

# POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TOUR



**NEW MEXICO  
CENTER FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**  
BRINGING CHANGE THROUGH NETWORKING & REDESIGN

**The New Mexico Center for School Leadership (NMCSL) hosted a Positive Youth Development (PYD) Tour on October 20, 2016. The Tour was intended to highlight schools in Albuquerque that have implemented PYD practices in order to support young people and improve their educational performance. The Tour is a next step in the current grassroots efforts to help schools become more responsive to the needs of students, families, and communities. This report focuses on PYD as a strategy that enables young people to reach their potential, now, and as adults.**

## **OUTLINE OF THE TOUR**

The schools on the Tour were chosen because they consider students to be assets to be nurtured rather than problems to be solved. When PYD is seen as a comprehensive framework for adolescent development, it is visible in multiple contexts throughout a school. The goal for the Tour was to document PYD practices in seven schools that are dedicated to building their practice in this area. Sixty people participated in the Tour: educators, youth serving community organizations, school board members, and students.

Tours were held at the following schools:

- Two middle schools (South Valley Academy and Hayes)
- Three high schools (Amy Biehl, ACE, and Technology Leadership)
- One school grades 6-12 (Media Arts)
- One school serving grades k-12  
(Native American Community Academy)

While each tour was unique, all had the following components in common:

- Student voice in a panel or other format
- Classroom observations
- Debrief of the Tour experience

Debriefs of the Tour followed the following steps:

1. Observations: “What did you observe today about how this school supports its students and builds positive school culture?”
2. Facilitated discussions to tease out common PYD themes
3. Reaching consensus on the most important skills, knowledge and attitudes that should persist after graduation, which are social, emotional and academic

## FINDINGS

We have used the definition for Positive Youth Development from [Youth.gov](#) to identify three essential elements schools use to implement PYD at a high level. PYD practices must be: **1. Intentional**, **2. Pro-social**, and **3. Successfully Engage Students**. According to Youth.gov, PYD is used “... within communities, schools, organizations, peer groups and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youth’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for youth people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strength.”



**Based on observations at the schools, the following practices were implemented by schools that are implementing PYD at a high level:**

### **1. Intentional** — Specific identifiable support systems that develop social and emotional intelligence of students:

#### **Advisory/Advocacy classes:**

Hayes Middle School meets every morning for 40 minutes in their Advocacy class which is designed to promote a Growth Mindset—the belief by a student that they can succeed and be open to the learning process—rather than seeing their development as fixed and decided. Students eat a family style breakfast together and have a personal wellness check-in with their teacher. Often students have a hands-on team building experience focused on developing interpersonal and language skills.

#### **School-wide morning meetings:**

South Valley Academy Middle School (SVAMS) begins every day with a school-wide morning meeting where students have a chance to connect with an advisor who knows them exceptionally well. SVAMS also uses this time

to triage students who may arrive at school with urgent concerns that must be dealt with in order to ensure that they are ready to learn. The school uses this time to ensure that high levels of rigor are matched by high levels of social and emotional support.

#### **Deliberate plan in place to measure student social and emotional growth:**

Technology Leadership High School uses the Search Institute Developmental Relationship Framework to target specific interventions for students. The interventions are designed to increase the meaningful relationships in a student’s life and TLHS implements these strategies in multiple settings throughout the school. The school measures the growth of each student’s positive relationships and adjusts its practices to meet their needs.



## 2. **Pro-Social** — Positive practices that can create a culture in schools that focuses on benefiting other people and the community at large and positive identity development.

At South Valley Academy Middle School, all incoming sixth grade students are enrolled in the Social Emotional Life and Fitness (SELF) class. Students gain greater self-awareness in the class and they understand their role in the school community. They are responsible for creating meaningful relationships with their peers and adults. In the first weeks of school year, students research their sixth grade identity and they present it to their parents as a guide to their development: “Here’s who I am and what you can expect from me this year.” This helps creating a positive culture that prevents bullying and other anti-social behavior.

### **Inclusiveness toward peers and adults (school as family)**

Support for students is ubiquitous throughout ACE Leadership High School. Social workers and other support staff facilitate school-wide

gatherings (morning meetings) and they are present before, during and after school as they build school culture. The school de-stigmatizes social and emotional support services and the staff is known by their first name to students. Finally, the school fully incorporates all students into projects regardless of learning or language abilities.

### **Pride in school and larger community**

At Technology Leadership High School, students are chiefly responsible for promoting a positive image of the school through service learning, which is focused on the surrounding neighborhood. Increasingly, students and teachers are working with local employers to develop technology focused projects where young people must demonstrate their learning before a panel of industry professionals, which is a great source of pride for the school.



