



John A. Sutter Middle School

Case Study (2021-2022)

Who We Are

An overview of our school community.

John A. Sutter Middle School is located on 17 acres on the Northwest side of the San Fernando Valley. We are part of Local District Northwest of LAUSD. Our school is located in the city of Winnetka, California, which has a population of 48,481 inhabitants with a population density of 11,092 people per square mile. Our student population consists of 275 Sixth Graders, 289 Seventh Graders, 295 Eighth Graders, 169 are Magnet students, and 192 students receiving Special Education services. The current combined enrollment of our General and Magnet School is 859 students. We are a Title I School of Action in LAUSD. Students who attend Sutter graduate from elementary schools such as: Winnetka E.S., Sunny Brae E.S., Melvin E.S., Mosk E.S., Shirley E.S., and Fullbright E.S. Students matriculate to Cleveland H.S., Taft H.S., Reseda H.S., Canoga Park H.S., El Camino H.S., Chatsworth H.S., and Birmingham H.S. The language, racial and ethnic make-up of the student body is predominantly Hispanic with 69% of students who have Spanish as their first language. English speakers compose 49%, Spanish 26%, Farsi 9%, Russian 4%, Hebrew 2.5%, Filipino 2%, Armenian 1%, and the remaining 6% include a diversity of languages such as Arabic, Vietnamese, Bengali, Cantonese, Hindu, Mandarin, Thai, Punjabi, and Hindi. Approximately 28% of the student body is identified as second language learners and 20% are students with disabilities. Our school-wide mission at Sutter is to afford students the opportunity to master essential communication skills, have the ability to problem solve, reflect on how they learn, understand their role in a democracy, be creative, be willing to be risk takers, and to create an environment that cultivates lifelong learners. In order to accomplish this, we institute school-wide programming and professional development that comprehensively supports the needs of all our stakeholders (students, parents, staff, and community).

Purpose

What is the Quaglia Institute for School Voice and Aspirations?

We continued our partnership with the Quaglia Institute for School Voice and Aspirations (QISVA) in the 2021-2022 school year. This approach is centered around the idea that students who have a voice and believe in themselves will be actively engaged in their learning leading to increased academic motivation, achievement, and post-secondary success. When students feel a sense of purpose and belonging, they are more likely to develop high aspirations, uplift community pride, and cultivate a campus of trust and respect.

When students have a voice they are...

- 3X more likely to experience Self-Worth in school.
- 5X more likely to experience Engagement in school.
- 5X more likely to experience Purpose in school.

Our partnership grants school-wide access to Student Voice Surveys including a schoolwide survey and the iKnow My Class Survey administered at the individual classroom level. These surveys place an emphasis on voice and are user-friendly tools for the educators at our campus. At our site the surveys function as a pedagogical approach, a community-building activity, and a classroom management/ positive-behavior/ implementation-strategies tier-1 approach. Looking at the survey data in partnership with students lets our staff decenter themselves as educators and support classroom space rooted in trust and respect. It is a tool for relationship building, differentiation, and serves as an ongoing assessment of students' perceptions of the classroom and their role and expectations for learning and engagement in a course.

Implementation

School-wide programs influenced and guided by the Quaglia Institute for School Voice & Aspirations framework that we used this year.

Training on how to meaningfully implement the Student Voice Surveys is just one component of the comprehensive support the Quaglia Institute offers to our school. During the 2021-2022 school year there were multiple programming decisions made with the Quaglia Institute's Aspirations Framework in mind as we work to implement the following Conditions as part of our "way of being" at Sutter.

Self-Worth	Engagement	Purpose
Belonging	Fun & Excitement	Leadership & Responsibility
Heroes	Curiosity & Creativity	Confidence to Take Action
Sense of Accomplishment	Spirit of Adventure	

Student-Led Clubs

One of our highlights this year was the development and implementation of student-led clubs. A variety of clubs were developed by and offered to all students. Throughout the year there was an explicit focus on the Condition of Belonging. Belonging, to Sutter, means placing an importance on an overall sense of well-being and social engagement; creating an environment where all students know they belong to the school community, while also being celebrated as an important individual within the larger community. The idea is that this helps to develop a strong collegial working environment for all staff and students in partnership with one another. Throughout the year, Sutter students and staff expressed how membership in clubs fostered a sense of belonging.



Sutter Student Clubs			
Club Name	Meeting Days & Times	Club Sign Up Form & Flier	QR Code
Battle of the Books	Mondays 2:45-3:15	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Video Game Club	Mondays & Tuesdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Chess Club	Tuesdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
GSA	Wednesdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Lunch Bunch	Wednesdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Sutter Sports Club	Wednesdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
All Aboard Board Game	Thursdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Harry Potter	Thursdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Sutter Day Troopers	Thursdays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	
Works of Art	Fridays @ lunch	Sign Up Form HERE Flier HERE	

Club Rush Thursday, March 3 @ Lunch at the Sutter Outdoor Stage



Key to our program's success was our student-centered approach. Students created, facilitated, and promoted their clubs. Throughout the year, students would meet once a week in a teachers/sponsor's room. View a student created flyer for the various clubs offered at school [here](#). Look at pictures and videos of our wildly successful [club-rush day](#). This [video](#) shows "Sutter's Spring Club Rush" on the quad.

