

**SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY RE-IMAGINED
PROPOSAL FOR RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION
FOSTER ALUMNI & YOUTH COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (FAYCES)**

San Diego County and Child Welfare Services have an extraordinary opportunity to positively impact the lives and futures of our San Diego youth and young adults impacted by the foster care system. To maximize this opportunity and fulfill our collective commitment to youth-centered solutions in all cases, the most important stakeholders, our current and former foster youth, must be prioritized and be at the core of every decision for San Pasqual Academy (SPA) going forward.

The recommendations presented in this proposal are created by the lived experiences of members of the Foster Alumni and Youth Community Empowerment Subcommittee (FAYCES), who have navigated Child Welfare Services (CWS), many who have resided at SPA during their time in foster care, and all who have made the transition from foster care into adulthood. To create an environment with the highest potential for the greatest positive impact in the lives of all foster youth at SPA, we believe it is imperative that the following essential recommendations are given full consideration and adopted in some form or fashion.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Establish a permanent foster youth and alumni advisory board as part of the SPA blueprint, embedding lived experience experts as partners in leadership, decision making, implementation, and assessment of SPA policy and practice.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Ensure that all youth populations being considered to attend SPA have a meaningful opportunity to contribute their knowledge and expertise in focus groups and interviews as essential data to determine if and how the SPA campus might be an effective fit to meet their needs. Youth populations include, but are not limited to, 1) current youth in foster care 2) youth at risk of entering foster care 3) unaccompanied minors and 4) youth interacting with the juvenile justice system.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Prioritize an essential cultural shift at SPA, transforming from a regimented system-centric model of students “supervised” by staff, to embracing a family and community-led model of children “raised” by caregivers who consistently meet the individual needs of the youth.

This shift would include each house on the SPA campus to operating independently, with each home led by a Resource Family or dedicated House Parents who address the unique needs of their children by having autonomy over the daily functions and activities of their home.

For this critical cultural shift to be effective, the investment of resources, skills development, and support must be provided to the caregivers as well as the youth. Staff roles will transition from student supervision to actively supporting Resource Family Parents or House Parents in meeting the needs of the young people in their home. In addition, each young person will be connected to a Lived Experience Coach, who provides relevant insight and assistance to youth in navigating foster care and preparing for adulthood.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Implement a zero-tolerance policy for any misconduct that violates or endangers the mental, physical, and emotional safety and well-being of youth. A primary aspect of SPA is the value, respect, and prioritization of youth safety and well-being. In addition, a third-party organization should conduct investigations of significant misconduct on campus with appropriate consequences and safety measures put into effect.

**SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY RE-IMAGINED
PROPOSAL FOR RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION
FOSTER ALUMNI & YOUTH COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (FAYCES)**

Provide an Ombudsman for all youth, with the opportunity to safely disclose any misconduct experienced or observed on campus. This resource will provide youth with a trusted mechanism and protocol to share their concerns to a neutral individual who does not hold any influence or authority over their placement at SPA, their daily living, or the quality of care they receive.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Conduct regular and outcomes-based assessments of the quality of education provided at SPA, to be completed by youth and alumni. Current youth and alumni are the experts on the impact their SPA education has had on their lives during and after foster care. They have the critical insights necessary to make accurate assessments that can confirm or improve educational experiences that meet the needs of SPA students.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Honor the School of Origin law by recommending that all entities at SPA commit to allowing and supporting the rights of each student to choose the school that aligns with their educational goals, interests, and needs. This youth-centered approach will empower young people to choose their path to success without fearing resources and services will be withheld during their time at SPA.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Cultivate each youth's path to success at SPA by expanding services to provide both education and career pathways for students, including the integration of trades and certificate training. For this model to align with the youth-centered approach, aptitude assessments should be integrated into the SPA blueprint. Assessments will give each student the autonomy to identify their own interests and have assessment results guide the development of an individualized success plan to fully explore their interests.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Make Independent Living Skills (ILS) foundational to the resources and services supporting youth development and success, during and after SPA. Collaborations with community-based organizations that demonstrate evidence-based outcomes will be identified to offer ILS at SPA. These organizations must provide practical and individualized self-sufficiency services for youth and young adults and verify their approach is youth-centered and leads to positive impact results.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Recognize mental wellness as a basic need for every youth at SPA, whether living in the group home or in a foster home, by expanding access to quality mental health services on campus. Caregivers must also be offered meaningful access to effective mental health resources, thereby making health, wellness, and healing a shared value within the SPA community.

For organization(s) to be considered for providing mental health services at SPA, they must verify, through evidence-based outcomes, that their services and approach are both trauma informed and have significant grounding in practices to mitigate the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACES.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Identify measurable youth-centered outcomes in collaboration with youth and alumni (potentially the Youth & Alumni Advisory Board) that address education, self-sufficiency, well-being, and personal power. A quarterly assessment process be implemented to measure youth satisfaction and the quality of care they receive.

**SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY RE-IMAGINED
PROPOSAL FOR RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION
FOSTER ALUMNI & YOUTH COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SUBCOMMITTEE (FAYCES)**

Critical resources that also need be assessed and influenced by both youth and alumni are: Food Quality, Outing and Experiential Opportunities, Extracurricular Activities, Functions of the Campus, and Staff Evaluations.

CONCLUSION

We have an extraordinary opportunity to positively impact the lives and futures of our San Diego youth and young adults impacted by the foster care system. As a first example, establishing the future direction and operation of San Pasqual Academy (SPA) through a process that embraces a youth-centered commitment that places current and former foster youth at the forefront of all decisions, policies, and practices create a new, transformative paradigm. The recommendations above are driven by the lived experiences of FAYCES members, who possess the critical lived experience, insights and collaborative mindset needed to advance both San Pasqual Academy and Child Welfare Services in general.