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## CASP CON 24

CULTIVATING THE SPIRIT OF POSSIBILITY  
Celebrating 75 Years

### Empower LEP Podcast: A Resource for School Psychologists Ready to Explore New Horizons



By Jana Parker, LEP, ABSNP

In the ever-evolving field of school psychology, finding resources that support professional growth and career transitions is crucial. The Empower LEP Podcast was created with this very goal in mind. As school psychologists and Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEPs), we often face unique challenges, whether working within school systems or contemplating a shift to private practice. The podcast is designed to be a trusted companion, offering insights, inspiration, and practical advice tailored to our profession.

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### Middle School: It's Not Recess, Just Fun!



By Dr. Maureen Schroeder,  
LEP, Harriet Eddy Middle  
School, Elk Grove Unified  
School District

Gone are the days when students have a morning, lunch, and afternoon recess once middle school begins. There is no more jungle gym, four-square, tether ball, etc. They only have a 15-minute morning break and a 35-minute lunch period. Some still have access to a blacktop, where they can play basketball and possibly an open field to play soccer or football. But what else? How does one fill their time during lunch after they've eaten a hearty meal? According to a study by the University of Santa Cruz (2018), middle schoolers are still very much interested in play and activity during their breaks. A meta-analysis by Boelen, Smit, Raat,

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## Message from the President

By Melissa Wood, Past-President



Dear Members,

I wanted to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you! Your dedication, compassion, and unwavering commitment to the students and families you serve have made a profound impact throughout this past year. Despite the challenges and uncertainties we faced, your resilience and professionalism have shone brightly, making a difference in countless lives.

I hope this summer provided you with a well-deserved opportunity to rest, rejuvenate, and spend quality time with your loved ones. It's essential to take care of yourselves, both physically and mentally, so that you can return to your vital roles this fall with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

As school psychologists, you play an indispensable role in fostering the mental health and well-being of students, ensuring they receive the necessary support to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Often serving as the first line of defense for students within the school environment, school psychologists are uniquely positioned to make meaningful connections and build rapport. In my own experiences working directly with students, I am continually impressed by their eagerness to connect, and I am reminded of the specialized training we possess to facilitate these vital relationships. Your efforts are deeply appreciated, and the positive impact you have on our communities is truly immeasurable.

Looking ahead, I encourage each of you to continue advocating for our profession and best practices in school psychology. By remaining informed, engaged, and proactive, we can ensure that our voices are heard and the significance of our work is recognized and valued. Our commitment to best practices requires us to continually research, refine, and implement these methods. It is this dedication to excellence that makes school psychologists indispensable in the educational settings we serve. Whether through participating in professional development opportunities, engaging with

policymakers, or collaborating with colleagues, your advocacy is crucial in promoting the growth and recognition of our field.

Fortunately, the California Association of School Psychologists (CASP) offers numerous opportunities for California school psychologists to stay current with best practices and engage in advocacy. [The 75th Annual CASP Convention will be held in Palm Springs from October 15-18](#), featuring an array of professional development sessions, CEU opportunities, and networking events. Our incoming President, Chris Jones, has organized a series of exceptional activities designed to address both the professional and social needs of our members. CASP members can also take advantage of monthly "Couch Chats" on various topics, led by content-specific experts or panels. Keep an eye out for our weekly CASP email blasts for more information. Additionally, the CASP Leadership Team is continuously seeking ways to support you. For further details, please visit our website at [www.casponline.org](http://www.casponline.org).

As I concluded my term as President of the California Association of School Psychologists on June 30th, I wanted to take the opportunity to express my deepest appreciation for your support and collaboration throughout my 2-year term. It has been an absolute honor to serve alongside such dedicated and passionate professionals and to take from those experiences and apply them to my own practice. The new CASP Leadership Team is made up of dedicated and passionate professionals, and I am confident that, together, we will continue to advance the field of school psychology and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve!

Warm regards,

Melissa Wood  
Past-President  
California Association of School Psychologists



## Message from the Executive Director

By Greg Wilson, Interim Executive Director



School psychologists today are facing a range of complex issues as they continue to support students, extended families, and school staff. There is an ever-growing demand for mental health services for students, including anxiety, depression, trauma, and behavioral issues.

School settings are often not only the first point where these issues are noticed in students but frequently the only place a young person can get the care and assistance they need. And of course, state budgeting is paramount to supporting effective systems.

CASP continues to work on your behalf in the state capitol to ensure adequate funding for school psychologists. CASP's advocacy firm, the Ball/Frost group recently reported that Proposition 98 funding was suspended. However, the Legislature adopted agreements acknowledging that the state will make up that funding in future years when state revenues are in a better position.

Schools are also becoming more diverse every year, which requires school psychologists to be culturally competent and able to address the needs of students from various cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Again, CASP has your back and continues to monitor developments in this area including the important Larry P. decision. I hope you will join your peers in Scotts Valley this July to hear attorney Marcy Gutierrez tell us where we stand on the Larry P. case.

But what CASP does for you is not all budgets and case law updates. The Ball/Frost group also advocates on your behalf on legislative and statutory issues. With their guidance, CASP was able to provide testimony on important bills at the Legislature.

Your Board of Directors recently met alongside an extended leadership team comprised of committee chairs a co-chairs in San Diego. That annual planning retreat reviewed the successes of the past year and began to develop the framework for strategic initiatives we will tackle over the coming 12 months.

