

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: December 6, 2010
Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Connect Academy at Albany High School Internship Program with the City of Albany

REPORT BY: Beth Pollard, City Manager

MAYOR WILE RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council authorize city staff to work with students from Connect Academy at Albany High School and Mayor Wile to place students in City internships.

BACKGROUND

Connect Academy was established in the fall of 2008 after a three-year planning period and a Specialized Secondary Program grant from the State of California. Connect is intended for students who want an alternative to the traditional core humanities curriculum. The course sequence includes U.S. History, American Literature, and Design Lab I in the junior year and U.S. Government/economics, senior composition/non-fiction, and Design Lab II in the second year.

The goal of Connect Academy is to promote rigorous historical and cultural academic study through creative hands-on learning and community action projects. Attached is a list of some of the Academy's partners and donors.

DISCUSSION

As part of the Connect Curriculum, seniors develop and execute an individualized community-based learning project. Seniors formulate a core question to guide their research and project. The components of the project include: a community-based learning experience (a mini-internship, shadowing a professional, volunteering, etc.); a research paper, a visual design lab product, a presentation to the school and local community, and a portfolio with reflection on all completed benchmarks. Mayor Wile is working on helping place Academy students into local internships and suggested the City of Albany as a placement agency.

For the next semester, the placement could start either January 24 or February 28, and lasts until the week of April 4. The student would work on-site each Wednesday from 8 or 9 a.m. to Noon. City staff has requested information on expectations of the placement

organizations to understand the staff time commitment. In the meantime, staff is working to identify potential projects that would be beneficial to both the students and the City. Mayor Wile has suggested that she can assist with the connection between the Academy and the City staff.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

One of the internship program areas identified by City staff is work on implementation of the City's Climate Action Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There will be staff time and no other expenditure.

Attachments

Connect Academy materials

Albany Unified School District
Student Responsibilities Contract for Community Based Learning (CBL)
(includes: Off-Campus Internships, Community Service, Field-Based Research, etc)

Name _____ Grade Level _____ Date of birth/age _____

Parents/Guardian name(s) _____

Home phone/work phone/email _____

Student Contract:

I, _____, agree to the following responsibilities for my participation in Albany Unified School District's Community-Based Learning experience:

1. I will attend school every day in accordance Albany Unified School District's attendance policy.
2. I further understand that I must
 - Report to my CBL site on time and ready for work and follow all relevant safety guidelines.
 - Complete all assignments as outlined by my Community-Based Learning teacher
 - Represent myself and my school according to the highest standards of conduct.

Parent or Guardian Contract

In the Albany Unified School District, Community-Based Learning (CBL) experiences are designed to give your student real-world learning experiences which will help increase motivation, deepen understanding of skills and knowledge taught in school and help students to reflect on their experiences in order to make more informed decisions about future career paths.

- Upon signing this form I am granting my permission for my student to leave the school building without direct supervision by an AUSD employee to go to the work location identified below.
- I agree to hold harmless the school and its employees or the school district/Board of Education and its employees for any expense or injury that my child may incur while my child is engaged in his/her CBL experience.
- I understand that my child is responsible for his/her behavior at all times and that my child may be dismissed from his/her work site if he/she does not meet CBL standards set by the work site host .
- I agree to provide proof of health insurance and auto insurance (if applicable) for my child while he/she is in the internship program.
- I realize the major emphasis of the work experience is on school success.

We have read this contract and understand our responsibilities for participation in this program.

Signature of student Date

Signature of parent/guardian Date

Workplace: _____ Contact name/Position _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Phone/Fax/Email: _____

What is Connect?

Connect Academy was established in the fall of 2008 after a three-year planning period and a Specialized Secondary Program (SSP) grant from the state of California.

Connect is intended for students who want an alternative to the traditional core humanities curriculum.

The course sequence includes: U.S. History, American Literature, and Design Lab I in the junior year and U.S. Gov't/econ, senior composition/non-fiction, and Design Lab II in the senior year. Curriculum is coordinated across subject areas, and, at times, grade levels.

