

GOVERNMENTS ENGAGING YOUTH CASE STORY

Oxnard Summer at City Hall



"Thirteen high school students were able to broaden their perspectives on potential careers within the city. Many of these students were from low income families and never would have had this opportunity. This experience helped one student secure a college scholarship from the local chapter of the National Latino Peace Officers Association. This was our first year and we are excited to build on our successes next year bigger and better" -**Oxnard Police Chief Scott Whitney**

Summary

Since 2007, the Oxnard Union School District (OUHSD) has used a Linked Learning model to offer students a comprehensive four-year program of study that combines academic curriculum with work-based learning experiences. The City of Oxnard, determined to show support for the alliance, passed a resolution in 2015 to become a Linked Learning City. This established a formal partnership between the City of Oxnard, OUHSD, and the Ventura County Civic Alliance, an organization tasked with helping implement work-based based learning opportunities. Summer at City Hall emerged as an opportunity to not only prepare students for a life of civic engagement but also give them first-hand experience working in the public sector. This five-week program, modeled after Sacramento's Sacramento City Hall, allowed thirteen students to spend a collective forty-five hours in seven different city departments.

Program Highlights

The Summer at City Hall program was able to provide students with civic education and work-based learning experiences in the public sector.

- Instruction and presentations were provided by employees of the City of Oxnard and teachers from the OUHSD. Classes were held Monday through Thursday morning at a local high school covering

COMMUNITY

City of Oxnard
(Ventura County)

PROGRAM

Summer at City Hall

STUDENTS SERVED

13

PROGRAM FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS

California Career Pathways
Trust

National Academy
Foundation

Oxnard Union School
District

Ventura County Civic
Alliance

SoCalGas

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a wide ranges of topics including municipal organization, career exploration, citizenship, and skills development. Presentations were also given by city and county officials on the importance of active citizenship and voting.

- Each program participant received five units of high school credit after completing the five-week program. In addition, a donation of \$5,000 was secured from SoCalGas to pay for student stipends.
- Summer at City Hall received widespread support at the municipal level, with students being placed in seven different city departments. Many of the students' projects are being continuously used by city departments especially their booklets, social media pages, and public announcements.
- The program culminated in a formal student presentation on the work being done at each city department. Attendees at their final presentation included leaders of the City of Oxnard, OUHSD staff, and Ventura County Civic Alliance members. Video documenting occurred during these presentations and throughout the program. Students were also able to present during a City Council meeting.

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

[City of Oxnard Resolution](#)

[Ventura County Civic Alliance Website](#)

[Oxnard Union High School District](#)

Lessons Learned

- While a five-week program allows students to gain insight into the public sector and daily operations of city departments, projects are limited by this period. The Oxnard city manager is now looking into creating a year round internship program that creates a more formalized pipeline into the city workforce.
- Program participants are able to add the Summer at City Hall experience onto their resume, but there is no concrete record of the hard and soft skills they earned. A work ready certificate or digital badge would help validate students and ensure their success in future careers and professional endeavors.
- Throughout Summer at City Hall, there was no formal collection of feedback or data. To ensure continued growth and success of the program, a formal evaluation is needed to assess the impact on students. Metrics will also help to increase public and private buy-in and ensure Summer at City Hall continues for years to come.
- Increased collaboration is needed between the city and the school district to ensure underserved and underrepresented youth learn and participate in the program. Outreach efforts should focus on youth of color and low-income youth, giving them work-based learning opportunities in local government.

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The Rest of the Story

A new program offered by the OUHSD, Summer at City Hall is a work-based learning opportunity for Oxnard High School students in the Law and Public Services academy. While Oxnard Summer at City Hall is coming to a close on its second year, the Alliance for Linked Learning has been around for ten years. This local innovative collaboration between the OUHSD and local businesses and organizations was supported by a \$6 million grant from the California Career Pathways Trust. The Linked Learning Model is based upon the work of the National Academy Foundation, which developed a curriculum emphasizing 21st century work skills and student job opportunities. The result is twenty academies across seven OUHSD high schools, which prepare students for college, career, and life.

The City of Oxnard expressed formal support of the Alliance for Linked Learning by passing a resolution to declare itself the first Linked Learning City in California. The resolution specifically stated that the City of Oxnard would take measures to facilitate work-based experiences in the public sector and use the Education Partnership Committee as a bridge between the school district and local entrepreneurs. When looking for a model civic engagement program, Sacramento Summer at City Hall caught the eye of school district and city officials. With the help of the Ventura County Civic Alliance, OUHSD and the City of Oxnard entered into a partnership to establish the Oxnard Summer at City Hall internship project for the summer of 2016. Thirteen high school students from the Law and Public Services Academy would be able to participate in a five-week program working in different city departments and learning directly from city and county officials.

Oxnard Summer at City Hall began as a pilot program introduced to the OUHSD and City of Oxnard with the help Mary Anne Rooney at the Ventura County Civic Alliance and liaisons from the Institute for Local Government. Rooney first approached the OUHSD Career Technical Education (CTE) team and went on to gain the support of City Councilmember Bryan McDonald and Deputy City Manager Scott Whitney. The Ventura County Civic Alliance

2016 STUDENT PLACEMENTS

- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Public Library
- Public Relations
- Performing Arts Center
- Parks and Recreation
- Development Services



City of Oxnard Fire Department Staff engage with youth about job experiences. Photo: Mary Anne Rooney

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served as a bridge between the different cultures at the school district and city, establishing better coordination between the two. While the CTE Learning Design Coach worked with the Law and Public Services Academy teacher on program curriculum, Rooney collaborated with the Assistant Police Chief Eric Sonstegard to develop the internship aspect. A \$5,000 grant from SoCalGas provided the necessary funds for student stipends.

The five-week program launched in the summer of 2016, with thirteen Oxnard High School students being placed in seven different city departments. The majority of these students came from low-income families and underrepresented communities in local government. In addition to receiving five high school credits and a stipend, each student received forty-five hours of work experience and formal recognition from the school district. The program ran from June 27 to July 28, 2016 with a classroom component in the morning and internship in the afternoon. Program curriculum centered on local government, active citizenship, workplace etiquette, public sector careers, and team building. Presentations from Oxnard's Mayor and Deputy City Manager emphasized the importance of community engagement, especially voting in local elections and staying up-to-date on local ordinances. The experience culminated in a final presentation to the city, county, and school district on the student's summer projects. For 2016, these projects ranged from creating a social media presence for a city department to designing promotional flyers for local events.

With widespread support from the city, county, and school board, Oxnard Summer at City Hall is projected to expand in the upcoming years. The hope is to continue strengthening partnerships between the school district, city, and county as well as create a more formalized pipeline to the public sector.

2016 GUEST SPEAKERS

City Mayor

Tim Flynn

County Supervisor

John Zaragoza

County Public Information Officer

Bill Nash

City Clerk

Daniel Martinez

Assistant Police Chief

Jason Benites

Assistant City Manager

Scott Whitney

County Clerk

Mark Lunn

District Attorney's Office

Stacy Ratner

City Attorney

Stephen Fischer

Assistant Police Chief

Eric Sonstegard