I am particularly excited about those initiatives as they support a commitment to the value of Data-Driven Decision Making. This emphasis on using data to inform decision associations is not at all new to school psychologists who embrace the value in their student interventions and support services. For CASP, data-based decisions mean we likely will ask more questions and have more surveys. All of that will ensure we have good information to make great decisions.

I also expect you will notice continuing and new opportunities for professional development and training in the next twelve months. We gathered for Summer Experience in Scotts Valley this July. Later in the fall, we will be gathering in Palm Springs for the annual CASP Convention – our 75th year!! In between all that we will have monthly webinars, and monthly couch chats, and continue to partner with the various regional and local affiliates to offer CEU opportunities.

This should be a great year and I am excited to see what comes of it.



## In Memory of Marcia Boden

By [Glenn Schumacher](#)  
(and contributions by Kendall Bare)

It is with both sadness and a sense of celebration that we honor the life and legacy of Marcia Ann Boden, who left us on December 19, 2022, in her hometown of Roseville, California.

Marcia's journey was one of dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to education. A proud Cornhusker, she graduated from the University of Nebraska and continued her academic pursuits at California State University, Sacramento. Her career spanned over forty years as a beloved teacher and school psychologist with the Grant Union High School District, where she touched countless lives with her wisdom and care.

Marcia's influence extended far beyond her local community through her incredible work with the California Association of School Psychologists (CASP). In 1987, she was honored with the association's Outstanding School Psychologist award, a testament to her exceptional contributions. She served on the Legislative Committee and led CASP as President from 1991-1992, showcasing her leadership and dedication. Marcia's outstanding achievements were recognized with the prestigious Sandra Goff Memorial Award in 1999. Her legacy continues to shine through a scholarship in her name, supporting future educators at CSU Sacramento.

Outside her professional life, Marcia was an avid golfer and a devoted volunteer at the Roseville Library. Her enthusiasm for life and learning was contagious, and she brought joy and knowledge to everyone around her.

Marcia's life was a beacon of dedication, positivity, and relentless advocacy for children's education and well-being. Her impact on our community and the field of school psychology is immeasurable. Let's celebrate her life by continuing to embody the values she championed and remembering the joy and inspiration she brought to us all.

To honor Marcia's remarkable legacy and keep her spirit alive, we invite you to join us at our 75th annual convention October 15-18, 2024. This event will be a celebration of possibility and innovation in education, much like the spirit Marcia cultivated throughout her life. Let us come together to learn, share, and continue the work she was so passionate about, ensuring her legacy lives on through our collective efforts.



# Teen Mental Health in the Digital Age: Role of Schools as an Access Point

By Candice T. Stanfield-Wiswell, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>, Jacqlyn L. Yourell, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>, & Jennifer Huberty, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>, Laura M. Tully, Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>



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## Key Takeaway

California has invested in the digital mental health platform Soluna to address young people’s needs through universally accessible and timely access to care. By partnering with school districts, Soluna enhances existing school-based mental health services, offering additional resources to better support students’ mental health and wellbeing.

## Introduction

The growing youth mental health crisis has placed schools in the forefront, burdened by limited resources. Effective digital mental health services offer young people alternative care pathways. These services reduce the pressure on conventional mental health services through the use of early intervention strategies and a range of entry points. Above all, they lighten the load on already overwhelmed school support services. California has made a substantial investment in digital resources for youth mental health, such as funding the Soluna platform to offer free mental health support to all California youth aged 13–25.

## Rising Mental Health Challenges in Young People

According to the [California Health Interview Survey](#), about a third of California adolescents experienced serious psychological distress between 2019 and 2021, with a 20% increase in suicides. Bullying significantly impacts teens’ mental health and academic performance (Fossum et al., 2021). A surge in mass shootings and suicide rates further exacerbates distress among teens (APA, 2018, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic only intensified stress levels, leading to higher rates of anxiety and depression (Jones et al., 2021; Shah et al., 2021).

## Schools and Youth Mental Health Crisis

Schools are on the frontline of the youth mental health crisis (Villarreal, 2018), serving as the primary entry point for young people accessing mental health services (Farmer et al., 2003). Despite the critical role schools play, they are often under-resourced. The National Center for Education Statistics (2023) reported a significant increase in students seeking mental health services in schools since COVID-19 began (69%), yet only 13% of schools have the resources to meet all students’ needs. Despite investments in expanding services, we need additional solutions to address this crisis effectively—recruitment and retention of mental health providers is challenging, especially in remote rural areas. It’s time to look at digital options like Soluna that enhance the existing system and expand access to care. These solutions can provide support and alleviate the burden on our already overstretched school support systems.

## Digital Mental Health for Teens

Digital solutions are highly accessible; harnessing technology for good has the potential to bridge the services gap. Nearly all teens in the U.S. have access to a smartphone (95%) and personal computer (90%; Vogels et al., 2022). Time spent online is a feature of young people’s lives, with most teens online multiple times a day. Although social media has been shown to have a negative impact on mental health, it is also a place where young people find community support and information. Providing a safe, moderated online environment is essential as an antidote to the negative effects of social media (see “Keeping students safe” section below).

Recognizing that digital platforms offer an easily accessible “digital front door” to mental health support, California has invested in technology to address young people’s needs through universally accessible and timely access to care ([CalHOPE](#), n.d.).

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## Empower LEP Podcast

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Reflecting on my journey, I remember the uncertainties and challenges I faced when transitioning from working within school systems to starting my own private practice. Over my career, I've worn many hats—school psychologist, program specialist, adjunct instructor, and more. These roles have given me a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the complexities and rewards of our field.

