



Teaching & Learning in 2020

When I was growing up in the 1960s and 70s, school was very different than it is today. Now, our children and grandchildren are growing up in a world with different expectations, new technologies, new job and career opportunities, a greater need to communicate with skillfulness and diplomacy, and a greater need to collaborate with others to create, innovate, and solve problems – in ways that we couldn't begin to imagine in the 60s, 70s, 80s, and perhaps even the 90s.

So, how are we adapting our approach in our schools in order to prepare our students for life after their K-12 experience in this 21st century?

Career Technical Education (CTE) is one major way we are doing this. CTE used to be called Vocational Education, or Voc Ed. Because we believe it is absolutely critical to prepare our students for the world of work, we are fully developing CTE pathways at our high schools in a variety of industry sectors. To be considered a complete pathway in the eyes of the California Department of Education, a pathway must have three related courses in a specific industry sector. In the past 3½ years, great progress has been made thanks to our district and high school leaders, our amazing CTE teachers, and Principal Kelly Hunkins who leads this work for the school district.

At Argonaut High School, we offer the following CTE pathways: Agriculture Science, Agriculture Mechanics, Ornamental Horticulture, Food Service & Hospitality, Games & Simulation, Information Support & Services, and Welding & Materials Joining. At Amador High School, we offer these pathways: Agriculture Science, Agriculture Mechanics (2 different pathways), Ornamental Horticulture, Media Arts, Graphic Design, and Food Service & Hospitality (planned for 2020-21). At Independence High School, we offer two pathways: Graphic Design and Games & Simulation. Students attending North Star Independent Study School may take any of the courses offered at Amador and Argonaut High Schools. This is referred to as blended enrollment.

Additionally, here is more work we are doing in our schools and classrooms to prepare our students:

- **Helping students have a growth mindset**
- **Focusing on social-emotional wellness** (See my November and December 2019 guest commentaries for more information.)
- **Making key shifts in reading and writing instruction** such as regular practice with complex texts; reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from the text both literary and informational; and building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

- **Making key shifts in mathematics instruction** such as greater focus and depth on fewer topics, linking topics and thinking across the grade levels (coherence), and increasing rigor through deeper conceptual understanding, procedural skills and fluency, and application with intensity and a growth mindset
- **Integrating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM)**
- **Integrating and more fully developing visual and performing arts education**
- **Using collaboration and communication strategies** where students talk about their thinking, defend their ideas, cite text evidence, and work with others to solve problems

Carol Dweck, researcher, author, and professor at Stanford University, says, “In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.” Our goal is to help students persevere with stamina as they collaborate to solve problems, defend their thinking, and learn new skills and content. For more on this, you may go to <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/>.

Another major focus area is related to meeting the needs of ALL students. This happens in a variety of ways including Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Special Education. In my next guest commentary, I will focus on this.

If you have questions or would like more information in any of these areas, I encourage you to contact your child’s school principal or teacher(s). If you do not have children in our schools and would like more information, please feel free to contact Sean Snider, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, at (209) 257-5334 or ssnider@acusd.org, or you may contact me at (209) 257-5353 or aslavensky@acusd.org. We look forward to sharing more information and talking with you.

As always, thank you so much for your support of our students and schools.

Amy L. Slavensky, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools
Amador County Unified School District