

SAN PABLO BEACON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

E.M. Downer Elementary School

2023-24 School Profile

Lead Agency: Bay Area Community Resources (BACR)

48 Students referred through CARE

579 Youth benefited from the SPBCSI

9 Youth in SPBCSI programs

Health & Wellness



The Beacon Director worked closely with school staff and coordinated the CARE team with new service providers. They held biweekly meetings and continued spearheading CARE team coordination. They helped triage new referrals and relied on their robust systems to support staff in providing direct service to students.

Family Engagement



The Beacon Director organized various activities to welcome families. They hosted monthly parent chats with administration to encourage caregiver participation on campus. They also coordinated events, such as a family game night, to foster a collaborative and fun environment.

School Culture & Climate

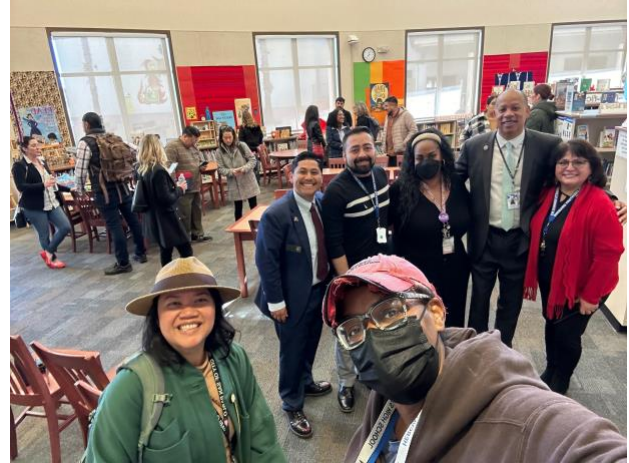


The Beacon Director led several events to promote a positive school culture and climate. They collaborated with the Culture and Climate team to re-design new PBIS initiatives and worked closely with the Climate Coach, a new role at the site. In 2024-25, the Director will focus on implementing a new PBIS system to help encourage better school spirit, pride, and appropriate student conduct.



City Investments

Each San Pablo school worked with a lead agency. The City granted each lead agency staffing and program funding to support the overall implementation of the San Pablo Beacon Community Schools Initiative at that school site.



Staffing

Beacon Director

The Beacon Director provided leadership and implementation of the San Pablo Beacon Community Schools strategy at E.M. Downer.

1

Full-time position

Grant Strategy: Coordination of Community Schools
Agency: Bay Area Community Resources (BACR)

Program

YLD Dragons¹

The YLD Dragon ambassadors supported the planning and implementation of schoolwide activities and events.

9

Grant Strategy: Youth Development & Leadership
Agency: Bay Area Community Resources (BACR)

*"I like how by us just participating in this club we help our school and plan fun things for our school." —
E.M. Downer student²*

¹ The YLD Dragons program did not complete enough youth surveys to be reported.

² Youth quotes are modified in length and for clarity.

Community Schools Coordination

For the 2023-24 school year, San Pablo schools focused on implementing the San Pablo Beacon Community Schools Initiative priorities focused on health and wellness, family engagement, and school culture and climate. In this section, we summarize findings drawn from interviews with the school's Principal, Beacon Director, and lead agency supervisor as well as documents provided by the City of San Pablo.

At E.M. Downer, students, family, and staff experienced challenges due to staff transitions and the changes of the Principal and School Community Outreach Worker (SCOW) at the beginning of the school year. The previous SCOW left for a planned retirement and the Principal left for a new professional opportunity. Because of these transitions, the school quickly hired a new SCOW to fill the role, however the school will lose this position at the end of the school year due to District budget cuts. Despite these challenges, the new SCOW and Beacon Director worked closely during the school year to coordinate schoolwide and District initiatives. For example, E.M. Downer welcomed several new school partners, such as a Playworks coach, to support unstructured yard time and behavior management with restorative practices.



