

**PRACTICE & POLICY BRIEF 2023:
BRINGING A GRADUATE PROFILE TO LIFE**

**ANAHEIM UHSD:
SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR
THE COMMUNITY'S WISHES**

"The old system is not working, it's broken. What's at risk is young people's faith in the institution called education... We've been in this silo for 20 years, focusing on standardized tests, but this generation is faced with unprecedented problems and challenges, and the kids know it. So there needs to be a sense of urgency. Kids are hungry for voice and agency, to connect with each other."

- Michael Matsuda,
Superintendent, Anaheim Union High School District

Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) has been working on making its Graduate Profile a reality for almost 10 years, developing a remarkably comprehensive system and culture that supports it. The district has created a sense of ownership for its approach to education at all levels, from administrators and teachers to students and the community. It has clearly moved the Graduate Profile "from poster to practice" and seen the benefits for its students.



ANAHEIM UHSD AT A GLANCE

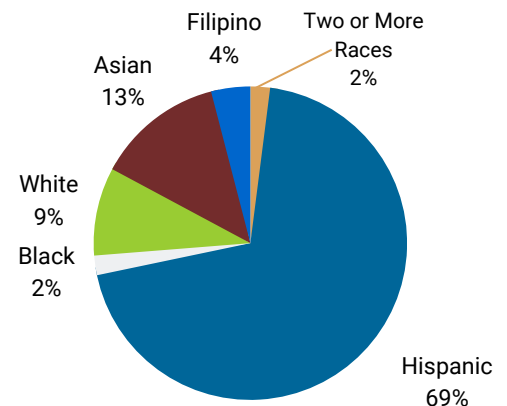
Anaheim Union High School District is in the northern part of Orange County, California, just southeast of Los Angeles. Anaheim is famous for being the home of the Disneyland Resort, as well as other attractions and professional baseball and ice hockey teams. It has a population of almost 350,000, making it the 10th-most populous city in the state. Major industries include electronics, aircraft parts, and canned fruit.

STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS:

- 28,000 students
- 8 junior high schools
- 8 comprehensive high schools
- 2 alternative education schools
- Oxford Academy, grades 7-12
- Cambridge Virtual Academy, grades 7-12
- Hope School, for students with special needs

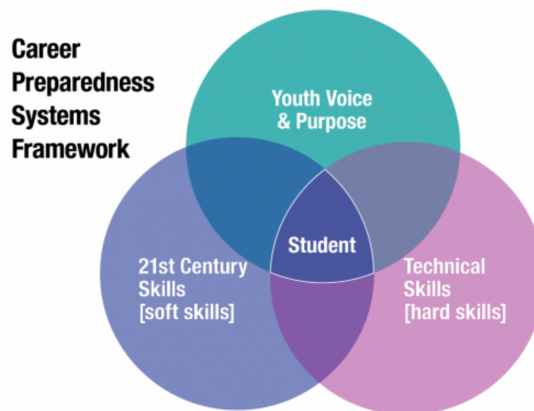
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:

- 28% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 24% English Learners



AUHSD'S CAREER PREPAREDNESS SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

The overall theme in AUHSD is career preparedness—but not in the traditional sense of “career and technical education” that focuses mainly on job skills. They have a much broader, systemic vision, which includes both soft and hard skills and student voice and agency—as well as civic participation in a democracy. They call this the [Career Preparedness Systems Framework](#) (CPSF) and it has three pillars, as shown.

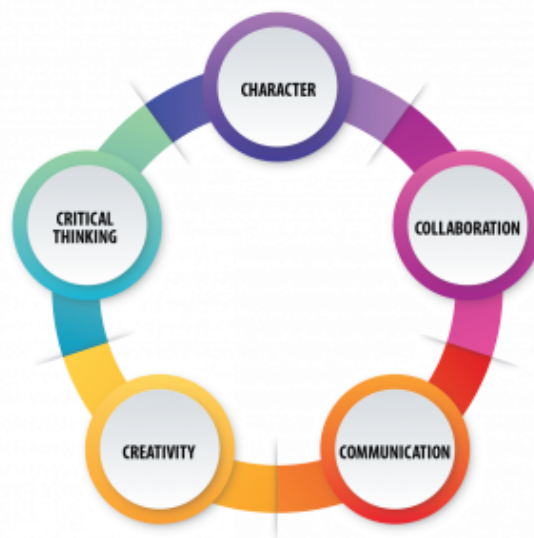


Scope & Rationale for the Framework: “For too long the secondary education system has operated in curricular and pedagogical silos that are not aligned with the needs of California’s employers, both private and public. For the last five years, the Anaheim Union High School District has taken a more fruitful approach to their education model by integrating and aligning their teaching and learning so that students and educators can better develop their academic, career, social and emotional skills to succeed as workers, citizens and life-long learners. The “through line” to this integrated approach is consistently cultivating and supporting student voice, identity, and purpose. These skills – often labeled as civic skills – help catalyze young people’s engagement in school, foster positive student relationships with peers and adults, and bring purpose and meaning to students’ academic and career learning. By centering student voice and purpose within career and academic preparation, the learning process becomes unified and community assets from traditionally different arenas can complement student learning and achievement.”

