

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

by James Grieshop, Ph.D.

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Looking Ahead to Spring

Although we are just heading into our California winter*, I want to encourage you to think ahead to the Spring of 2007. Specifically, I want to alert you to the 4-H Center for Youth Development's effort to again host both a Spring Seminar series on the Davis campus and to co-host a Youth-Nutrition-Community symposium on June 4 -5 on the UC Davis campus.

First the Seminar Series: in the Spring of last year we organized a Department of Human and Community Development for credit speaker series which featured UCCE Youth Advisors presenting their work. For the Spring, 2007 quarter we are planning to again host a series with the general focus on "Youth and Culture." We again want to invite Youth Advisors as presenters, along with other youth development professionals from the local area. In addition we hope to have some presentations in which youth will be presenters along side the Advisors and others. We are also particularly interested in Youth and Culture presentations that include elements or examples of "youth-led research."

June 4 -5 Symposium: Currently we are in a planning phase for this Symposium. The intent of this event is to bring together dynamic elements from youth development, nutrition and community development all related to community learning and education. The focus and title are on "Making (and Celebrating) Connections" in these three areas. Working together to develop this event are Sheri Zidenberg-Cherr in the Department of Nutrition, Jonathan London with the California Communities Program (CCP) in the Department of Human and Community Development, Bina Lefkowitz from the Youth Service Providers Network in Sacramento, and several representatives from the 4-H CYD. This event will also be the annual UCCE Human Resources Conference.

As we scope out this Symposium, which we intend to offer as a venue for highlighting, celebrating, and creating new connections in these three areas, we will provide you with more information, along with requests for participation. Since last year's Symposium's inclusion of youth was

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Congratulations to Aarti Subramaniam, Ph.D.!

Aarti Subramaniam, who has been a graduate student researcher with the CYD for the past four years, has completed her doctorate dissertation and all work required for the Ph.D. The title of her dissertation is "The Relevance of

Community-based Organizations for Rural Youth." Aarti will begin a post-doc in January and continue to be affiliated with the CYD. Please join us in congratulating Aarti on her achievement!

CYD Symposium Break-Out Groups Continuing Work

The CYD Symposium ended last May with reports from break-out groups and plans for possible future work. The groups were in the areas of Youth Action Research, Youth-Adult Partnerships, Culture/Bi-culturality, and Collaboration Within Cooperative Extension. The notes from the break-out groups were posted on the

Cultural Awareness in 4-H YDP

--by Ramona Carlos

A new taskforce has been created to address the issue of cultural and diversity awareness for staff, youth and volunteers. Mignonne Pollard, Assistant Director of the 4-H YDP will be leading the Cultural Awareness Statewide Education (CASE) Taskforce, one of whose goals is to establish an overall

CYD website and all Symposium participants were informed of their availability. (Go to <http://fourhcyd.ucdavis.edu/surveynotes/default.html>) Staff at the CYD has been actively involved in subsequent work, particularly in the areas of cultural awareness and youth action research.

direction for statewide cultural awareness programs for staff, youth, and volunteers. The CASE Taskforce met on November 8th and 9th, and began preliminary steps towards addressing the issue of broadening cultural awareness within the 4-H program. There are two other meetings scheduled in the next six months.

Participatory Action Research and Youth-Adult Partnerships

--by Aarti Subramaniam

The CYD will be convening a *training session in March* (dates to be determined) on ideas for infusing participatory and youth-led research approaches within 4-H YDP. Participatory and youth-led action research is a powerful methodology that encourages adults to partner with and engage young people in research and evaluation that inform research, policies and programming. Through facilitating participatory research projects where the knowledge young people bring is considered valuable to research and planning, the CYD will continue to promote youth-adult partnerships within the 4-H YDP. We will also continue to bring youth voice into future Symposia and showcase youth action research projects in an online forum.

In addition, Center staff are continuing to support ongoing youth-adult partnership efforts, such as working with the Youth In Governance workgroup in all stages of research and dissemination.

We've taken to heart the suggestions and comments regarding the need to increase collaborations within CE and with outside groups, by connecting with groups outside UCCE in planning for the Human Resources conference scheduled for early June, 2007 (see Director's Notes). It is anticipated that the conference will provide an opportunity for learning about youth work taking place outside of UCCE, as well as an opportunity to develop collaborative working relations in the areas of health and wellbeing.