Health and Wellness

"[The Beacon Director] is part of our CARE team, so she is the person in charge of CARE. So for us, whenever there is a referral for a student, whether they are having academic difficulties or even if it's behavioral or just emotional, the teachers will submit a CARE team form...she runs the CARE team, which is biweekly with the rest of the partners, plus our psychologist and resource specialist." —

Principal

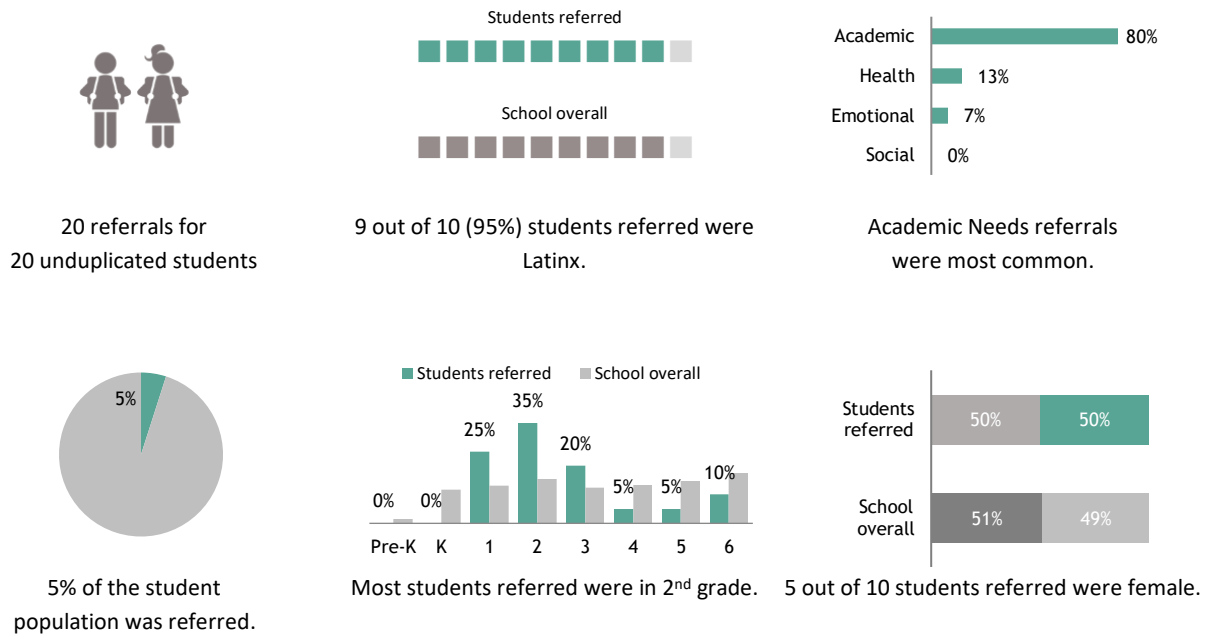
The Beacon Director met biweekly with the Crisis Assessment and Referral Evaluation (CARE) team to connect students to appropriate resources offered by local service providers. They worked closely with the school psychologist, counselor, and therapist to ensure that students' needs were prioritized and supported through a consistent referral process. This year, the school was able to offer a full time Medi-Cal therapist on campus. During CARE team meetings, the Beacon Director facilitated conversations to 1) identify impactful practices and strategies that benefit students and 2) brainstorm ways to address team member transitions and 3) prepare for potential attendance challenges the current and following school year. For the first time, the CARE team coordination also included representation from key



community partners, like Studio 5.0. These partners joined the biweekly CARE meetings and helped implement a district-assigned new PBIS system and co-lead culture and climate meetings.

The Beacon Director also coordinated and managed robust community partnerships that delivered services on campus. They oversaw the partners’ onboarding, supervised on-site staff, and ensured that all engagements aligned with E.M. Downer’s focus on health and wellness. In addition, they co-led attendance campaigns to encourage students to have regular school attendance. They also hosted a pizza party for the classrooms that had the most improved attendance and put a medal outside the classroom’s door.

Figure 4: CARE referrals



Sources: Cityspan Crisis Assessment and Referral Evaluation (CARE) data, August 2024; CDE, DataQuest 2023-24 Enrollment Data, accessed August 2024.