(Source: [“Unleashing the Education and Workforce Development Engine,”](#) executive summary of the CPSF, AUHSD website)

GRADUATE PROFILE

The district’s Graduate Profile, which it calls the “5 Cs,” is embedded in the CPSF pillar of 21st-century skills.




HOW THE JOURNEY BEGAN

According to assistant superintendent Jaron Fried, the path toward the CPSF began in 2011 at Savannah High School, on the district’s west side. Teachers and school leaders there, in the era of the federal government’s “No Child Left Behind” legislation, were frustrated by how they were being asked to teach. They had come to feel like they were “playing the game” as Jaron describes it, dominated by pacing guides, interim assessments, analysis of standardized test items, and test-prep strategies. The school initiated a community-wide process, which included a full-day gathering of over 200 educators, students, parents, and community members in the gym to answer the question, “what do we want our kids to look like when they graduate?” This led to the adoption of a set of “[Student Learning Capacities](#)” that reflect deeper learning skills beyond the goals of traditional education and standardized testing. They wanted students to be “critical thinkers and inquirers, academically and personally accountable, communicators and collaborators, globally aware and culturally competent, and digital-age learners.”


Five years after Savannah’s actions the district, now headed by superintendent Michael Matsuda, conducted a similar community gathering of about 250 people. This led to the adoption of the “5 Cs” district-wide—which were, with minor variations, aligned with the same competencies the schools were creating. As of 2022 a total of 17 out of 20 schools in AUHSD have undergone similar efforts. Across the district, every community agreed that what it wanted was not just high grades and SAT scores, but a more holistic vision of the whole child.

Even parents who were dedicated to seeing their children attend selective colleges and focused on A.P. courses, Matsuda notes, came around to the idea that the 5 Cs led to success in college and careers and built leadership skills—and increased students’ happiness.

An important next step, following the adoption of the 5 Cs, was the creation of a team of 50 teachers representing all schools, departments, and grade levels tasked with describing what each competency looked like in practice. A rubric was created for each of the 5Cs, with indicators at the “emerging,” “progressing,” and “excelling” levels plus a list of what you would see in a classroom that promotes the skill. The rubric for Critical Thinking is shown here; the [complete set](#) is available on the district website.


ANAHEIM UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

CRITICAL THINKING



Critical thinking is when the quality of thought is improved by analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing information. Critical thinking means asking a question with purpose or identifying a goal, constructing and evaluating arguments, identifying relevant and important ideas, detecting inconsistencies in reasoning, and reflecting on the justification of the conclusions. Being able to think this way is crucial to navigating the world both in- and outside educational settings and to finding solutions to real-world problems.

	EMERGING	PROGRESSING	EXCELLING
RESOURCES	Require guidance to find and use appropriate and accurate resources.	Identify and use appropriate and accurate resources.	Identify and use appropriate, accurate, and reliable resources; make connections between disciplines and contexts.
ANALYSIS	Begin to analyze new information and perspectives with support.	Demonstrate moderate ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate new information and perspectives.	Analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and detect bias in new, complex information and perspectives.
GRIT	May need encouragement to develop grit and resilience to persevere.	Demonstrate grit and resilience to persevere situationally.	Demonstrate grit and resilience to persevere consistently, even in novel or unexpected situations.
GROWTH	May need to be reminded that some problems require more effort to solve.	Increase effort in response to challenging problems.	Seek out challenging problems and approach failure as an opportunity to improve and increase effort accordingly.
PROBLEM SOLVING	Use problem solving process and self-reflection inside a scaffolded classroom setting as directed.	Apply problem solving process and self-reflection in classroom and school settings (e.g., in other classes, on projects, with group work).	Apply problem solving process and self-reflection to real-world problems; consider how the process can be used to find solutions outside of a school setting (e.g., at home, at work, with friends).

CLASSROOMS THAT PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING...