"Drama club is for people who like acting, singing, dancing, and like to express themselves in acting. The goals for our club are for us to have fun and to find and express ourselves in acting so we can learn about each other. The purpose of this club is for kids who like to dance to be able to come and feel free to be themselves because it is a way to relax and relieve stress. I also think that the kids that want to learn how to dance can learn in the club."
-Sutter Student

Connecting Cultures Mobile Museum

In May our history department and teacher-librarian collaborated to bring the Connecting Cultures Mobile Museum experience to our school. This experience fostered *Curiosity & Creativity*, which is another Condition in the Aspirations Framework. We implemented this project because it promoted questioning, problem solving, innovation, and creative exploration. This programming was a way to sustain student and teacher engagement and aligns with our school-wide vision; a vision in which we see ourselves as world citizens and lifelong learners.

The exhibit we explored was entitled “spiritual connections.” [Click here](#) to view the presentation.

“Throughout the entire year in 7th grade we studied world history during the early modern era. Each civilization we analyze has some form of spirituality. Religion gives people a sense of purpose and has been one of the most powerful forces in human history. Religious tolerance is important and one way we can do that is by looking at religions of the world. Exploring the artifacts displayed in the museum exhibit allows students to comprehend how religion plays a role in the cultural identities of people all over the world, and allows them to practice not judging others based on their beliefs.”

-Jordan Dominguez, History Teacher

Focus Groups

Based on the data that we received from the Student Voice surveys, we developed five questions to ask students in a series of focus groups so that we could learn more about their perspectives and engage them as partners in the improvement process. Students at Sutter Middle School were chosen at random, by each grade-level and were given the opportunity to participate in the focus groups.

Students were asked open ended questions in focus groups based on the following data points from the Student Voice Survey administered in April 2022:

1. 54% believe school is a welcoming and friendly place.
2. 87% agreed that it is my responsibility to make sure I am learning and 82% said they know what they need to do to be successful in school. (But majority of grades do not reflect this.)
3. 36% believe they are a valued member of the school community.
4. 34% agree that students respect each other.
5. 49% said they are proud of their school.

Commonalities that the students shared across all grade levels included the following: Sutter should showcase more cultural diversity; the average students do not get recognized; adults need to pay attention more to the students; and adults need to deescalate and address negative student behavior. These are all areas we will be working to improve moving forward in partnership with students as we continue to listen to, learn from, and lead with students.

Sutter Takes 20

Sutter Takes 20 is our weekly webinar assembly originally designed to connect students’ school wide during distance learning. We continued this format as we returned to in-person instruction. In weekly installments Sutter family members make important school announcements, recognize and acknowledge student and staff achievements, and engage students in digital literacy or

social-emotional learning themed lessons. View a sample webinar at [Sutter Takes 20: Tuesday, August 31, 2022 with special guest, Dr. Lisa Lande](#)

Analysis of Current Data

What our current data shows and goals for the 2022-2023 school year.

The data from the 2021-2022 highlights strengths and areas for growth. 623 students took the Student Voice Survey. Sutter saw significant growth on majority of the survey statements between 2019 and 2021, but after the challenging year of transition back to in-person learning saw an overall decline in student perceptions on the survey. It is important to celebrate the growth that had been made and recognize that with focused and intentional work as a school community, we can return to a growth trajectory. The following are three areas that saw a decline between 2021 and 2022 that Sutter will be focusing on improving during the upcoming school year.

School is a welcoming and friendly place. 339 students agreed that school was a welcoming place and friendly place, 182 were undecided, and 102 students disagreed. A goal for the next survey is an overall increase in students experiencing school as a welcoming and friendly place where they know they belong. We will be working with students to create a positive and exciting experience for students when they return to campus in the fall and sustain that culture all year long.

I am a valued member of my school community. 218 students agreed that they are a valued member of the school community with this statement, thanks to the dedicated students, educators, administrators and staff members at Sutter. However, 292 students were undecided, and 98 students disagreed with the statement. This is a significant number of students that need to know they are valued, and our goal is to make sure ALL students feel a sense of community at Sutter and know how truly important they are. As a team we will continue to discuss best practices to engage students, teachers, and families to become active members of our school community and cultivate a shared sense of belonging for all.

I know what I need to do to be successful in my classes. 493 students agreed with this statement, 92 students were undecided, and 15 disagreed. This is an opportunity to celebrate our hard work to increase clarity for students on success criteria and supporting students in taking a greater level of responsibility for their learning. We will continue to strive for ALL students knowing what they need to do to be successful and translating that knowledge into action.

The following graphs show the data from both 2021 and 2022 for the three Student Voice Survey statements discussed above.

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2022-2023 School Year

Next Steps at Sutter Middle School.

As a school we will continue to use stakeholder input and Student Voice Survey responses as the center in our discussions as we work to implement best practices, school wide programming and provide professional development around our partnership with the Quaglia Institute. Our team made of stakeholders and students developed the following plan for the 2022-2023 school year:

- Facilitate professional development related to:
 - Communication and classroom management.
 - "Democratic Classrooms" and an environment of safety, justice, trust, and respect.
 - Support for new teachers, specifically strategies for building relationships and de-escalating challenging situations with students.
 - Consistency across campus through shared, communicated, expectations and Positive School Wide Behavior Intervention, and Support (PSWBIS), meditation, and restorative justice.
 - Establish clarity for students and staff about behavior expectations and consequences. In addition to highlighting what not to do, there is a need to also focus on what TO DO.
- Increase the number of clubs so students can engage at school related to their interests and passions. Ask students what clubs they want in a google doc and give staff an opportunity to flexibly connect with students through creating new clubs.
- Host a cultural fair to help students connect to each other through both shared experiences and cultural differences among students on campus.
- Moving beyond "acceptance" and "tolerance" to true "respect" and a "sense of belonging" for all.