Family Engagement

“The Beacon Director is definitely spearheading to have our community engagement also be focused on our African American parent groups, which is one of our subgroups that we don't quite get a lot of participation in. She's making that a priority to make sure she is, whether it's surveying, asking students, providing little things here and there to really giving them the space.” — Principal

The Beacon Director focused on community engagement and families by hosting monthly parent chats and coordinating the African American family group. During the monthly parent chats, parents were welcomed on campus to gather information about school events and talk about academic or non-academic goals for students. The Beacon Director improved family involvement during the school year through their event coordination and community outreach. They also hosted a Family Game Night event where families came on campus to play games like Jenga and Monopoly to help build community.



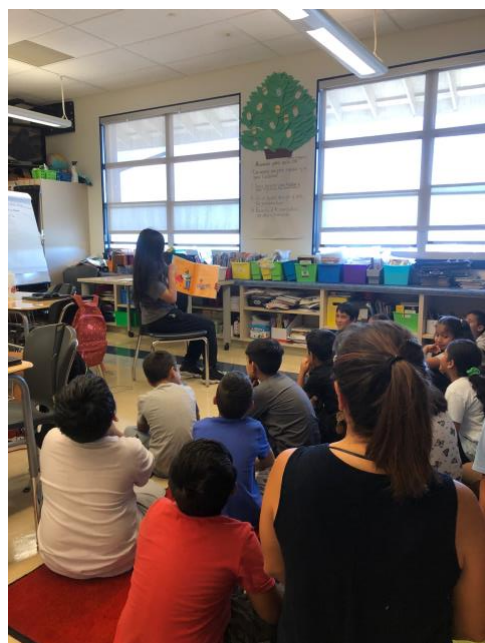
The Beacon Director, with the support of the SCOW, coordinated a variety of giveaways sponsored by the City of San Pablo, which included clothing, backpacks, gift cards, and Christmas gifts. Families and students thoroughly appreciated these items.



School Culture and Climate

“A lot of the conversation and work that we’ve been doing in culture and climate, to help really get our PBIS back on track, and then we come back next year, we’ll get back to doing our assemblies, that model student expectations and highlighting them every week.”

— Beacon Director



The Beacon Director’s efforts to listen to the needs and interests of all community school members helped them deliver activities that created a welcoming environment. They continued to organize events that celebrated the diverse student population. They held a read-in that introduced students to African American literature and poetry.

The Beacon Director worked closely with a newly appointed District role, a Climate Coach. E.M. Downer was one of the few schools that received this new role. The Climate Coach supported re-designing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems and setting schoolwide expectations in collaboration with school leadership and partners. During the next school year 2024-2025 the Culture and Climate Committee plans to fully implement a new PBIS plan to support positive student interactions. The new plan includes

opening a student school store, where students can use “Downer Bucks” to purchase items to reward students with good scholarly behavior.

Lessons Learned

At the close of the interviews, the Principal and Beacon Director reflected on their experiences from the past year.

- “Being the new principal after the standing principal who was here for five years, I wanted to minimally change anything...the biggest thing is just really analyzing the supports that our students are obtaining. I hope we focus on next year the parent outreach and their parent engagement portion. I think this year it wasn't as robust as it was, and I know we're still, again, it is still with COVID is around, we're still post COVID, so our parents are still not quite fully back yet.”– Principal
- “Since I've been in this role, this is probably the most involved that I've been in as far as really doing campaigns. We've always highlighted attendance, but now I can honestly say we're doing campaigns around it. I feel like that's a win.” – Beacon Director

Plans for Next Year

The Principal and Beacon Director also took time to share their plans for the coming school year.

- Maintain and build relationships between the school and the community.
- Continue strengthening and creating PBIS systems that support all members of the school community.



“So I think that's really one of the bigger pieces is really with my Beacon Director working with her, working with the City to see how we're creating these things for next year. Definitely I think for me, highlighting would be, I know one of the things that they talked about was definitely increasing our SEL and really the services that we're providing our students.” – Principal