Before venturing into private practice, I spent 12 fulfilling years as a school psychologist, and following this, I worked for 4 years as a program specialist. These roles were incredibly rewarding and provided me with so many experiences, yet I felt a pull toward the autonomy and potential of private practice. I worked in a clinic using my LEP for almost seven years, alongside working full-time in schools before taking the leap and going out on my own. Starting my own practice was both exhilarating and challenging, a journey filled with learning curves that I hadn't anticipated, and I knew that others could learn from my experiences and the journey of others.

The Empower LEP Podcast was born out of a desire to share the lessons I've learned, the insights I've gained, and the journeys of other professionals with school psychologists, LEPs, and other like-minded professionals who might be considering similar transitions. Each episode features conversations with experts across various fields and professions. As I write this article, I have recorded over 30 episodes with guests including new LEPs like Dr. Amy Merenda, who shared her passion for neurodiversity-affirming practices, LEPs specializing in counseling like Misty Bonta, LEPs supporting school

psychologists across the nation like Jenny Ponzuric, LEPs providing resources and training to the educational and testing psychology field at large like Dr. Liz Angoff, and great minds in our field who provide continuing education in school neuropsychology and more, like Dr. Julie Gettman. Additionally, I have had several guests who specialize in various areas of business development because, as we all know, they did not teach us how to run a business in graduate school. These discussions aim to demystify the process of shifting into private practice, offering practical advice on everything from business development to diagnosis and report writing. I'm so excited about the conversations I have yet to have with future guests and will likely venture into solo episodes that focus on content and business development in the future.

One of the most exciting aspects of the podcast is highlighting the diverse career paths available to educational psychologists. I've had the privilege of interviewing professionals who have taken their expertise in unexpected and inspiring directions—be it test development, social media content creation, or leadership roles in educational programs. These stories are not just informative; they are meant to inspire you to think creatively about your career possibilities. Educational psychologists have so much to offer the world, and my hope is that these conversations will ignite the spark within my listeners and motivate them to follow their hearts, whether that is inside or outside of the educational system.

Continuing education and professional development are vital for our growth and effectiveness as LEPs and

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### CASP Webinars

Whether you need to learn about ERMHS, dyslexia, suicide prevention, or self-care, we have what you need! We are proud to offer CEUs that LEPs need to renew their license. Our webinars also count for NASP CPD credit. When you buy your webinars from CASP, you support YOUR association. Check out our [webinar library](#) today!



## Empower LEP Podcast

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school psychologists. Throughout my career, I have been committed to staying at the forefront of the field, whether through attending workshops, presenting at conferences, or supervising new professionals. The Empower LEP podcast extends this commitment, providing listeners with updates on the latest trends and opportunities for further learning.

Ultimately, the Empower LEP Podcast is about building a supportive community. Transitioning into private practice or exploring new career avenues can sometimes feel isolating. By sharing stories, challenges, and successes, we create a network of encouragement and mutual support.

I invite you to join me on this journey of discovery and empowerment. The [Empower LEP Podcast](#) is available on multiple platforms, making it easy to tune in whenever and wherever you have time. Whether you're commuting, working out, or relaxing at home, I hope that the episodes will inspire and inform you.

Thank you for being a part of this vibrant and dedicated community. Together, let's explore the many possibilities our field has to offer.

Jana Parker, MS, LEP, ABSNP  
Host of the Empower LEP Podcast

### Direct link to podcast:

<https://www.empowerlep.com/podcast>

### Podcast Application Form:

<https://www.empowerlep.com/podcast-guest-application-form>

### YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/@empowerlep/videos>

My websites: <https://www.empowerlep.com>,

<https://www.themindbydesign.com>

My email: [jana@empowerlep.com](mailto:jana@empowerlep.com)

## Middle School: It's Not Recess, Just Fun!

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Braner, & Jansen (2022) indicated that organized activities are shown to have a positive impact on a student's mental health. Research also shows that when adolescents are provided with activities during breaks, they allow their brains to have a break from academics, socialize, and build connections (Evans & Pellegrini, 1997). Can adolescents create their activities and social interactions? Hice-Fromille and London (2022) note in their research the importance of providing structure during lunch breaks for middle school students. This can assist in facilitating social interactions, which can be done through cooperative games and activities.

According to a study by Leff, Power, Costigan, and Manz (2003), most discipline issues happen during lunch, such as bullying, physical altercations, and

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**SAVE!  
THE DATE!**

### Mark Your Calendars for our 75th annual convention!

Be sure to save the date for our 75th annual convention, October 15-18, 2024 in sunny Palm Springs! This special milestone event will be a fantastic chance to come together as a community, share our experiences, and grow professionally.

Keep an eye out for more details about registration. We can't wait to see you there and **celebrate this significant occasion with you!**



## Middle School: It's Not Recess, Just Fun!

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peer conflicts. They noted that having some structure through organized activities can help improve the school climate during these unstructured times (Leff, Power, Costigan, & Manz, 2003). After reviewing Harriet Eddy Middle School's discipline referrals data, my school site, specific to lunch period, I found that fights and peer conflict decreased when there was an organized activity for students to participate in. A local organization visits our site twice a month during both lunch periods. They bring pizza and facilitate a cooperative activity, which they host in our MP room. Some of the activities they host are dodgeball, basketball, and obstacle course games. Those participating in these cooperative games are a diverse group of students, boys and girls. Additionally, students appear to respond well when adults are present and participate and engage during play. Unfortunately, there is limited space and a limited number of students who can participate. The organization has a limited number of staff who facilitate the games and activities; therefore, frequently, students are turned away, particularly those who end up arriving late. These students can meander around the quad and go to the blacktop, football field, or library.

