

# Centering Equity and Youth Voice in Program Evaluation



## Overview

The Western Educational Equity Assistance Center at WestEd provided technical assistance to the Lompoc Unified School District to evaluate the **Future for Lompoc Youth** program. The purpose of the program is to provide a safe and positive environment for youth in Lompoc Valley to feel empowered in developing their future goals. Students are recruited to participate in the Future program through:



**Referral** from counselors, teachers, or paraeducators



**Word of mouth** from former students



**Self-referral** through seeing the program on Google Classroom

A group of juniors and seniors at two high schools in the Lompoc Unified School District participate in program activities after school including:

- ✓ **Career Readiness Academy** to prepare students for college and career
- ✓ **Customer Service Academy** to learn communication, problem-solving, and customer service skills with guidance from local business leaders
- ✓ **California Freedom Summer Participatory Action Research Project** to collect and use data to make informed decisions about policies in their community, in partnership with UCLA

## Evaluation Approach



**Interviews** with 10 Future leaders, partners, and school staff,



**Focus groups** and interviews with 17 Future students, and a



**Survey** with 16 Future graduates

## What We Heard From Youth

“ I have improved in how to communicate with people. Now I feel like it's easier for me to go up to someone and talk to them.”

– Future Student

### Social and Emotional Benefits

- ✓ Improved **social** and **communication skills**
- ✓ Increased **self-confidence**
- ✓ More than **90%** of survey respondents agreed that Future:
  - helped them grow as a person
  - improved their communication skills
  - increased their confidence in life skills
  - improved their ability to adapt and problem-solve

### College and Academic Benefits

- ✓ Increased exposure to **higher education**
- ✓ Increased **academic motivation**
- ✓ Motivation to attend and **graduate from high school**

### Career Benefits

- ✓ Learned about the **benefits of creating a resume**
- ✓ Participated in **mock interviews with professionals** from local businesses



## Future Graduate Survey Results

**93%** agreed that Future eased their transition from high school to college

**86%** agreed that Future helped them achieve their academic and career/job goals

**93%** agreed that Future increased understanding of workplace expectations

**86%** agreed that Future increased knowledge of job opportunities in Lompoc

## Areas for Improvement

**Meet** more frequently



**Expand** the program to other high schools



Offer the program to freshman and sophomores for **earlier exposure**



“ Instead of being anxious about going to college, I was actually looking forward to it and all the new opportunities I was going to get from it.”

– Future Student