### **3. Engages** — Experiences in and out of school that allow students to develop interpersonal skills and self-worth:

#### **Group learning that builds empathy, humility and collaboration**

ACE Leadership is focused on “Learning by Doing” as a strategy to re-engage students and prepare them for the construction industry. The student’s preparation is focused on serving a client through team work, which is essential for future success in the sector. Ultimately, projects are judged by industry experts and students must demonstrate that they can solve real-life problems.

#### **Placed-based learning in the community that allows for student leadership to emerge, brings out passions, and encourages hard work**

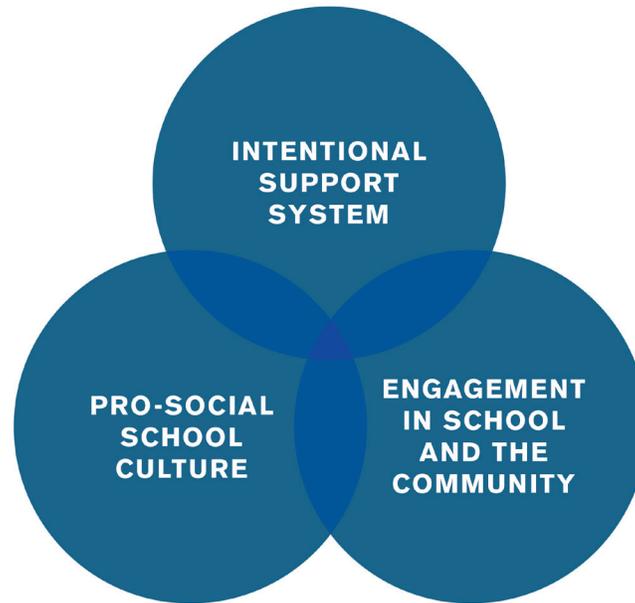
Amy Biehl High School requires that all seniors complete a community based project with a local non-profit or governmental agency. The project is the culmination of the service learning program at the school that begins in the freshman year monthly service opportunities and a Social Action Carnival where students identify and research local

community issues. The service mission of the school is realized by giving young people the support and responsibility to lead a community based project with a sponsoring agency during their Senior year. Ultimately, the students must present their findings to the organization and be evaluated by local experts in order to graduate.

#### **Success in the community that shows students are valued outside of school**

The Media Arts Collaborative Charter School (MACCS) requires that all students create, produce and/or participate in Community Outreach Media Projects. The students and their projects are in high demand and the school fields more requests from the community than they can meet. MACCS chooses the projects that are timely, meaningful and relevant to the community. Students are articulate about their self-worth during their Exhibitions of Learning which include reflection about their growth and confidence along with their performance on the project itself.

## PYD MODEL



## LOCAL WISDOM

Over the past five years there has been increasing attention paid to cultivating community input to improve public schools in Albuquerque. There have been many structured dialogues led by community organizations and Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) where parents, students, employers and community leaders have expressed their specific expectations for the future of education in the city.

Examples include of the outreach efforts include:

- The NMCSL Innovation Tour,
- New Mexico Learning Alliance and the reauthorization of ESSA,
- Mission Graduate and creation of the Graduate Profile for Albuquerque Public Schools (APS),
- The Academic Master Plan developed by APS, and
- The Family Engagement Policy crafted by Families United for Education and APS.

Demand for increased attention to the social and emotional development of students was a constant theme in each of the initiatives listed above. Examples of PYD practices found on the Tour, and listed in this report, should be seen as a next logical step in the change process. In essence, this report attempts to match the expressed local need with locally developed solutions.



## CONCLUSION

Below is a list of skills, knowledge and attitudes that Tour members observed being cultivated by the schools. These attributes are remarkably similar to those that were named in other community based dialogues named in this report. It is our conclusion that there is a base of expertise in the city that can be tapped to grow the PYD practices that will result in higher performance for students who are currently in school. In addition, these skills that are being developed will lead to more successful careers later in life.

### **Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes**

Following the lead of other efforts outlined above, Tour participants were asked to identify the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that that are promoted in the schools that were visited.

**Skills:** Leadership, collaboration, empathy, adaptability, conflict resolution, self-advocacy, problem solving

**Knowledge:** Serving the community, goal setting, self-determination, community empowerment, restorative justice, self-awareness, self-worth, potential careers, applied learning, social justice and how to make a contribution

**Attitudes:** Self-esteem, self-control, positive outlook, friendliness, pride in work, pride in school, hard work, respect, passion, confidence, community focus, self-accountability, authentic to yourself