



A Lot of Helping Hands *Entire school community pitching in for college readiness*



Sixta Becerra with her son, 8th-grader Javier

In her role as Family and College Resource Center (FRC) Director at CCPA, Abby Friedman has toured many schools. She recalls a recent visit to a high school's college center where she asked about parent involvement in the school's college-prep work. Her question was met with a blank stare. "I was shocked," she recalls. "At CCPA, our families are founders of the school and are integrated into everything we do."

In fact, at CCPA family and college go hand in hand – and room in room. This idea is built right into the name of our dual-purpose center – the Family and College Resource Center – and echoed in the guiding vision posted on the room's wall: *family support services, college access for all, parent leadership*. "These are the pillars of what we do," says Friedman, "and they are all intertwined."

Family connection to college-going plays out in a range of ways at CCPA. When staff decided to extend the school's Laney College concurrent enrollment program to 10th-graders, it was family outreach coordinators – including Maria Robles and Deanita Lewis – who set the wheels in motion by calling

parents to explain what this opportunity could mean for their 10th-grade children.

While the list of resources in the Center is long – college application help, scholarship support, SAT and ACT workshops, and more – Friedman says it's sometimes the intangibles that set the Center's work apart. "It's often the small, informal conversations you have over time that add up to ultimately make the impact," she says. "You really start to see the power of building long-term relationships with both students and parents."

One example involves 12th-grader Antonio, whose Summer Search trip we chronicled in a 2010 *Communicator* edition. His mother Beatrice, says Friedman, "has been a regular at our meetings and workshops for many years and is one of the founding parents of the school." Along the way, FRC staff have spoken informally with both Antonio and his mother about the "emotional challenges" of him being away from home – first in Summer

Search and now, come next fall, off at college. As the November 30 deadline for UC and CSU applications approached last month, Antonio found himself procrastinating. "We were able to sit down with both him and his mom and say, 'We understand some of the internal struggles you're going through,'" recalls Friedman.

In the end, Antonio produced a strong personal statement and applied to four CSU and four UC schools. "It was a tough process, but I'm glad I accomplished it," he reflects. "I revised my personal statement several times with the help of different people like Abby and my advisor Laura. Through the years I've had so many people helping me – a lot of helping hands. I know that whatever I do next fall, my mom will be proud of me."

"The FRC has a lot of resources to support parents and help us get involved in the school," says Sixta Becerra, a long-time parent volunteer in the FRC and elsewhere on campus. "By being involved in the school and the FRC, I have learned how important it is for parents to motivate our kids to go to college."

Becerra's three children are all at CCPA: senior Jorge, 8th-grader Javier, and 6th-grader Jennifer. A testament to the comprehensive nature of the Center, Becerra connects with FRC staff as well as Jorge's teachers to make sure he is on track as he approaches graduation. She's also there for other students, a point of pride for her and other parents in the FRC. "Yeah, that's my mom!" says Jorge. "A lot of students like my mom, the way she is. I'm doing well because of her, because she's always there for me."

Like Antonio, Jorge recently applied to college. "He had some ups and downs academically," reflects his mother, "but I always had faith in him and knew he could pull through it and graduate. For the first generation of CCPA seniors to be graduating this spring... Just talking about it, I'm getting excited!"

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**- Sixta Becerra
Parent Volunteer**

CCPA 9th-Graders BUILDing Business Skills

When 9th-graders Carlos and Juliana use the term “SWOT” (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats) early in the interview for this *Communicator* article, it is clear their business savvy belies their young age. When they threw out “COGS” a minute later, this reporter was officially lost.

As they patiently explained, COGS is “cost of goods sold.” These terms – and more importantly, their use in the real world – are becoming second nature to 9th-graders in CCPA’s BUILD program (www.build.org) a skill-building and college-going effort new on campus this year. The kids recently put the business buzzwords to use in their first big BUILD project: a candy-selling competition against other schools. With a start-up cost of \$30, the CCPA team turned a \$150 profit and beat out the rest of the schools.

“Our team had problems communicating in the beginning,” reflects Carlos, “but during the candy sale we were able to work together and talk to each other. When you work together, everything’s better.”

“BUILD has taught us we need to sacrifice some things to work as a team,” says Juliana. “We’ve had to learn how to be patient and listen to everyone’s ideas.”

A big piece of the four-year program involves mentors from the wider community teaming up with the students to help them create a start-up business. “My team’s idea is to make a service for people who don’t have time to



9th-graders Juliana and Carlos at a recent BUILD workshop

babysit children or clean their houses,” says Juliana. “We’ll also provide tutoring services for their kids.” Subsequent years will see the kids developing these business ideas with their mentors, even earning microloans to get them going.

The 9th-graders understand the value these tools will have down the line. “We’re learning teamwork, which we can use in college,” says Carlos, “and SWOT is a good thing to learn. It’s really helpful to know these different strategies in case we want to start our own

business after we finish college.”

“They’re really learning how to work hard,” says Sarah Moore, Carlos and Juliana’s Biology teacher and CCPA’s BUILD liaison. “In winning the first competition, they’re seeing the value and the payoff. It’s been amazing to see how they’re progressing while also staying on top of their regular classes. This kind of juggling is setting them up well for college and the working world.”

For longer versions of these articles, and more photos, visit www.oaklandschools.blogspot.com.

SUPPORT CCPA!

The BUILD program has connected CCPA with dedicated mentors from a range of business backgrounds including sales, marketing, social work, and computer engineering.

But we need more! As Carlos says, “The more help, the better.”

If you are interested in becoming a business mentor for a group of our 9th-graders, please contact Sarah Moore at smgr614@gmail.com.

With roughly \$200,000 in budget cuts this year, we also seek financial support.

Your tax-deductible contribution can help us keep essential college-prep programs running at a high level. To donate, visit www.coliseumcollegeprep.org/donate.html or send a check to “OSF/CCPA,” P.O. Box 20238, Oakland, CA 94620. Thank you!



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