



California Association of Directors of Activities

Greetings from the California Association of Directors of Activities,

We know in these trying times we are all worried about the impact of the virtual world on our students. This impact could be a loss of social interactions with peers, a sense of being part of something bigger and a student's feeling of being all alone. Activities directors are essential in filling the role of creating a positive school culture by making connections and building relationships with students and staff.

The great challenge to education is always engaging students and connecting them to the campus. Today, with virtual learning, we are seeing a vast increase of students who are disconnecting from school. We can all see the immediate consequences as these students stop attending their academic classes. Perhaps they turn on the computer, but do not turn on their camera, or they do not engage in classroom discussions. The single most important job of the school activities director is to connect students to school and their peers. Leadership programs create positive social interaction even in the virtual world and reduce dropout rates, giving students a platform for social interaction with their peers.

A Gallup poll published in 2020 ("[Resilient Wellbeing in a Chaotic Education World](#)," October 2020), showing schools with higher student engagement demonstrate significantly lower incidents of negative student behavior compared to schools with lower student engagement.

- 75.8% fewer student suspensions
- 91.4% fewer student expulsions
- 29.4% fewer student trancies
- 76.5% student dropouts

According to the recent Gallup poll:

The current state of education is in a reactionary mode like never before. As recently as [November 2020], 44% of U.S. public school teachers said they did not know what their school's teaching and the learning situation would be this fall.

Three colliding pandemics -- the COVID-19 crisis, an economic recession and escalating racial tensions -- have created a perfect storm for not only the wellbeing of students, but also that of the leaders and teachers accountable for their progress.

Where does this leave our education leaders in the near and longer term? Leaders need to build engaging and thriving schools in this age of crisis. Student leaders are the key to developing social-emotional support to all stakeholders on school campuses.



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How can your district help and benefit from a strong activities and leadership program? We know involvement in school activities increases student attendance which positively impacts school funding. Keeping activities directors employed on your campuses is a simple matter of dollars and makes perfect sense. Social-emotional learning is a critical component of LCAP and the California School Accountability Report Card. Activities directors, along with their leadership program, provide programs to create forums where students can express themselves and share their interests with mentoring adults.

As we encounter budget cuts it is important to keep in mind the value of co-curricular activities keeping students engaged on school campuses. The most recent reporting from *Ed Week* is from 2019, in which the average district funding in California is \$12,143 annually; **if activities can save just 7 students from dropping out or leaving the district it will more than offset the cost of an activities director's salary** - activities directors are worth keeping!

Respectfully,

CADA State Board of Directors