



CASE STUDY BRIEF

Since 2013, the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) has annually designated 21st Century Learning Exemplars based upon exceptional implementation of the [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#).

Each year, P21 has highlighted a cohort of early learning centers, K–12 schools, school districts, and beyond school programs in the U.S. as 21st Century Learning Exemplars. Now that P21 is a network of Battelle for Kids, we are leading together in celebrating the current year of 21st Century Learning Exemplars.

As part of celebrating these awardees, Battelle for Kids and its P21 network provide ways for their stories and impactful practices to be shared with others. This case study brief and those for the other awardees provide powerful insights to guide other school districts, schools, and programs so that every child can experience the best of 21st century learning experiences.



Santiago Charter Middle School Orange, CA

With a strong sense of ownership and pride, the Santiago Charter Middle School community comes together to provide a warm, collaborative learning environment where students are enabled and encouraged to explore pathways that suit their unique interests and needs.

Grades Served: 7–8

Enrollment: 969 Students

Founded in 1995

[Website](#)

- One of sixteen schools statewide receiving the 2019 Schools to Watch designation through the California Department of Education
- Recipient of the Civic Learning Award of Distinction, co-sponsored by the Chief Justice and State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Santiago Charter Middle School

Orange, CA

Student Agency

Implemented as a foundational linchpin of Santiago Charter Middle School, the school's elective wheel serves as the precursory program to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway courses and certification strands offered at the feeder high school and nearby community college. With strong vertical articulation between El Modeno High School and the seven feeder elementary schools, the school embraces exploratory coursework in popular offerings such as industrial arts (wood shop), home economics, film, public speaking, and classical guitar ensemble. With 13 elective offerings, students have a wide breadth of topics to pursue their interests and discover industries and technical acumen that build confidence inside and outside the classroom.

Students at Santiago garner a sense of purpose and direction in a culture that promotes choice and an active role in the decision-making process. This is evidenced by numerous student-incepted projects and leadership of school-wide initiatives and programs. An example includes the weekly "Lunch on the Lawns" that strengthens relationships and increases interactions between members of the Santiago student community.

The distributed leadership among teaching and administrative staff reflects this strong sense of agency. With low teacher turnover and impressive service terms, instructional staff have ample opportunities to advocate for additional training, engage in collaborative planning, and take on leadership roles.

Digital Student-Led Conference

From its earliest days, Santiago has had a capstone student-led conference. To increase digital literacy, Santiago shifted towards an electronic culminating conference that showcases student highlights from their tenure at the school. In the first trimester of grade 7, students create their electronic conference portfolio and are mentored by their grade 8 "buddy." They support their buddy by helping them practice their presentations.

Students include selected works from all content areas in their digital portfolio on a weekly basis. As an exit activity, students participate in a rotation of career day and present on their portfolios to family members, teachers, school administrators, and student peers. Assessed with a 21st century rubric modified for Santiago's student population, students publicly showcase the skills and expertise they acquired by selecting their top three to five pieces of work, explaining the process they used to develop and execute the pieces, and their significance to their academic and personal growth.



Kindness Week Challenge

Santiago students participated in a Kindness Week Challenge in fall of 2017. Receiving a daily challenge in their morning advisory period, students completed more than 3,000 acts of kindness over the course of five days. Students who completed all five kindness challenges had opportunity to wear their favorite sports jersey and join “Team Kindness.”

A kindness chain wraps the interior of the Santiago Library Media Center as a reminder of the school ethos of kindness, tolerance, and respect for others.

Santiago also co-sponsored the inaugural Champions for Kindness event, part of a larger Orange County district-wide initiative. Champions for Kindness is a coalition of anti-bullying and cybersecurity organizations and professionals who are dedicated to creating a safer, more tolerant K-12 learning environment. The event was attended by more than 200 parents and 200 students. They addressed real-world examples and concrete steps related to topics such as gaining confidence and resiliency when faced with setbacks or supporting character growth in children.



2019 21ST CENTURY LEARNING EXEMPLARS

Each of the following earned this year’s award for its outstanding practices in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge for success in college, career, and life:

Early Learning

The Goddard School Located in Broadview Heights (Broadview, OH)

The Goddard School Located in Simpsonville (Simpsonville, SC)

K-12 Schools

Canyon Crest Elementary School (Fontana, CA)

Elon Elementary School (Elon, NC)

EVSC New Tech Institute (Evansville, IN)

Henry Ford Academy: Alameda School for Art + Design (San Antonio, TX)

Kairos Public School Vacaville Academy (Vacaville, CA)

Kensington Elementary School (Waxhaw, NC)

Moreno Valley High School (Moreno Valley, CA)

Saint Ambrose School (Brunswick, OH)

Santiago Charter Middle School (Orange, CA)

Valley View High School (Moreno Valley, CA)

Vineyard STEM Magnet (Ontario, CA)

Vista Heights Middle School (Moreno Valley, CA)

Wolf Springs Elementary School (Overland Park, KS)

Districts

Lennox School District (Lennox, CA)

Vicksburg Warren School District (Vicksburg, MS)

Beyond School Programs

Camp Champions (Marble Falls, TX)

[Learn more](#) about the 21st Century Learning Exemplars at: bfk.me/p21 [ExemplarProgram](#)