4-H Center for Youth Development

"The 4-H Center for Youth Development fosters collaborations in research and evaluation among UC Cooperative Extension professionals and UC campus-based scientists that deepen our understanding of youth development in the contexts of family and community."

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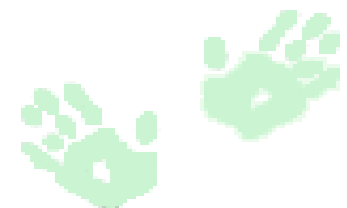
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so well received, we plan to include youth in the June 4 – 5 Symposium.

See you there! Let us hear from you before Winter is over.

*I must say that having grown up in Ohio and gone to a university in Wisconsin, what passes for winter in California is like Spring there.



Project Updates and General Information

Driving Project Update

--by Katherine Heck

The *Teens Making Decisions* project has now surveyed 1,943 high school seniors around California about driver's education and driving behaviors. We are in the process of entering and analyzing the data. This spring, we will present our data to the California Association of Safety Educators, a group of driver's education and training instructors, with recommendations about improving driver's education for California students.

Enrollment Task Force

--by Katherine Heck

Carole MacNeil has gathered a group of interested 4-H staff members to participate in a review of the 4-H enrollment data system. Katherine Heck is participating as an enrollment data user. The task force has met twice and held one brown bag seminar discussing the future needs for a new data system. At the last meeting, the task force reviewed a data system used in 17 other states that could potentially be purchased for use here in California as well.

Civil Rights Project Moves to UCLA

--by Ramona Carlos

The Civil Rights Project, the nation's leading research center on issues of civil rights and racial inequality, will move from Harvard University to UCLA in 2007. Established at Harvard University in 1996 by its current director and co-founder, professor Gary Orfield, *The Civil Rights Project* will be co-directed

by Orfield and professor Patricia Gandara, who has been a professor of education at UC Davis since 1990. Both will be joining the faculty of UCLA. Renamed *The Civil Rights Project/El Proyecto de CRP*, the project will add a stronger focus on issues of critical importance to the West and Southwest, including

immigration and language discrimination. *The Project/El Proyecto* will also focus on California and local policy issues and work actively with non-English language media to reach a broader portion of the public, issuing reports in Spanish as well as English.

California Instructional School Garden Program "Flourishing & Nourishing"

--by Daniel Desmond

Recently the Governor signed the California Instructional School Garden bill (AB 1535) making \$15 million available for school gardens. This program provides an opportunity for local schools to obtain grants of up to \$5000 to promote, create and support California instructional school gardens*. The grants are designed to help children learn to make healthier food choices, participate more successfully in their educational experiences and develop a deeper appreciation of their community. This program also creates a unique opportunity for 4-H youth, volunteers and staff to

partner with local schools to enrich the curriculum. It also offers the possibility for Advisors to consider research that might evaluate the outcomes and impacts of these gardens.

The program is being administered by the California State Department of Education and information and applications will be available at their website www.cde.ca.gov on January 17th. Schools must apply through their school district or through the County Office of Educations. These are non competitive grants, but it is expected that the demand will be significant and schools should plan to

apply early.

Workshops to support these garden efforts will be offered at the Life Lab Garden at UC Santa Cruz on March 10th and at the UC Davis Children's Garden on March 24th. To register for either of these trainings and/or view the training agenda visit the California School Garden Network website at www.csgn.org.

*Access to bare ground should not be viewed as a barrier to garden development. There are many container garden strategies (e.g., The Growing Connection) that will allow schools to begin gardening above the ground.

--Submitted by Daniel Desmond, UCCE Advisor Emeritus, Food & Society Policy Fellow

A Report of the California High School Exit Exam

--by CAES Family Development Specialist Nicki J. King, Ph.D.