Generally, the male students will either go to the blacktop or the football field, where they will often engage in basketball and football, or just walk around with their peers. Girls have no choices besides the library for some and the quad for the rest. Some students will sit at various picnic tables to socialize. Some remain in the multipurpose room after they've finished their lunch, only to be told to go to the quad or the blacktop. Generally, peer conflicts and fights occur in the quad, sometimes on the field or blacktop, where some groups would just "hang out."

Our aim with this project was to cater to the needs of our middle school students at Harriet Eddy. We offered structured activities during lunchtime to help them take a break from their studies and engage in positive social interactions. This reduced conflicts

between peers and significantly improved the school environment. We selected inclusive and fun games and activities like cornhole, Giant Jenga, dodgeball, double-dutch, Giant Connect Four, and Win Spin to keep the students motivated. To further incentivize participation, we gave students a simple reward in the form of popcorn.

Since being awarded the California School Psychology Foundation mini-grant, Mr. Sapien, our PBIS Tier 1 Coordinator, and I have used the funds to purchase various games and materials. During the initial implementation of our structured lunch activities, Tuesdays and Thursdays were the designated days. Mr. Sapien, with the support of our National Junior Honor Society students and some staff, hosted these games and activities. As the weeks progressed and students began to observe that these lunch activities were here to stay, other students began to volunteer to help set up and facilitate these games as well, notes Mr. Sapien. Moreover, an unexpected turn of events came from those students who had minor infractions volunteering to help set up and break down as an alternative consequence of misbehavior. Students have reported enjoying these lunchtime activities, and Mr. Sapien has found that depending on the type of activity (physical, sport, food, trivia, etc.), it draws a different crowd.

Lunchtime activities soon became a regular expectation of our students and staff, so much so that after returning from our Winter Break, our Leadership teacher and students decided they would host lunch games and activities on Wednesdays and Fridays. Doing so allowed our 7th and 8th graders to engage in games or activities every day except on Mondays. According to Mr. Sapien, 60% of all students' lunches had something going on, and more importantly, school discipline data showed over 30% reduction in fights at lunch for the school year so far. Overall, fights have been reduced by 47%.

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## Middle School: It's Not Recess, Just Fun!

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To put this in perspective, Mr. Sapien shared the following:

For the School Year 2022–2023, there were 94 fights from the start to the end of the school year and 61 total fights from the beginning to the end of February. Of these fights, 38 happened during lunch/break. Half of these fights at lunch happened in the last quarter of the school year. Little to no lunchtime activities were done during the school year 2022–2023.

For the Years 2023–2024, there have been 39 fights, 22 less than last school year at the same time. Of these fights, 18 have happened during lunch. Of these 18, only five fights occurred during lunchtime activity, seven less than last year at the same time. There is a trend of fewer overall physical altercations this year than the previous.

Mr. Sapien also reported some challenges with lunchtime games and activities. The current difficulty with the activities is consistently having staff supervision. It has typically fallen to the PBIS Tier 1 coordinator to handle the lunchtime activities. The PBIS Coordinator has other responsibilities that sometimes conflict with hosting the activities. Administration and Security will take over sometimes by hosting basketball or other sports. Due to staff needing a duty-free lunch, they have yet to assist in running the lunchtime activities. They have been handing out behavior points for positive behavior, which can be redeemed for some lunchtime treats.

Despite these challenges, Mr. Sapien and I hope to build support from staff in other ways. We are collaborating with our Administration to create options for our teachers to engage through adjunct duties. We must also solicit suggestions from our student populations, encouraging them to use their voice and actively facilitate and coordinate these games and activities with and for their peers.



The intent and purpose of this grant was to provide middle school students with opportunities to engage in a variety of structured activities during lunch that will help them take a break from their studies and to be able to build positive interpersonal relationships with their peers. In return, based on school data, the goal was to see a decrease in discipline issues during lunchtime. So far, from the data that Mr. Sapien has gathered, Eddy Middle School discipline issues have decreased between the 2022–2023 and the 2023–2024 school year. Research has shown that positive social interactions help create a school climate that is safe and inviting for students. Although we may no longer call it recess in middle school, middle schoolers still love to play and have fun!

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## Regional Updates

### Region I

By Leslye Charlesworth, Region I Representative



The Sonoma Association of School Psychologists (SCASP) and Region I are excited to share professional development opportunities for the 2024–2025 school year:

- August 16, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Leticia Zadrozny-Zelaya, MA, Ed.S, will present a workshop on organizational tools for school psychologists.
- September 6, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Dr. Samuel Ortiz will present on Best Practice in Evaluation of English Learners: An evidence-based approach for all practitioners.
- December 6, 9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Dr. Ross Greene – Introduction to Collaborative & Practice Solutions (CPS) Model with Dr. Ross Greene [co-sponsored with Santa Clara County Association of School Psychologists (SCCASP) and North Eastern California Association of School Psychologists (NECASP)].
- March 14, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Dr. Ray Christner will lead a workshop on the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in schools.