- Create learning opportunities such as AUHSD Talks, Project Based Learning, DBQs, Civic Inquiry, and performance tasks that are open-ended, intentionally challenging to students, connected to meaningful real-life contexts, relevant to students’ lives, and aligned to students’ interests.
- Allow students to make independent critical decisions throughout the process of completing an assignment (e.g., students are allowed to formulate their own problems/hypotheses within a topic, instead of being given a prompt or completed hypothesis.)
- Give students time to process material or concepts that require them to manipulate information; to think about, discuss, and evaluate content; and to make decisions based on evidence either individually or in teams.
- Monitor student learning by regularly checking for understanding, adjusting instruction as needed, and providing opportunities for students to reflect on learning.
- Encourage students to ask critical questions and consider diverse perspectives about subject matter to facilitate discussion, clarify, and extend students’ thinking.

AUHSD 5Cs DESCRIPTOR- CRITICAL THINKING

FROM POSTER TO PRACTICE: 5 KEY STEPS

Superintendent Matsuda points to five things districts need to do in order to “move from poster to practice” and make sure their Graduate Profiles come alive through the programs and day-to-day instruction students experience.

1 Create a **shared vision, mission, and core values** that point to whole-child instruction in the classroom. After the Career Preparedness Systems Framework and the 5 Cs were created, the district worked hard to communicate its work. In addition to written materials, it posted a nicely-designed five-minute [animated video](#) on its website about the need for the CPSF. It also posted well-produced, three-minute [videos on YouTube](#) about each of the 5 Cs.

2 Build **structures and systems that support the teacher in the classroom** and align with the vision, mission, and core values. This includes:

- Professional Learning Communities that focus on instruction in the 5 Cs.
- Early starts and targeted teacher release time, to allow for professional learning, planning and collaboration.
- Release time for selected teachers to be “5 Cs coaches” who support teachers in providing whole-child and 5 Cs instruction.
- Site administrators who make decisions based on the vision, mission, and core values, including control over the master schedule (“the principal is really really important,” notes Matsuda).

3 Work with the **teacher association** on supporting teachers in aligning their work with the Career Preparedness Systems Framework and the 5 Cs.

The teacher’s union has been on board with the district’s efforts to transform teaching and learning and move beyond the status quo. According to Matsuda, “this is the new ground we’re pushing on” and it’s working because the union recognizes the need to support teachers beyond traditional salary and benefits issues. The new ground includes teacher release time for planning and professional learning, and it’s about shared governance, which the union supports. “Teachers understand that CPSF is not about the overuse of testing, which they did not like,” says Matsuda. “We allow teachers to create their own performance-based assessments for the 5 Cs, applied learning and problem-solving.”

AUHSD Vision, Mission, Core Values

Vision:

To create a better world through Unlimited You

Mission:

The Anaheim Union High School District, in partnership with the greater community, will graduate socially aware, civic-minded students who are life ready by cultivating the soft and hard skills.

Core Values:

We believe...

1. **In and model the 5 Cs:** collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication, and compassion.
2. That **education must work for students** and not the other way around.
3. In an **assets-based** instructional approach focused on our community’s strengths and in nurturing everyone’s potential.
4. In moving the needle toward **equity and justice**.
5. That our vision, mission, and core values are delivered primarily through **instruction**.
6. In **systems** not silos.
7. Public schools should enhance and strengthen democracy through **cultivation of student voice and problem solving**.

- 4** Develop a **human resources strategy** that is aligned with the vision, mission, and core values, including recruitment, hiring, retention, and evaluation of teachers and administrators.

According to Jaron Fried, AUHSD’s hiring process, beginning with interviews at the district level, focuses first on a candidate’s attitudes and beliefs—and the 5 Cs—not their content background. Once they clear this hurdle, candidates are sent to the schools for the second round. Matsuda adds, “It comes down to hiring people who believe in an asset-based mental model of students, not deficit-based.”

- 5** Collaborate with **higher education, business and nonprofit partners** to support the vision, mission, and core values.

Colleges and universities as well as corporations today recognize the importance of the 5 Cs. “A good way to frame it is ‘keep talent local’ when reaching out to the business community,” Matsuda notes.

The “Anaheim Union Educational Pledge” program includes the North Orange County Community College District; CA State University, Fullerton; and the University of California, Irvine, as well as the City of Anaheim and the Tiger Woods Foundation. Each entity commits to specific actions it will take to support the CPSF. The Pledge also includes families, in an effort to insure awareness and access to opportunities and services that prepare students to meet their goals for college and career.

The Anaheim Innovative Mentoring Experience (AIME) involves partnering with business, corporate, and community partners to provide students with opportunities to explore career possibilities and gain workplace experience. Notably, the program includes “externships” for teachers to spend time in an industry partner’s workplace in order to gain knowledge of real-world applications of the 5 C’s in their content area.