Effective with the graduating class of 2006, the state of California joined 22 other states in requiring that high school students pass an exit exam in order to graduate. California's state legislature passed the bill requiring the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in 1999 (SB-2X, 1999) and 2002 (AB 1609, 2002), and the State Board of Education was allowed to defer the requirement (originally slated to be required beginning with the class graduating in 2004) until the class of 2006. It is estimated that by 2008, 70 % of the high school students in the United States will be required to pass an examination (CEP, 2004). States requiring an exit exam are heavily concentrated in the Eastern and Southern United States, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

There are several controversies surrounding the CAHSEE requirement, and this review will touch on four of them: equity concerns, stereotype threat, the potential increase in the dropout rate, and the test's measurement of subject matter mastery. First and perhaps of most concern is the issue of equity. As a result of the CAHSEE requirement, it is estimated that 15% of Latino and 18% of African American seniors did not pass the test

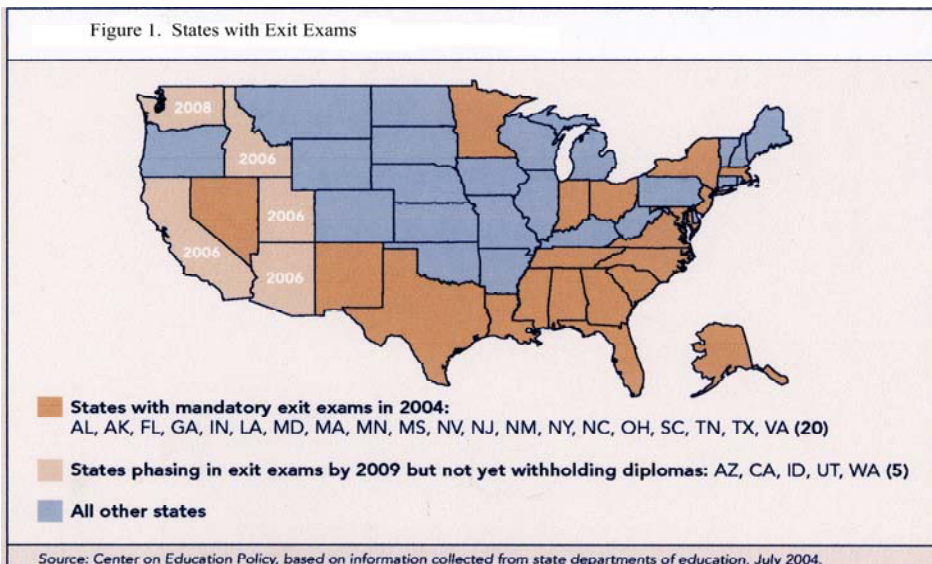
by May 2006, and as a result, were not granted high school diplomas (Wise, et al., 2006). In comparison, only 3% of White and 5% of Asian students did not pass and were denied their diplomas. Most of the African American and Latino students who have not passed the CAHSEE are in predominantly minority schools affected by the *Williams* case, which requires that public schools in California be brought up to minimum standards in staffing, textbooks, and adequate school facilities. There is a great deal of concern over whether the students who are failing the test have received an equal opportunity to pass it because they have attended substandard, overcrowded schools. This concern is underscored by the fact that both African American and Latino students have much higher pass rates when they attend integrated schools than when they attend segregated schools (UCLA/IDEA, 2005).

A second controversy surrounds the issue of test performance by stigmatized minority groups. Psychologist Claude Steele (1998) has demonstrated that African American students perform significantly worse than their non-minority peers when they believe the

test demonstrates something about their academic ability. His results suggest that presenting a challenging test can undermine African American students' performance by making them feel threatened by racial stereotypes. It is likely that a high school exit exam, as the ultimate high-stakes test, might result in significantly lower performance for any racial group with negative stereotypes related to academic performance.

The third controversy surrounds the impact of the exit exam on California's already unacceptably high dropout rates. The reasoning behind this concern is that students who fail the CAHSEE repeatedly may be less likely to remain in school if they believe they will not graduate. According to the California State Department of Education (Wise, 2006), the 4-year dropout rates for California in 2004 were 24% for African American students, 17% for Hispanics and Pacific Islanders, 14% for American Indians, 8% for non-Hispanic Whites, and 6% for Asians. Other estimates of the 2004 dropout rates are much higher: up to 35% for African Americans, 42% for Latinos, and 24% for American Indians (NCES, 2006). The discrepancies can be explained by differences in the criteria for counting "dropouts" and the absence of unique student identifiers that would help in the tracking of students who appear to drop out of one school district and re-enroll in another. According to the CAHSEE Independent Evaluation, dropout rates have fallen somewhat during the past two years, and the authors speculate that the CAHSEE requirement may be motivating some students to remain in school (Wise, 2006). Absent a more accurate method of calculating

Figure 1. States with Exit Exams



dropout statistics, it will be difficult to determine whether the CAHSEE is having any impact on dropout rates.

