

CADA NEWSLETTER

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2026



READY. SET. GO.

Discover the CADA Roadmap designed to help Activities Directors build stronger school culture, develop student leaders, amplify student voice, and create campuses where every student belongs.

Read more on Pages 4–7



CONVENTION SPOTLIGHT

Creative ideas from the CADA Convention, including Kerry Sherer's popular balloon décor session, practical event-planning tips, and innovative strategies you can bring back to your campus.

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HUMANS OF CADA

Meet Alden Esping, one of CADA's most influential leaders, whose lifelong dedication to student leadership continues to inspire educators across California.

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LEADERSHIP RESOURCE

Discover practical leadership lessons on cultivating gratitude, building stronger relationships, and creating a positive campus culture through simple, meaningful daily practices.

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CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF ACTIVITIES

Empowering student leaders. Strengthening school communities.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A NEW YEAR OF IMPACT, CONNECTION, AND INCLUSION



MELISSA EDSALL

CADA President 2026–2027

As another school year begins, I am reminded of the incredible influence that student leaders, Activities Directors, and leadership teachers have on our campuses every single day. While the school year often starts with calendars to build, events to plan, and countless details to manage, at the heart of our work is something much more important: people.

Each day, we have the opportunity to create experiences where students feel seen, valued, connected, and included. We help students discover their voices, develop confidence, build relationships, and find a place where they belong.

This spring, the CADA Board had the opportunity to visit San Quentin Rehabilitation Center during our board meeting. Throughout the visit, we heard stories that reinforced an important lesson: **Every person wants to belong.** We learned about the transformative power of inclusion, connection, and positive relationships. We saw firsthand how environments that foster dignity, support, and opportunity can profoundly impact people's lives.

As educators and student leadership advisors, that lesson resonates deeply with the work we do on our campuses. Every student who walks through our doors deserves to feel that they are part of the school community. Whether through activities, leadership programs, clubs, recognition efforts, or school traditions, we have the unique ability to create spaces where all students can find connection and purpose. Inclusion is not simply a goal—it is a responsibility and one of the most powerful tools we have to positively shape campus culture.

As we begin this year, I encourage each of us to reflect on how we can continue creating campuses where every student feels welcomed, represented, and valued. The small actions we take each day often become the moments students remember for years to come.

CADA is excited to support you throughout the year with a variety of professional development and student leadership opportunities. From our regional one-day advisor and student conferences to our annual CADA Convention in Palm Springs this February, there will be countless opportunities to learn, connect, and grow alongside colleagues from across California. We also look forward to welcoming student leaders to the California Association of Student Leaders (CASL) Conference in Santa Clara this April, where students will have the chance to develop their leadership skills, collaborate with peers, and return to their campuses inspired to make a difference.

Thank you for the passion, commitment, and energy you bring to your students and school communities. The work you do matters. Even on the days that feel long, challenging, or exhausting, please remember that you are making a difference. You are helping students find belonging. You are creating opportunities for growth. You are building positive campus cultures that change lives.

It is truly an honor to serve as your CADA President. Thank you for all you do for the students of California. I wish you a wonderful school year filled with meaningful connections, memorable experiences, and continued success.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mel Edsall".

THE CADA ROADMAP

A CLEAR VISION FOR CLIMATE, CULTURE, & OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS

BY PAUL CHYLINSKI - CADA PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

Improving school climate and culture is not accidental; it is intentional.

The CADA Roadmap provides a strategic, practical framework for Activities Directors and administrators who want more than just events on a calendar. It offers a systems approach to creating campuses where students feel connected, valued, and empowered.

And for schools striving to earn the CASL Outstanding Leadership Program Award, this Roadmap is more than guidance; it is the blueprint.

Ready. Set. Go.

Like any meaningful journey, school transformation begins with clarity.

Ready means ensuring the right people are behind the wheel: a committed administrator and a dedicated Activities Director aligned in vision and purpose.

Set means establishing your baseline. What does your campus climate look like right now? What data tells your story? Attendance rates, GPA trends, discipline data, climate surveys, Safe Schools results, and student voice metrics provide the measurable starting point.

Go means implementing intentional, standards-aligned practices to elevate student leadership and strengthen campus culture.

”

If you don't know where you started, you won't know how far you've traveled.

”

And the most powerful part? The Roadmap does not exist separately from the six strands of CADA Leadership Standards; it brings them to life.



1) TRAIN STUDENT LEADERS

Standards Alignment: Government | Personal & Social Development | Communication
Strong campuses begin with trained leaders. Leadership cannot be accidental. Retreats, workshops, skill development, and structured mentorship ensure student government members and campus leaders understand both their influence and their responsibility. When leaders are trained intentionally, campuses see:

- Stronger representation
- More confident communication
- Increased accountability
- Healthier collaboration

“We don't rise to the level of our expectations; we fall to the level of our training.”

