

MODERN LIFE SKILLS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Team Central Coast - Better Careers Design Group

Purpose: Address Workforce Gaps for Youth

A coalition of education and workforce system practitioners came together over the last two years - in the midst of a global pandemic - to discover local workforce gaps and connect youth to career pathways leading to well-paying jobs on the Central Coast of California.

Hartnell College, the Hartnell College Foundation, Monterey County Workforce Development Board and the Santa Cruz Human Services Department and its Workforce Development Board formed “*Team Central Coast - Better Careers Design Group.*” With leadership and technical assistance from Third Sector and funding support from the James Irvine Foundation, the team went through the human-centered design process to engage youth & their families, community-based organizations, and school staff in the Central Coast to develop a solution to local challenges.

Solution: Modern Life Skills Mentorship Program

As a result of these community engagement efforts, the team recognized a need for first generation immigrant youth to receive more guidance on career pathways to well-paying jobs, culminating in upward economic mobility for these youth and their families. Accordingly, the team is building a Modern Life Skills Mentorship program that will coach middle school youth in Five Key Success Elements (illustrated below). We aim for 80% of graduating youth to demonstrate age-appropriate growth in each of the Five Key Success Elements, and for all participating youth and their families or other caring connections to demonstrate increased awareness of pathways to opportunities in in-demand, well-paying regional industries or career clusters.



The programmatic focus on engaging youth earlier in the cradle to career pipeline, when they are in middle school, was an important finding from community engagement. This local context is also affirmed by national research: A national career development and work-based learning leader with 25 years of related experience remarked,



“CTE students start in middle school exploring and discovering career interests and inventories so that by the high school years, a more defined and concrete pathway can be built. This well-defined “road

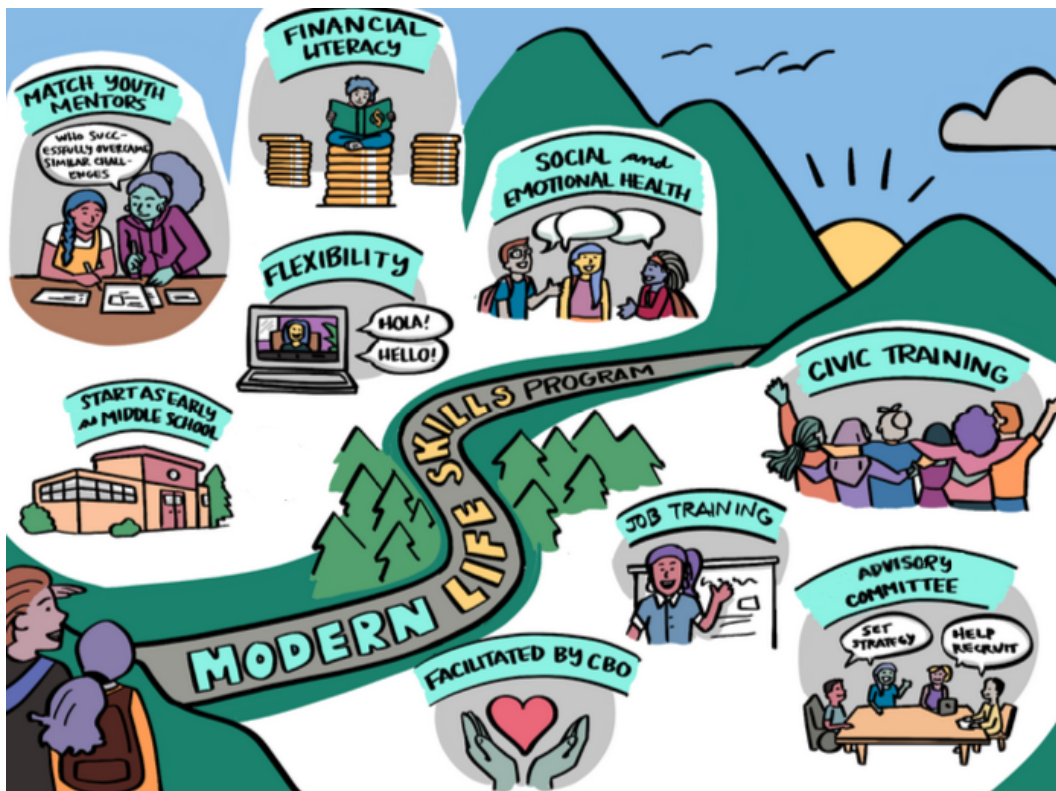
map” or “GPS” allows students to zoom in on the needed education and industry prerequisites, allowing for a successful, lucrative, and purposeful career.”

The Success Team

The Modern Life Skills Mentorship program will implement a Success Team made up of caring adult connections to wrap around a youth and support their success. The team will include a parent, family member or guardian, a lead mentor, a school-based mentor, and a community-based mentor. Together, the team will support the youth and reduce systemic barriers to success, such as: food and financial insecurity, lack of digital connectivity, and transportation challenges. Mentors may provide the youth with prizes and swag to celebrate accomplishments, scholarships or individual development accounts (IDA), and cover travel costs for special events. Mentors will receive a stipend to honor their time and efforts. Early in program development, the project will form a Caring Connection Advisory Committee (CCAC) in order to help inform strategy and develop curriculum for the five key success elements, and ensure equitable continuous improvement.

Program Reach and Focus

We will implement a cohort approach to serve 60 youth members over a two-year period. The project will focus on the rural regions of Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. To ensure equity, the cohort composition will include 75% first generation immigrant youth and underserved populations.



PROJECT GOALS

▶ To **increase equitable access to well-paying jobs** for middle schoolers with barriers to work by connecting them with supports **to investigate and step into career pathways at the crucial start** of their career journey

▶ To **build the capacities, skills, and proficiencies** of participating youth for accessing well-paying jobs, particularly by helping them grow their **social-emotional well-being** and deepen their connection to **and leadership in local communities**