We are also excited to announce the election winners for the SCASP 2024 – 2025 school year, congratulations to:

1. President-Elect – Edward Vulpe
2. Membership Chair – Emily Jacobsen
3. Secretary – Bethany Deni
4. Co-treasurers – Annalise Puentes & Suzy Merideth

For more information on any upcoming events, please visit <http://www.scasp.org>.

### Region V

By Ashley Schwenn, Region V Representative



Region V serves the needs of the Foothills Association of School Psychologists (FASP), the Greater Long Beach Association of School Psychologists (GLBASP), and the South Bay Association of School Psychologists (SBASP). The executive boards of GLBASP and SBASP most commonly meet via Zoom either during or after the workday. All Region V affiliates continue to use social media and email blasts to communicate with members on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis. At this time, all three organizations are in the process of seeking new affiliate members via social media, word of mouth, and strategic outreach of executive board members. They are also working to increase the number of joint affiliates and CASP membership numbers. GLBASP currently has 25–30 members. SBASP has 13 members. FASP is working to build membership. SBASP will be hosting an upcoming PD session on assessment of students with Limited English Proficiency in the fall of 2024. SBASP just held its end-of-year social in June of 2025 and is also currently working to put together a follow-up series of free virtual “coffee chats” showcasing local school psychologists and private practitioners who have already implemented AI into their current practice. GLBASP is working to clarify its status as a nonprofit association and SBASP is also working to establish itself as a nonprofit association. The most popular PD topics of interest include assessing English Language Learners and students with specific learning disabilities, social justice, and culturally responsive practices, providing mental health services to address challenging behaviors post-COVID,

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## Regional Updates, continued

report writing and results sharing, and how to become an LEP. There is also interest in connecting with local testing companies to provide assessment-focused PD to members. The Region V Representative has started attending affiliate meetings to encourage greater communication and resource sharing within the region. If you or a colleague are looking to join and/or seeking leadership opportunities within the FASP, GLBASP, or SBASP affiliate, please contact Ashley Schwenn who can link you with the leaders of these affiliates!

### Region VII

The San Diego County Association of School Psychologists (SANDCASP) recently held its annual elections, and we are pleased to announce the new SANDCASP Board for 2024-2025. The board members are:



- President: Shawn Dee Hartless (SDUSD)
- Past President: Celeste Garcia (SDCOE)
- President-Elect: Sarah Maloney (SDUSD)
- Secretary: Adrienne Garcia (Learn4Life)
- Treasurer: Vania Knight (The Learning Lens)
- CASP Region VII Representative: Dorothy Guintier (SDUHSD)
- Board Members At Large:
  - Ann Mellon (SDUSD)
  - Antonio Hernandez (Soluna Wellness)
  - Jarrett Clifton (MEUSD)
  - Laura Mueller (PUSD/AlliantIU)
  - Megan Storey-Hallam (Francis Parker School)
  - Melanie Armour (SUHSD)
  - Misty Bonta (Get Psyched LLC)
  - Sarah Llorente (SDUSD)

We celebrated our annual end-of-the-year event by honoring our award winners. This year's recipients were:

- Outstanding School Psychologist:** Kathy Pawlukiewicz
- Ross Zatlun Mentorship Award:** Jarrett Clifton
- Dr. Valere Cook Morales Memorial Scholarship Award:** Robyn Taylor

Please keep an eye out for our upcoming professional development opportunities. The board is diligently working to finalize our workshop schedule. We hope everyone enjoys a restful summer and look forward to seeing you at our next event.

### Region VIII

By Dr. Ivan Alvarez, Region VIII Representative

Dr. Amy Smith, President of the Ventura County Association of School Psychologists (VCASP) shared that upcoming workshops for the 2024-2025 school year include: Neuro-diversity, Introduction to the Test of Dyslexia, Executive Functioning, and Manifest Determination.



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## Regional Updates, continued

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Dr. Ivan Alvarez, Region VIII representative, and Malia Mondragon, Central Coast Association of School Psychologists (CCASP) President shared that they co-hosted bi-monthly Network meetings with SBCSELPA for countywide school psychologists during the 2023-24 school year. CCASP is planning several trainings during the 2024-25 school year (in progress/to be announced).

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### Region IX

By Jennifer Strong, Region IX Representative



Region IX has experienced significant growth over the past year. The board has expanded with many new members, and the community has been revitalized since the challenging times of COVID-19. There's a palpable buzz and a positive energy within the community, with many more school psychologists getting involved. Our spring workshop, held in person at the beginning of May, was a tremendous success! A special thank you goes out to everyone who volunteered and helped ensure the event ran smoothly. We extend our gratitude to Irvine Unified School District for allowing us to use their learning center space.

We are excited to announce the results of our recent elections and are honored to have such wonderful leaders supporting our county. Please join us in warmly welcoming our new board members: President Jenna Wood, Treasurer Jamie Carey, Secretary Ashley Morris, Event Coordinator Libby Kelly, Membership Coordinator Angela Weedn, Webmaster London Carter, Social Media and Community Liaisons Erin Spillane and Sarah Meeks, Chapman University Liaison Lily Nguyen, and Azusa Pacific University Liaison Emma Castro. This is an exciting time for Region IX, marked by positivity and substantial growth. The community is coming together, and we are eager to see what the future holds for our county.

If you are interested in becoming involved with OCASP, please reach out to our Membership Coordinator, Angela Weedn, at [angelaweedn@iusd.org](mailto:angelaweedn@iusd.org) for more information. Don't forget to follow us on social media: our Facebook page, Instagram account at [\\_ocasp\\_](#), and our website at [ocasp.wildapricot.org](http://ocasp.wildapricot.org).