Sample Quarter 1 unit of instruction for juniors:

In US History, students learned about the founding of the nation, wrote first-person diaries about Columbus' arrival on the continent, and studied important documents such as the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. In English, students read *Our America* and a post-Civil War era play, *The Piano Lesson*, drawing on information learned in history class. Students honed writing skills with EAP-style prompts, reviewed on elements of literature, and wrote their own books. The

Seniors create a mixed-media visual to explore their identity.

Design Lab allowed students to design and create linocuts for book covers, illustrate their stories, and bind the books; this project followed initial explorations of design discipline and application. To better illustrate the connections between the arts and local history, a fieldtrip to San Francisco's Mission District was organized to see the Mission Dolores and participate in a City Walks tour of murals that illuminate the connection between culture and community. Finally, in a research-based project, students collaborated with Voices to Vision to redesign the waterfront or worked with local experts to propose a design for the Connect Garden and Compost Project; these proposals were judged by a panel that included Connect Academy partners.



Students visit the newly opened Angel Island Immigration Station in Spring 2009.



Juniors tour Mission Dolores and the murals and architecture of the surrounding neighborhood.



The haunts of author John Steinbeck and the Monterey Bay Aquarium are stops on a trip to Cannery Row.

Current Connect Faculty:
Leone Avery
Frank Brown
Juliet Chiarella
Karen DeHart
Sarah Samonsky
Emily Surowitz

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT CONNECT ACADEMY?

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A small learning community for 11th and 12th graders

CONNECT ACADEMY



Connect Academy at Albany High School

Connecting students to their peers, the curriculum, and the world around them

Connect Academy at Albany High School



Connect students tally votes during the "Rock the Mock" election during Fall 2008, working with the League of Women Voters.

"What a joy to work with students and teachers as they reach beyond school walls."
**- Bill Chapman,
 League of Women Voters**

A main goal of Connect Academy is to take student learning and apply it in a real world context. This is accomplished through meetings with community leaders, senior projects, field trips throughout the Bay Area, the Connect Garden and Compost Project, and more!

Our Mission

The two year Connect Academy focuses on the greater Bay Area and the roles that young people must take on to effect change. Students will work hard to recognize historical themes, past and present, and will identify social and political forces that have shaped and continue to shape our larger community. We will select areas of interest, conduct research based on our curiosities, and make practical plans to affect our community in a positive way. The Connect Academy Mission Statement is a driving force for the program:

The goal of Connect Academy is to promote rigorous historical and cultural academic study through creative hands-on learning and community action projects.

Some of Our Partners and Donors:

- **The League of Women Voters**
- **Albany Sustainability Commission**
- **De Young Museum**
- **Wells Fargo**
- **Target**
- **PTSA**
- **Albany Education Fund**
- **Alameda County Master Gardeners**
- **Center for Ecoliteracy**

Community-Based Learning Projects

As part of the Connect curriculum, seniors will develop and execute an individualized community-based learning project. Seniors formulate a core question to guide their research and project.

The components of the project include: a community-based learning experience (a mini-internship, shadowing a professional, volunteering, etc.), a research paper, a visual design lab product, a presentation to the school and local community, and a portfolio with reflection on all completed benchmarks.



Senior Hannah Hsieh

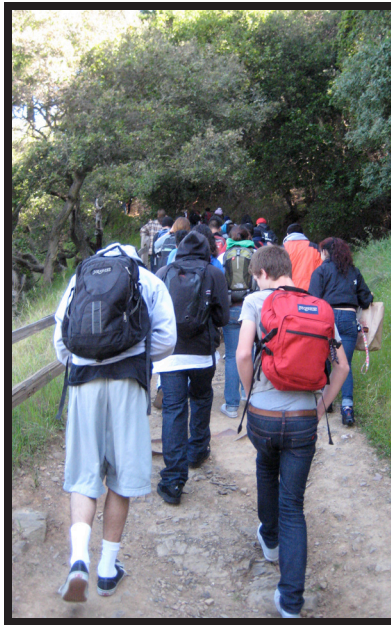
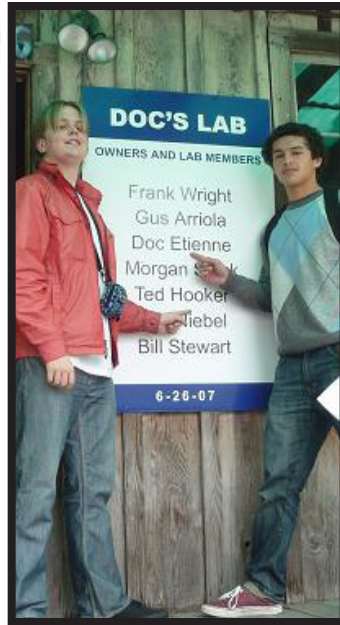
Student Spotlight: Hannah Hsieh

