antonelli describes,

There was the understanding that these kids were suffering, but teachers felt that they were ineffective because they didn't have their normal tools to be able to help kids. So, I would say that our teachers more than any other group have been dying to get back to in-person instruction, because of the efficacy element. They just do not feel they're able to do what they can do in an online format.

The pandemic exacerbated the stress levels that teachers and school staff experienced. Educators faced personal trauma due to illness, loss, employment, housing, or other factors influenced by the pandemic.

Simultaneously, many students faced greater personal stress, with educators' often reporting feeling less able to support their students, adding to their own already elevated stress and related mental health challenges. In thinking about the school reopening for Fall 2021, Antonelli explained the need for educators to be well prepared,

When you have a dysregulated child with a dysregulated adult, the [s---s] going to hit the fan. I mean, that's really what's going to happen. So we need to make sure we know our kids are coming in dysregulated and we can't really control that. But what we hopefully have some level of influence over is helping our adults so that that we have a dysregulated child hit a well-regulated adult. And now we can have a productive outcome.

Notably, the pandemic expanded the sphere of people reporting mental health concerns. While increased mental health issues are a negative outcome of the pandemic, one positive result is that there may be more understanding of, and interest in addressing, mental health issues by a broader segment of the population.

This elevated understanding may have helped Corona-Norco Unified School District to broaden buy-in to including mental health in its strategic plan, starting with student mental health and leading to the recognition that to support students, adults themselves needed support. As Ilic shares,

The pandemic is what pushed it over the edge because we now have kids that have mental health problems. Well, maybe they had them before, but this exacerbated it.... It woke people up...

Educators at Orange Grove High School and Corona-Norco Unified School District had worked for many years to address mental health issues, understanding the interrelationship between mental health and academic success, between student well-being and adult well-being. The pandemic acted as a catalyst to a comprehensive approach to the issue, as the issues surfaced more deeply and more broadly across the community. The district and its continuation high schools are forging ahead with a multi-faceted approach, one that is championed by the broader district system.



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PROFILES IN CALIFORNIA ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

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This profile is part of a series created to highlight challenges, creative policy responses, and exemplary practices in California's legislatively created public alternative high schools. The series is a project of the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University in support of the California Learning Collaborative on Alternative Education. It is intended to invite a new conversation among educators and policymakers about innovations to better support the success of youth enrolled in public alternative secondary schools across the nation. The series is funded by generous grants from the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Stuart Foundation.

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