



The Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Educational Success (ARCHES) is a voluntary confederation of collaboratives focused on improving student outcomes and closing the achievement gap through collective action among schools, community colleges, baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities, business, and community and family-centered organizations.

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY P-16 COUNCIL

History

In 2005, San Luis Obispo County Office of Education convened education, business, and community leaders to establish a P-16 Council to accomplish this mission: “To establish priorities, commit resources, and advocate across institutional boundaries for a coordinated approach to improve student achievement and eliminate the Achievement Gap in San Luis Obispo County”. Today, the Council is the county’s primary educational system-building forum.

This Council has been expanding its scope since its inception in deliberative phases:

- Phase One: Concept development for future initiatives
- Phase Two: Launch-planning for new initiatives
- Phase Three: Monitoring and oversight for current initiatives
- Phase Four: Sustainability planning for mature initiatives

For Early Childhood Education and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education, this process is well underway; next will be English Language Learning.

Membership

This Council is composed of the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, San Luis Coastal Unified School District, Cuesta College, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, PG&E, Twin Cities Community Hospital, San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation, and the county’s Economic Opportunity Commission.

Demographics

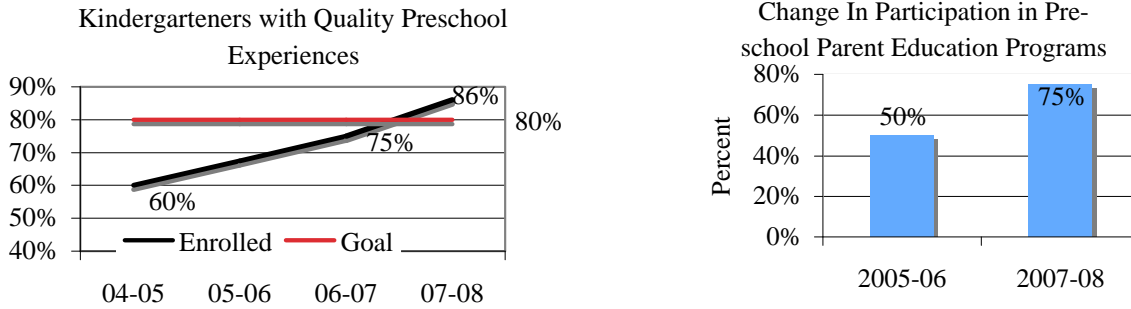
This semi-rural central coast county has seven small cities in a large geographic area. State and local government and agriculture, health, and tourism constitute its economy. White residents comprise about 75 percent of the population but the Latino presence has grown by nearly 40 percent in the last decade. While the poverty rate is relatively low at 11 percent, the proportion of students -- especially young children -- living in poverty in this county continues to grow. The county’s overall student achievement is relatively high, but when the achievement of low-income students, particularly English Language Learners, is considered, the gap is large.

Impact

For the ARCHES-ENLACE grant awarded in 2006, the Council’s goal was that all county children would have access to quality preschool. However, it set an initial benchmark at 75 percent of the students in four neighborhoods with low performing elementary schools who would enter kindergarten after completing a quality preschool experience. Display 1 on the next page shows changes in relevant measures in the communities of focus in this initial effort:

- In the 2004-05, 60 percent of kindergarteners completed a quality preschool experience; over 85 percent did so by 2007-08.
- Participation in Parental Education Programs: 50 of 100 surveyed parents in 2005-06 had participated in parental education programs; by 2007-08, that number rose to 75 percent.
- Not pictured on this display is that the number of students completing a state-funded or federally subsidized preschool experience rose in these neighborhoods as well.
- Area elementary schools moved upward to Deciles 4-5 on the Academic Performance Index

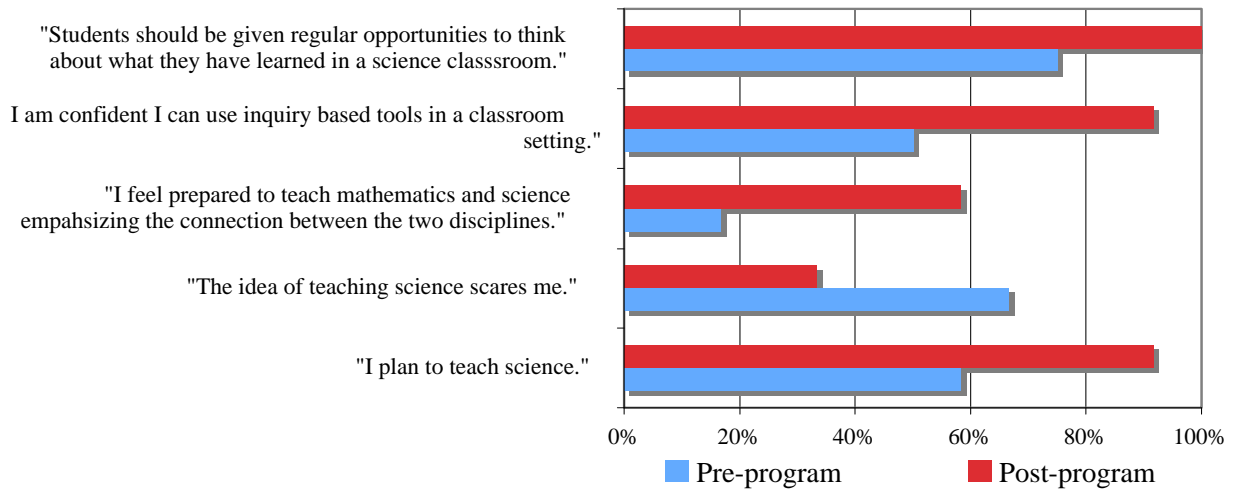
Display 1
Early Childhood Education Outcome Measures in Specific Communities



A second initiative undertaken by this Council is Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education. This initiative is designed to enhance the teaching of these fields through recruitment, professional development, and dissemination of information on best practices. Several sets of activities are either being conducted or planned by the Council.

One activity in this initiative was the development of a course jointly sponsored by the College of Science and Mathematics and the Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education at Cal Poly that was designed to encourage college students majoring in Engineering or physical sciences to consider a career in teaching. Display 2 shows evidence of this course's early success in changing the attitudes of these 12 prospective teachers.

Display 2
Change in Attitude of Selected College Students about Teaching Science



- On each question related to attitudes about teaching science in secondary school, students became more enthusiastic about, and committed to, this career after taking the course.
- On each question related to attitudes about appropriate pedagogy for teaching science, these students exhibited a higher regard for inquiry-based learning and the importance of learning multiple ways of teaching science.

Future Initiatives

- Develop implementation plans for the English Language Learning initiative.
- Continue development of the STEM initiative focused on mathematics in its second year.
- Within the STEM initiative and through an ARCHES grant, plan and implement a career pathway in alternative energy industries.