To research her essential question -- Who is responsible for obesity in America? -- senior Hannah Hsieh interviewed a local dietician, enrolled in a one-day nutrition course, and narrowed her research to focus on the most recent updates about obesity in the U.S. Through this process, she learned that 50% of American adults are carrying around an excess amount body fat. "Americans don't have the time or the knowledge to make a healthy and delicious meal. My idea for my senior project is to make a healthy cookbook... to get young people cooking healthy, well-balanced meals instead of eating out." The recipes will yield individual portion-sizes to ease the burden of cooking for one but recipes can be multiplied for larger groups.

- *Connect has made Madeleine feel safe and in control of her school work. She has taken much more responsibility for projects and homework this year than ever before. Everything fits together logically within the course work, and that can only make school a better place to be.* - Gwen Whittle, Connect parent
- *I was getting Ds and Fs in my classes last year, was very unmotivated, hated coming to school but now in the Connect program I am getting As and Bs and I love my classes.*
 - Ross Bergstrom, Connect senior
- *Seeing the same people all day in class gives you a chance to get closer to your classmates and learn more about them. Connect gives you a chance to connect with people and build a stronger relationship.*
 - Myles Babitt, Connect junior
- *Cameron loves the Connect program [...] The teachers are awesome and the way the classes are connected is truly a revelation in learning. Cameron enjoys these classes very much and also enjoys this teaching style. My son learns by visual cues so it is great to have alternatives to the standard teaching methods. Keep up the great work!*
 - Sharyn Thollaug, Connect parent



A small learning community for juniors and seniors, connecting students to their peers, the curriculum, and the world around them



Is Connect Academy Right for You?

- Not seeing a connection between high school and the real world?
- Feeling disconnected from your teachers or peers?
- Want to experience English, history and the arts in a whole new way?

Then Connect Academy is for you!

The two year Connect Academy focuses on the greater Bay Area and the roles that young people have and must take on to effect change. Students will work hard to recognize historical themes, past and present, and will identify which social and political forces have shaped and continue to shape our larger community.

The goal of Connect Academy is to make clear links between historical and cultural understanding through creative hands-on projects and present-day action.

To learn more about Connect Academy contact:
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A main goal of Connect Academy is to take student learning and apply it in a real world context. This is accomplished through:

- hands-on projects that teach real world skills
- field trips throughout the Bay Area
- the Connect Garden and Compost Project
- collaboration with community leaders
- senior projects

The Connect course sequence includes:

- U.S. History, American Literature, and Design Lab I in grade 11
- U.S. Gov't/econ, senior composition/non-fiction, and Design Lab II in grade 12
- Curriculum is coordinated across subject areas, and, at times, grade levels

What students are saying about Connect:

- *I like Connect because it deals with team building and you get to meet new people... We get to go on fieldtrips that help us understand what we are learning in our classes. It helps us get more excited about learning new things.*
-Jacque Armstrong, Connect junior
- *I was getting Ds and Fs in my classes [sophomore] year, was very unmotivated, and hated coming to school, but now in Connect I am getting As and Bs and I love my classes.*
- Ross Bergstrom, Connect senior
- *As a student in Connect, I feel comfortable with my classmates as if they were family and also have good communication with all of my teachers... I have seen an improvement in my grades and the motivation of my classmates, and my teachers give me the attention I need to succeed as a student.*
- Noelle Linsy, Connect junior