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### Get Involved with CASP - Join a Committee!

Not quite ready to serve on the board, but want to get more involved with CASP? Think about joining a committee! Whether you're interested in recruiting members, advocating for your profession, or organizing educational events, we have a committee for you. You'll meet new people, become part of the inner circle, learn new skills, and be recognized for your contribution to the profession.

## Committee Updates

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### Student Leadership

By Brain Leung, Past Student Leadership Chair

Connecting school psychology students with CASP

The second cohort of Student Board Representatives (SBR), Erin (CSUS), Kyna (Chapman), Michelle (CSUF) completed their tenure this month. They took turns attending board meetings and reporting pertinent issues via the CASP Student Newsletters. The newsletters also included news and events from various school psychology student organizations around the State. Check out resources for school psychology students here: Resources for School Psychologist Students – California Association of School Psychologists ([casonline.org](http://casonline.org)) Great job SBRs for connecting school psychology students with CASP!

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### Membership Committee

By Dorothy Guinter, Membership Committee Co-Chair



The Membership Committee is pleased to announce that CASP continues to thrive with over 2,000 dedicated members. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of you for your on-going support. In our ongoing efforts to highlight the vital work of school psychologists, we are excited to share that a new subcommittee will be formed to advance this project. Additionally, our social media takeovers have been a success, showcasing the incredible dedication and hard work of our school psychologists.

We wish everyone a fantastic and relaxing summer! If you are interested in joining the Membership Committee, please email Emily Bersaglia or Dorothy Guinter. Your involvement would be greatly appreciated.

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### Professional Learning

By Sarah Rodriguez, Professional Learning Co-Chair

Do you ever feel like you still don't know all the things? Or have imposter syndrome? Us too!! One way to counteract that feeling is to engage in professional learning. When we stop attending trainings or talking to our colleagues about various cases, we run the risk of becoming stagnant in our learning and not keeping up with the zeitgeist. So, what learning or collaborating have you done to keep your skills updated and relevant?

CASP, as well as your local affiliates, if you have one close by, offers incredible professional learning opportunities. During the 2023-2024 school year, CASP hosted multiple chances to learn, including in-person and virtual events, webinars, and couch chats. The convention is held every year in person in October. This past year's convention was in Costa Mesa. The Spring Institute is a virtual event held each spring. Summer Experience is happening in Santa Cruz, July 16-19. Couch chats (hour-long, non-recorded opportunities for school psychologists to ask questions and offer support to each other) topics included AI, supervising interns, preschool assessment, and the future of assessment for African American students.

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# Committee Updates, continued

## Professional Learning, continued

The 2024–2025 school year promises more in-depth and relevant offerings, so mark your calendars!!! We are starting the year off with some exceptional learning opportunities! Couch chats are typically the first Fridays of the month. Currently on the calendar for the fall:


- Fri, 8/9 – Learn About the IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access & Liberation) Committee
- Fri, 8/23 – Exclusionary Factors Relating to Impacts of COVID
- Fri, 9/6 – Graduate Student Focused

Other events currently scheduled:

- Fri, 9/13 – Webinar on psychopharmacology
- October 15–18 – Convention – Palm Springs
- April 24–25, 2025 – Spring Institute
- July 8–11, 2025 – Summer Experience

While we try to provide a wide range of learning opportunities and a little something for everyone, please let us know if we are not meeting your needs! We are here for you and want to make sure we give you what you need. Feel free to email me at [srodabler@gmail.com](mailto:srodabler@gmail.com) with your suggestions or if you would like to attend our professional learning committee meetings! We would love to hear from you!!

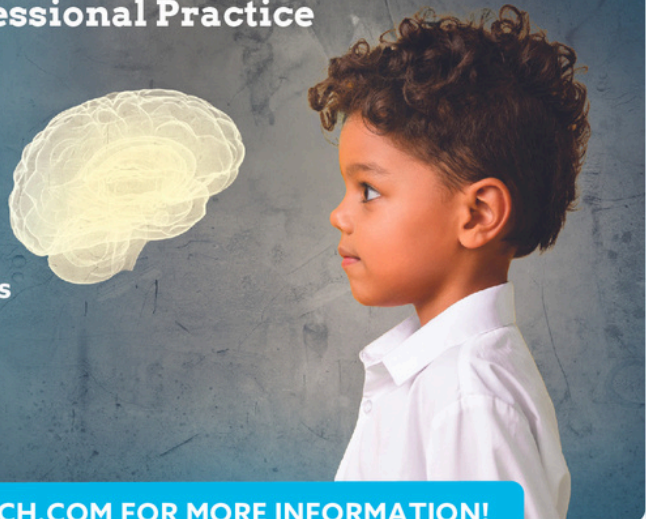
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# Legislative Update

By Laura Wasco and Andrea Ball



*Despite the unprecedented budget deficit, lawmakers craft a budget that spares cuts to education.*

Legislators and the Governor reached an agreement on the state budget for 2024-25 and multiple budget and trailer bills are on their way to the Governor or have been signed into law. The agreement bridges the more than \$40 billion deficit through the use of reserves, fund shifts, delays, deferrals, and reductions. To tap into state reserves, the Governor had to issue a budget emergency proclamation.

