



Santa Cruz County

Birthplace of Arizona's History

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Summer Happenings in Santa Cruz County

The Santa Cruz County School Superintendent's Office and its partners were able to use ESSER III funding from the Arizona Department of Education to cosponsor a diverse and intense series of summer camps and programs for the County's children and youth. The activities launched the *Invest in Our Youth Project* which represents a comprehensive initiative for our children and youth that addresses the considerable loss of learning and the social and emotional stress placed on our children and youth caused by the COVID Pandemic.

Over 500 Santa Cruz County students in grades K-12 participated in the fifteen Summer Camps. Some camps targeted youth in need of social emotional learning supports. Other camps used robotics, fitness, the sciences, cybersecurity, and/or the arts in project-based programs. Plus, we were able to offer programs to our youth related to college and career planning (e.g. admissions, scholarships), career exploration through internships and leadership and entrepreneurship projects.

Students from elementary and middle school experienced ESSER III funded La Linea's Art Fest which featured projects that involved recycled materials, papier-mâché, painting, sculpture, and more. Elementary students also had the opportunity to create their own theater plays in the camp titled "Act Your Hat"; in this camp students' characters were based on paper hats that they learned to make from scratch.



La Linea's
Art Fest



Act Your
Hat Camp

School and community partners supported the camps with promotion and recruitment, use of facilities, providing breakfast, lunch, and snacks, and volunteering their time to mentor and provide services.

Students who participated in the Santa Cruz County Arts for Learning Camps had a fun summer exploring many inspiring visual and performing artforms at the 1904 Courthouse, La Linea Art Studio, and the Santa Cruz Center.

The Morley Mural Project brought another vibrant mural to downtown Nogales. High School students painted a large mural that depicts a collage of Nogales history from the De Anza expedition to Morley Avenue commerce.

The Downtown Documentary brought high school students, local artists and their downtown murals together to create documentary short films on the local mural scene. Each student was assigned a mural and local artists were interviewed and filmed. Students learned how to use professional cameras and recording



Morley Mural Project

equipment and learned the editing process for their videos that will be shared at the Oasis Cinema and the local media platform We Love Nogales.

Along with the exciting art camps, the local mining company South32 was able to provide STEM camps for our Santa Cruz County youth. There were two sessions of grades K-2 Robo Story, three sessions of grades 3-5 Coding Story, and one session of grades 6-8 Robo Master. The STEM camps introduced young children to the world of technology and important skills like coding. Each weekly camp session, instructed by Zigma Consulting, ended with a robotic soccer game or sumo wrestling competition.

The Superintendent's Office applied, and was awarded AZ OnTrack summer camp funding from the Office of the Governor and implemented a two week, 30 hour STEAM camp called The Universe Within for students in grades 2-8. Teachers implemented a curriculum created by the Mat Bevel Company that engaged students in developing superhero characters who solve social and environmental problems in a unique world of their own design. Students learn basic sciences, the principles of matter, and Newton's Laws of Motion while exercising their creativity.

With the support of the Arizona Department of Education's ESSER III Funding, the **Promoting Healthy Students Initiative (PHSI)** was able to develop, create and implement a new camp this summer. **YEP! (Youth Empowerment Program)** took place at the Santa Cruz Center from July 18-22 and in Patagonia the week before. Thirty-five students participated in **YEP** break-out sessions. A wide variety of topics were presented by counselors from our local agencies including Coping Skills, Mindfulness, Nutrition, Yoga and Gratitude amongst others. The **YEP!** camps incorporated active engagement, the arts, and hands-on activities.

Beginning on June 20th through July 8th, the ESSER III Invest in our Youth Project hosted a Biking Camp attended by 78 students of all ages. The camp involved initially training youth leaders who then worked with the younger camp participants. Students learned to care for and

ride with safety in mind. They also learned how to navigate their bicycles through obstacle courses and ramps. Students received a bike kit and learned how to problem solve and fix common issues with their bicycles. In addition to the safe biking skills, the curriculum focused on social emotional skills, teamwork, and healthy relationships.

Finally, the **CCREO (College and Career Readiness Educational Opportunities) Gear Up** program piloted the *Gear Up 2 Work* internship project for high school students. Fifteen (15) local businesses provided internships for 45 of our youth using a digital project-based work experience platform. In the coming school year, Gear Up will team with the ESSER funded **Invest in Our Youth** project where juniors and seniors across the county can seek internship



CAB Panel

opportunities on their high school campus and earn valuable experience and soft skill knowledge that looks admirable on an employment or college application.

Invest in Our Youth and **CCREO Gear Up** also partnered to offer camps on the college admissions process during a week-long college admissions bootcamp; opened their eyes to the Cybersecurity profession, and taught leadership and entrepreneurship skills.



Our students visiting the University of Arizona

Santa Cruz County School Superintendent Alfredo I. Velasquez summarized it best. “It has been a phenomenal summer with all the camps providing opportunities for students to pursue different avenues of learning while tapping into their curiosity and talents. “ And the camps and learning opportunities would not have been possible without funding from ESSER III and the support of our partners including South32, Zigma Consulting, La Linea Studio, We Love Nogales, Mariposa Community Health Center, local businesses , the Youth Enrichment Center in Patagonia, the Boys and Girls Club of Nogales, and the City of Nogales Recreational Center.