The fourth, and final (for this paper), area of controversy surrounding the CAHSEE is the extent to which pencil and paper tests actually reflect mastery of subject matter. This argument has been raised most prominently for English learners in the legal challenge to the CAHSEE mounted by *Valenzuela v. O'Connell*¹. While it is true that students with inadequate proficiency in English have the most difficulty with the CAHSEE (only 76% of English Learners in the first cohort passed by May 2006), it is possible that many students are not able to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject matter when faced with a pencil and paper test of any kind. Although some of the students who fail the CAHSEE have a history of difficulties in school, others

have completed their high school course requirements with GPA's of 2.5 or better (King, et.al., 2004). Some of these students have likely mastered the material required by the CAHSEE, but will be denied a high school diploma because they do not perform well on tests. Students are aware of the impact of the exam, and many have expressed anxiety and frustration over the requirement. A significant number of students taking the mathematics portion of the exam indicated that some of the material in the exam was not taught in their classes (UCLA/IDEA, 2005).

What can Cooperative Extension do to improve this situation?

Cooperative Extension's youth development programs can and do help students to develop positively and exercise the skills they learn in school. Research on youth development indicates that out-of-school activities help youth to

develop a positive sense of self-efficacy and may increase academic investment (Larson, 2000, 2001). There is also a strong indication that positive ethnic identity development is correlated with positive outcomes for at-risk youth (Spencer & Swanson, 1991; Spencer, 1995). Out of school programs that encourage positive ethnic identity development and the development of decisionmaking skills would be helpful in this regard. Programs that provide tutoring and homework help should be continued and increased in number, especially in low-income communities. In addition, older youth (9th-12th graders) should be utilized as tutors of younger program participants. Research suggests that cross-age tutoring will do as much or more to help the older youth to reinforce their own mathematics skills as it will help the younger youth to master those skills at an earlier age.

¹ *Valenzuela v. O'Connell* was filed in February 2006, and received an expedited hearing in California Superior Court. After the Superior Court Judge found the CAHSEE violated the equal protection clause of the Constitution and enjoined the state from using the CAHSEE to withhold a diploma, the state appealed to the California Supreme Court. The Supreme Court overturned the earlier ruling and re-instated the CAHSEE, sending the case on to the US Court of Appeals.

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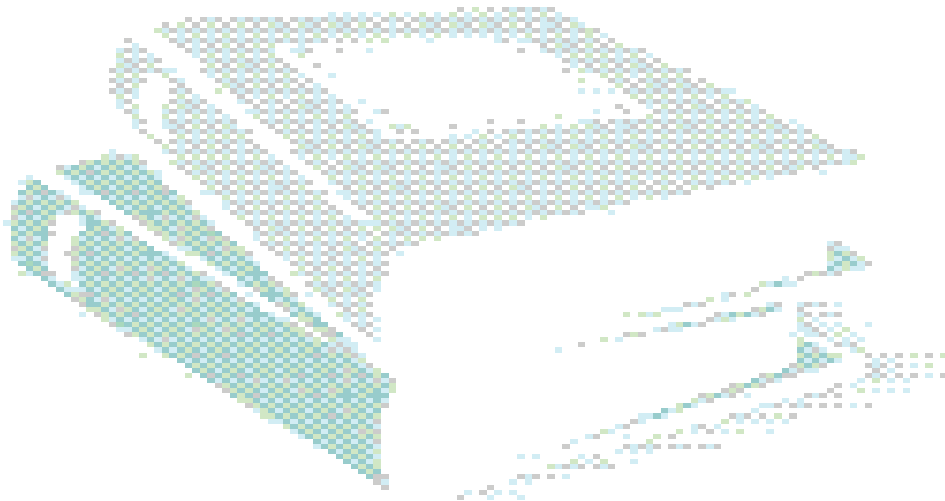
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