

Training the Next Generation of Educators



Every year, juniors and seniors from Linden High School assist teachers in classrooms and help lead homework and recreational activities at a local elementary school.

Sargina Yonan, Director of Expanded Learning Programs of the Linden Unified School District loves having youth apprentices from Linden High School work with younger students. “The students are able to immediately connect with these high school students, almost like a big brother or big sister situation,” she said.

The youth apprenticeship is facilitated by [ARCH](#) - Apprenticeships Reaching Career Horizons, led by the San Joaquin County Office of Education. Available in multiple occupations, ARCH’s apprenticeship programs were the first for high school aged youth to be registered with the State of California.

One youth apprentice, Catalina Govea, initially thought she wanted to be either a teacher or a chef. Her youth apprenticeship, with its paid, hands-on work and mentorship from educators in the district, has shown her that her calling lies with education.

“I like going into work every day and seeing the kids. It just makes me so happy to see how far they’ve come starting from the beginning of the year,” Govea said.

As part of her apprenticeship, Govea takes education courses at no cost at San Joaquin Delta College. She said that these courses help her develop techniques for leading and engaging children, and that her work experience enhances her coursework.

A class on student behavior, for instance, has helped Govea calm and redirect students. “When a student was having a meltdown, I practiced one of the techniques. I realized if I hadn’t known this technique, the student would have probably

responded differently and the situation would have escalated,” Govea said. “I’m learning and then practicing it on the job.”

A youth apprenticeship is a work-based learning program designed to start when apprentices are high-school age. A proven education and workforce strategy, youth apprenticeship combines paid, structured on-the-job training with related classroom learning. Youth apprenticeship builds a more inclusive economy by creating affordable, reliable, and equitable pathways from high school to good jobs and college degrees.

Youth apprenticeship also creates a talent pipeline for industries that participate, enabling them to train young people who can hit the ground running when they begin working full-time.

Yonan said that after many teachers left the field during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth apprenticeship program helped the district cultivate well-trained future educators from their own community.

“To me, it’s a no-brainer because you create a feeder program,” Yonan said, adding that she encourages youth apprentices to participate in district professional development programs, which enhances both their teaching-specific skills and their awareness of workplace expectations. “They get a skill set that most high school students don’t usually have the opportunity to get.”

[ARCH](#) is a member of the [Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship \(PAYA\)](#), a multi-year, collaborative initiative that supports states and cities in their efforts to expand access to high-quality apprenticeship opportunities for high-school-age youth. PAYA believes that youth apprenticeship has the power

to transform how our education system prepares young people for careers and adulthood, as it connects the learning needs of youth with the talent needs of industry, creating a more inclusive economy and skilled workforce.

Aidee Fregoso, the extended learning site lead at Linden Elementary, said she wishes for enough youth apprentices to have one in every classroom. "Catalina is one of my strongest staff members," Fregoso said, attributing this at least in part to the training she received as a youth apprentice.

Fregoso also serves as a mentor to the youth apprentices, including Govea, who she described as "amazing" because Govea takes initiative, asks questions and is skilled at managing a classroom. Fregoso said she has an "open-door policy" for all staff, especially the youth apprentices, and said she works hard to cultivate the trust that Govea and others need to ask for her guidance and support.

Mentorship is a key element of youth apprenticeship, giving students a trusted adult to guide their professional growth, answer questions and help strengthen their skills.

Govea said Fregoso has been invaluable to her journey as a teacher in training. They talk every day, and Govea said Fregoso has helped her develop patience, an invaluable skill to an educator working with young children.

“She’s really helped me come up with techniques and methods to help redirect my classroom, and she’s helped me with talking to students in general and coming up with ideas to engage them,” Govea said.

Fregoso has also helped Govea navigate workplace relationships, recognizing the need to occasionally take a break and balance her youth apprenticeship responsibilities with her high school courses and activities.

While balancing the youth apprenticeship with high school and college coursework has been challenging, Govea said she is thrilled to have this opportunity to enter the education field at an early age. "Youth Apprenticeship definitely allows you to get training and see how everything works. Having that experience and also getting paid for it is a great opportunity, because you're learning a new skill and making money. It helps you with your future goals, and it looks really good on your resume to say that you were able to master those skills," Govea said.

Govea said that she also worked to earn the respect of teachers and staff at Linden Elementary by showing them she is responsible, conscientious, and open to learning.

In working with adults regularly, apprentices get a head start on preparing themselves for life in the workplace. But Yonan said that teachers at Linden Elementary School also enjoy the opportunity to pass along their expertise. "Our frontline staff don't always have leadership or mentorship opportunities," Yonan said, adding that just as the youth apprentices get the chance to influence and guide younger students, the teachers and staff have the opportunity to help shape the next generation of educators. "It's this really well-rounded program because it provides leadership and mentorship opportunities at all levels, which I think is a beautiful thing."

Yonan agrees that working as a youth apprentice has given Govea a leg up on her peers. "She's going to be ahead of the game because she's already in the workforce. She's already put in all these on-the-job training hours. She's gone to professional development. She's done dual enrollment. So I just think she's so far ahead of most kids," Yonan said. "She has this amazing opportunity ahead if she continues to stay in education. She already has an idea of what education looks like. She's lived and breathed it."

To learn more about apprenticeship programs with ARCH, visit www.sjcoe.org/CollegeAndCareer/#apprentice