For TK-14 education, the budget agreement avoids cuts to our education system through a suspension of the Proposition 98 Guarantee with a recognized obligation to make payments in future years to meet the Guarantee level. Suspension of Proposition 98 required a 2/3 vote of the Legislature and was done in a separate budget trailer bill. As reported in EdSource, this is only the third time in its 36-year history, the Guarantee has been suspended. Education funding was also supported by the use of reserve funds and additional accounting adjustments (aka maneuver).

The agreement for higher education funding -- California State University and the University of California -- includes a planned 5% increase to their base funding levels but legislative intent to defer base increases scheduled for 2026-26 to 2027-28. These higher education systems will also see reductions in their administrative funding in 2026-27.

Information on funding and policy changes of interest are below:

**Cost of living adjustment for TK-14:** The statutory COLA of 1.07% is funded for major education programs, including the Local Control Funding Formula, special education, nutrition, and Community Colleges. The COLA is much lower than in the previous few years and is based on a set federal formula.

**Alternative high school diploma pathways:** Local educational agencies are authorized to offer the alternative diploma pathways to students who were in grade 10 or higher in the 2022-23 school year. (new Education Code section 51225.32)

**Inclusive College:** Establishes the California Center for Inclusive College to be administered by a county office of education working in partnership with its local regional center, its local public postsecondary educational institutions, and the UC Davis MIND Institute. The focus is on inclusive college opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities. (\$2 million appropriation). The responsibilities of the Center are outlined in statute (new Education Code commencing with 66032).

**Youth behavioral health training for employees of local educational agencies:** Adds statutory requirements for governing boards of school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools by January 1, 2026, to adopt policies on referral protocols for addressing pupil behavioral health concerns in grades 7 to 12 inclusive. Requires policies to be developed in consultation with school and community stakeholders and school-linked behavioral health professionals. Also requires that by July 1, 2029, a local educational agency (school district, county office of education, charter school) certify to the California Department of Education that 100 percent of certificated employees and 40 percent of classified staff who have direct contact with pupils in grades 7 to 12 have received youth behavioral health training that meets specified requirements. The proposal includes legislative intent to provide \$35 million for allocation to local educational agencies for these purposes. (new Education Code 49428.2)

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# Legislative Update

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## Golden State Teacher Grant program

**modifications:** While the existing appropriation level for this program was not reduced, the budget agreement limits the California Student Aid Commission, the administering agency, to award no more than \$50 million for the 2024-25 award cycle. The revised language also creates a means test for the program awards for the 2024-25 fiscal year, including a cap of \$10,000 per award, and a reduction in the priority school service requirement to two out of four years. Eliminates intern credential programs from eligibility. It also requires the Student Aid Commission to establish up to three application periods each year. Note that CASP and coalition partners successfully advocated when this grant program was established to include eligibility for individuals pursuing PPS credentials.

**Instructional Continuity Plans:** Requires that beginning July 1, 2025, school safety plans include an instructional continuity plan to establish communication with pupils and their families and provide instruction to pupils when in-person instruction is disrupted due to an emergency. Specifies elements, including procedures for pupil engagement within 5 days, and remote or in-person instruction within 10 days of an emergency. (See amendments to Education Code 33282).

**What's next?** The Legislature takes Summer Recess beginning the afternoon of July 3 and returns on August 5 for the remaining four weeks of the session. The first half of August is for Appropriations Committees, the fiscal gatekeepers on policy bills. The last two weeks of the month are reserved for floor sessions. Final recess begins August 31st and the Governor has through September to sign and veto bills. Then, it is election season and a new Legislature convenes January 2025 the 2025-26 session.

# CASP Corporate Members



# Teen Mental Health in the Digital Age: Role of Schools as an Access Point

*continued from page 5*

As part of the [Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative](#), the California Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS) partnered with [Kooth](#) to launch [Soluna](#), a digital mental health platform providing free mental health support to all California youth aged 13–25. Soluna delivers support via three pathways: self-guided resources, a moderated peer support community, and 1-to-1 sessions with coaches.

Soluna’s design caters to young people and is available in both English and Spanish, with telecoaching services offered in 17 other Medi-Cal threshold languages. Offering services in Spanish as well as English is critical, particularly in California. Soluna enables individuals that have historically faced systemic and historical barriers to mental healthcare to receive the support they need when they need it.

## Benefits of Using Soluna in Schools

Digital mental health platforms, like Soluna, aid adolescents in reducing stress, anxiety, and decrease rates of suicide (Stevens et al., 2022). Soluna offers teens a place to connect with a moderated, safe and respectful peer-community, receive on-demand 1-on-1 coaching with a trained mental health practitioner via text-chat or tele-coaching (soon through video coaching), set goals individually and/or collaboratively with a practitioner, connect with and regulate their emotions through journaling, and explore diverse resources and wellbeing tools.

The majority of young people (74.6%) benefit from online peer-community posts for connection, empathy, and skill-building (Banwell et al., 2022). Soluna’s online peer community is an emotionally safe environment that enables engagement with friendly peer-to-peer support. A mental health professional moderates the posts to ensure teen safety.

## What Soluna’s Users Say

Soluna facilitates meaningful connections and support between peers. Many users have expressed

unprompted gratitude for Soluna and the supportive community it fosters.

One activity on Soluna involves a reflection prompt where users recall a small action they took during a challenging mental health moment. A user responded, “Possibly downloading this app,” highlighting its significance in their mental health journey.

Users frequently share their appreciation for Soluna, with comments like, “I am thankful apps like this exist,” and “Anyone else feel like this app is just too good to be true? ... I never expected an actual helpful mental health app to exist!”