Superintendent Matsuda inherited a school board that already supported the “whole child” approach to education, and it backed his drive to create the Career Preparedness Systems Framework. The district did not pursue formal waivers from the state of California, but Matsuda comments that “I put my job on the line early on and did away with [interim assessments](#). I wanted to advocate for teachers using practices like project-based learning, performance tasks, and reflective reading & writing.” His gamble paid off: test scores went up, along with other metrics such as attendance.



THE 5 C'S IN THE CLASSROOM

The Anaheim High School District's Career Preparedness Systems Framework and its 5 Cs (Graduate Profile) is deeply embedded in classroom practice in several ways. First and foremost is culture. The district fosters teacher leadership and innovation, from planning instruction and creating assessments to designing civic action projects. Teachers are committed to the AUHSD Vision, Jaron Fried believes, because they contributed to its creation. He notes that the CPSF was created through an "organic, bottom-up process; it was not imposed by me and the superintendent."

This sense of ownership has helped attract and develop a high-quality teaching staff. Most districts have some "rare bird" teachers, Jaron says, who reach the whole child, connect learning to the real world and build 5 Cs skills, rather than just teaching to the test. "But in our district, that's more the norm. We say, are you a teacher of "stuff" or a teacher of kids? We've given (teachers) the permission to go back to their "why"--why they became a teacher."

Student voice is a highly valued part of the district culture as well. For example:

- Students make TED-style talks and "soapbox speeches" as part of their grade-level "capstone" process, building the 5 C skill of communication.
- Students reflect on their use of 5 Cs skills after lessons and projects that have specifically been designed to build the skill. Teachers tag lessons with the corresponding 5 Cs competencies and provide reflection prompts.
- Students often suggest ideas for community action projects, linked to all five of the 5 Cs. For example, some high school students who lived near Disneyland were aware of a problem: more and more housing in the area was being used for short-term rentals, which was harming their community's culture and cohesiveness. They studied the issue, developed some proposed solutions, and presented them to local government officials.



The 5 Cs in Action: Classroom Snapshot

In an 8th-grade math/science classroom at Dale Junior High School, students were working in small teams, standing at whiteboards around the room. On a nearby table, each team had a set of laminated 4 x 5-inch cards with short descriptions of each of the 5 Cs. Today, they were working on the skill of collaboration, as they discussed the Pythagorean Theorem and made drawings and wrote equations on the whiteboard. They had read and discussed what was on the card first, and after the lesson, they were going to reflect on how well their team used the skill.

THE CAPSTONE: WHERE INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT MEET

The “[Capstone](#)” feature of AUHSD’s program deserves special mention because it’s proved to be an effective way to build and assess 5 Cs skills. It also reflects the district’s emphasis on whole-child instruction that connects to the real world and student interests, agency, and engagement. The capstone was first developed at Savannah High School over 10 years ago, and it eventually became district-wide.

Here’s how the Capstone works. The basic goal is for students at each grade level to maintain a portfolio of evidence of achievement and accomplishment, both in academic subject areas and in terms of college and career preparedness and 5 Cs skills. Teachers, often co-creating with students, design performance tasks as part of their curriculum. Students complete two tasks per teacher, per year and reflect on their progress toward 5 Cs skills at the end of each year. Seniors share and explain their portfolio of Capstone work in a culminating presentation to a panel of teachers and community members.

Here are some examples of performance tasks:

English Language Arts

- Argumentative Multimedia Project with multiple sources - topic of student’s choice (10th grade)
- Elizabethan England 1550-1600 research project (9th grade)

Math

- High degree polynomial/roller coaster design project (Integrated Math III)
- Climate change and community service project (Pre-Calculus)

Social Studies

- Versailles Treaty simulation (10th grade World History)
- Modern slavery civic inquiry (11th grade U.S. History)

Science

- Stoichiometry Dream Car Project (Chemistry in the Earth System)
- Honey Bee Colony Analysis (A.P. Biology)

eKadence: Beyond the Traditional LMS

Anaheim UHSD partners with [eKadence Learning Foundation](#), which provides what the nonprofit calls “the first and only Unified Learning Platform to marry academics with Emotional Quotient.”

The district has found that eKadence fits its needs better than traditional learning management systems that only track grades, credits, test scores, and other traditional metrics. The platform offers a more holistic view of a student that captures “soft skills” found in Graduate Profiles. In addition to teachers, counselors, and administrators, students and families can access the platform. Students can even “take it with them” after graduation, as a kind of e-portfolio.



NEXT STEPS

Amy Kwon, Director of Innovative Programs and Instructional Systems at AUHSD, describes a “huge breakthrough” on assessing the 5 Cs now being piloted. With the assistance of Associate Professor June Ahn at the University of California, Irvine, they are developing a process for quantifying student progress along the 5 Cs rubrics. Teachers, within their professional learning communities, will calibrate their judgment about a student and give them a rating on each of the 5 C’s, hopefully four times a year. Students will be able to add their reflections about their progress, and there will be an “adjudication” process if a student disagrees with teachers.

AUHSD has several promising new developments planned for 2023 and beyond. Some are still in the beta stage to see how and if they can work, according to Jaron Fried. “We want to be careful not to overload teachers.” These include:

- A system for teachers to use something like a “badge” to quickly assess a student’s demonstration of the 5 Cs.
- The collection of feedback from families and employers/community internship providers about student demonstration of the 5 Cs.
- The creation of a “baseball card” (with eKadence) to capture teachers’ assessment of a student’s growth on the 5 Cs. The card will have a QR code that links to the evidence of growth. For students and families, Fried notes, “It’s as if your transcript is coming to life. It’s not just an ‘A’—now you can see what you did to earn it.”

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR OTHERS ON THIS JOURNEY

Amy Kwon emphasizes the need to trust in teachers. “In the absence of things like interim assessments, we do have to have a high level of trust with our teachers to be able to commit to something like the CPSF drivers. We have to trust that our teachers have come into the profession wanting to build these skills... And we do, and it works.”

Amy also makes important points about efficiency and equity when schools and districts pursue innovation. “We want to make sure it’s integrated into systems we already have, to minimize redundancy. And we want to maximize equity—so if we have a program that’s amazing for students, it’s not just for the students who can do it. If we think it’s good for all kids to have, is there a way we can embed it for all kids?” Because, she adds, “Education has looked the same for a long time. It’s time for us to recognize that the system has not worked for all kids. It’s time for us to change the system so it can work for all kids.”

Jaron Fried says, “You’ve gotta go slow, it’s like turning a huge ship. We had to get the union on board, speak the language of our corporate partners, have learning walks for parents. We got ground-up support. We had alignment of all initiatives. We sent a consistent message, focused on the ‘why,’ our north star.”

Superintendent Matsuda, when talking about how the district worked with corporate partners to design career pathways, connects it to his belief in the need for education reform based on student voice and agency: “It’s not about imposing the old-school factory model on kids. A lot of districts have internships and mentoring programs, but the mistake is to leave out student voice and agency and purpose.”

He offers this message to other superintendents: “Have the courage to work with the Board on that new north star, to focus on whole-child instruction—and then the follow-through.”

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Scaling Student Success is a California partnership dedicated to educating the whole child. With our many partners, we embrace school districts that have engaged their local communities to create a Graduate Profile (or Portrait of a Graduate) as a means of articulating a whole child vision and more holistically and equitably defining student success.

Through our **Community of Practice (CoP)** we support districts to move “from poster to practice,” i.e., fully operationalizing their Graduate Profiles as a promise to their students, families, and communities to move beyond the current outdated metrics of our accountability system and embrace outcomes that better represent the values and priorities of their local communities – its employers, civic and community leaders, educators, parents and students.

Please join us! We welcome any school district, charter school or county office interested in joining the movement to realize its whole child vision and redefine student success. To learn more, please visit our [website](#) and/or see the [invitation](#) to join our CoP.

The **Reimagining CA Schools Innovation Pilot** represents a subset of five (CoP) districts aggressively pursuing a journey to realize their Graduate Profiles, eager to go deeper for greater impact on the student experience, learner outcomes, and systems change. Together, over a period of several years, we are determined to establish proof points to demonstrate to the state – its educational agencies, associations, policymakers and LEAs – the power and potential of a Graduate Profile to drive transformational change in order to more holistically prepare young people for future success.

The school districts involved in the innovation pilot include:

- Anaheim Union High School District
- Cajon Valley Union School District
- Davis Joint Unified School District
- Lindsay Unified School District
- Vista Unified School District

The four **Practice & Policy Briefs** (combined with a [case study of Lindsay USD](#) published earlier this year by NGLC) are intended to tell the real-world stories of California districts participating in the innovation pilot – their journeys to realize their whole child visions, the strategies they have opted to pursue, their lessons learned and challenges faced. Please feel free to share them widely.

In publishing these briefs, our goals are to:

- Embolden school district leaders to pursue a similar vision and path
- Entice policymakers and funders to incentivize these efforts
- Encourage state educational agencies and associations to join the movement

Special thanks to our writer/storyteller, [John Larmer](#), and designer, [Kimberly Rachelle Ranalla](#).

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