Gratitude for peer support is also common, as users find comfort in shared experiences and offer each other encouragement: “Going through something similar with my mom right now and let me tell you there’s hope! ... Try to stay positive!” Another user shared, “I totally get that, I’ve been going through a rough time recently, too. You are doing a great job though, reaching out is the first step to helping yourself!”

The peer community provides a sense of belonging, as one user noted, “Thank you guys for your replies! It helped me a lot to know others can relate... like I’m not fully alone.” Regular users appreciate the ongoing support, saying, “I come back to this app whenever I’m feeling a bit down,” and “I enjoy looking around at different forums. It makes me feel less alone in my struggles!”

These testimonials illustrate the powerful impact of Soluna in creating a supportive, empathetic community for young people navigating mental health challenges.

## Keeping Students Safe Online & Using Technology for Good

As psychologists, we are understandably cautious

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# Teen Mental Health in the Digital Age: Role of Schools as an Access Point

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about recommending digital tools to our students. The digital world, especially social media, is fraught with dangers—bullying, trolls, inappropriate content, and misinformation. Yet, social media also offers connectedness, community, and access to a wealth of knowledge. Soluna takes the good that social media offers and leaves the bad: the resources and tools offer evidence-based and trusted information and the peer community forum is pre-moderated. Before going live, a moderator evaluates every post in the forum under strict community guidelines to identify risk indicators and prompt safeguarding intervention, and prevent inappropriate content, misinformation, or accidental revealing of personal information. All users are anonymous and unable to message each other directly, preventing any inappropriate relationships. This moderation creates a safe and trusted community for users to support each other and share their lived experiences without fear of bullying or judgment. Coaches receive comprehensive training that covers best clinical practices and evidence-based interventions, including modules on safeguarding, ethical practices, and the use of gold-standard techniques such as Trauma Informed Care and Motivational Interviewing. Coaching sessions are goal-focused, allowing young individuals to have control over their mental health journey and aiding them in building the life they want to lead. Soluna is the antidote to social media and offers a safe online space for young people to reap the benefits that technology can provide.

## **Expanding the Continuum of Care**

Soluna enhances the spectrum of mental health care solutions by offering a prevention and early intervention approach. Its purpose is to empower young people early in their mental wellness journey, equipping them with essential skills to navigate challenges effectively. If additional support is required, the Soluna Care Navigation team

collaborates with individuals to ensure they receive the services they need, preventing them from getting lost in the complexities of the mental health care system. This includes navigating traditional healthcare services as well as connecting with agencies focused on addressing social determinants of health (e.g., food access, transportation, financial resources, and more). Care navigation supports young people by helping with the practical steps that are often barriers for individuals to access services independently. Soluna's Care Navigation team provides an end-to-end service, including submitting referrals, scheduling appointments on behalf of the Service User, conducting warm handoffs with relevant providers and agencies, and post-appointment follow ups to ensure Service Users have received the assistance that they need.

Schools often serve as the frontline where mental health concerns among young people first emerge. Soluna partners with school districts to offer its services to all students for free, seamlessly integrating with existing school-based services, providing additional resources to students. This collaboration between schools and Soluna fosters a supportive environment that prioritizes the mental health and wellbeing of every student.

## **Conclusion**

Schools play a pivotal role in providing access to mental healthcare services for students. By integrating innovative digital tools like Soluna, schools can enhance their mental health support systems and better address the needs of their students. We encourage school psychologists to consider adopting Soluna to help students establish connections with life-changing mental health services, empowering them to thrive in the digital age.

Soluna is a free service funded by the California government and available to all 13–25 year olds in

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# Teen Mental Health in the Digital Age: Role of Schools as an Access Point

*continued from page 18*

California. Recommendations from trusted sources like school psychologists can increase awareness and access. School psychologists interested in learning more about Soluna should email [california@kooth.com](mailto:california@kooth.com) for more information.

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CASP Today welcomes articles relevant to practicing school psychologists in an effort to promote evidence-based practices and to close the research to practice gap. All articles submitted for publication must be complete, including graphics and/or photos, and be received on or before the announced deadline to be published. All references should follow an APA format and only well-organized, final draft articles will be considered. Criteria for selection are as follows:

- **Timeliness:** Issues are published 4 times yearly and deadlines are published on the CASP website.
- **Relevance:** Topics related to current events, legislation, or new evidence-based practices in school psychology will be given preference. Articles submitted on other areas of interest will be saved for future issues.
- **Specific value to CASP membership:** CASP is committed to providing quality service to our membership base. Surveys are distributed to members on an annual basis to determine topics of interest and those results will be considered when planning CASP Today issue contents.
- **Writing must be clear and concise.** Writing clearly means choosing words deliberately, constructing sentences carefully, and using grammar properly. Concise writing means using the fewest words possible to convey an idea clearly. Follow a logical outline and avoid redundancy.
- **Writing should be formal rather than informal.** Use a tone that is appropriate for communicating with professional colleagues—other researchers and practitioners—who share an interest in the topic.
- Use references and citations throughout the paper following APA format.
- Avoid biased language. Be sensitive to labels,

words, or descriptions that may be offensive or have negative connotations.

- Define technical terms that may be unfamiliar to the reader.

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- Spring 2024: March 22, 2024
- Summer 2024: June 28th, 2024
- Fall 2024: September 6, 2024
- Winter 2025: December 15, 2024

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