Training student leaders is foundational to earning Outstanding Leadership Program recognition; it demonstrates intentional leadership development rather than event management.

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2) PROVIDE STUDENT VOICE

Standards Alignment: *Civic & Service Learning | Government | Communication*

Student voice creates ownership. When students are invited into meaningful decision-making, campus culture shifts from “them and us” to “we.” Advisory councils, student surveys, collaborative planning meetings, and structured forums for input build democratic leadership structures while strengthening communication skills.

“When students help shape the culture, they protect it.” Schools recognized by CASL demonstrate authentic student voice, not symbolic participation.



3) UNITE YOUR CAMPUS THROUGH COMMON EXPERIENCES

Standards Alignment: *Communication | Personal & Social Development*

All-school experiences create shared language and shared identity. Rallies, awareness campaigns, motivational speakers, and campus-wide initiatives unify diverse student populations under common values and experiences.

These moments build belonging and break down silos between grade levels, programs, and subgroups.

“Unity doesn’t happen by chance, it happens by design.”



4) CREATE PRIDE & SPIRIT

Standards Alignment: *Personal & Social Development | Business & Finance | Communication*

Tradition builds belonging. Spirit weeks, homecoming, themed events, and campus branding initiatives cultivate pride and identity.

Behind the scenes, these programs also teach:

- Budget management
- Vendor coordination
- Marketing strategy
- Responsible financial decision-making

Outstanding Leadership Programs show fiscal responsibility alongside spirit and engagement.



5) PROMOTE ACHIEVEMENT

Standards Alignment: *Personal & Social Development | Business & Finance*

Recognition systems reinforce the behaviors we want more of. Attendance incentives, academic awards, character recognition programs, and growth-based celebrations communicate what matters on campus.

When schools strategically allocate resources to recognition systems, they strengthen both climate and fiscal accountability. “What gets recognized gets repeated.”



6) OFFER POSITIVE SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Standards Alignment: *Personal & Social Development*

Education extends beyond the classroom. Dances, rallies, noon-time activities, Friday Night Live-style programs, and safe social events provide healthy alternatives to high-risk behaviors.

These structured opportunities foster:

- Emotional development
- Relationship-building
- Campus connection

Schools earning statewide recognition demonstrate consistent, inclusive social programming.



7) ENCOURAGE A CULTURE OF SERVICE

Standards Alignment: *Civic & Service Learning | Personal & Social Development*

Service builds empathy and purpose. Community outreach, philanthropic initiatives, and campus service campaigns strengthen student self-esteem while reinforcing civic responsibility.

A culture of service produces graduates who continue to give long after they leave high school.

“There is no better way to build self-worth than by serving someone else.”



8) CONCENTRATE ON CHARACTER EDUCATION

Standards Alignment: *Personal & Social Development | Civic & Service Learning*

Character education is not a separate program, it is embedded in strong leadership culture. Reflection opportunities, collaborative learning, debate, social skills training, and moral action all contribute to integrity-based leadership. Schools recognized as Outstanding Leadership Programs demonstrate intentional character development across their activities structures.



9) COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Standards Alignment: *Communication | Technology & Digital Citizenship*

Clear communication fuels positive culture. Administrators must provide platforms for Activities Directors to report and collaborate, while student leaders must understand marketing, branding, digital citizenship, and message consistency. In today's schools, climate is shaped as much online as it is in hallways.

"Culture travels at the speed of communication."



10) HONOR DIVERSITY

Standards Alignment: *Personal & Social Development | Civic & Service Learning | Technology & Digital Citizenship*

Diversity strengthens community. Celebrating cultural backgrounds, abilities, interests, and identities fosters empathy and inclusion. Activity programs create opportunities for dialogue, awareness campaigns, inclusive programming, and digital respect. Outstanding Leadership Programs demonstrate that diversity is not an event; it is a value.



11) CREATE CONNECTIONS

Standards Alignment: *Personal & Social Development | Communication | Civic & Service Learning*

Connection is the protective factor.

Students who feel connected to their school demonstrate:

- Higher grades
- Improved attendance
- Fewer discipline incidents
- Reduced high-risk behaviors

Activities programs are uniquely positioned to create entry points for every student, through clubs, leadership, service, spirit, and social engagement.

"Connection changes everything."

THE ROADMAP & THE OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AWARD

The CADA/CASL Outstanding Leadership Program Award is not earned by accident. It is awarded to schools that:

- Train leaders intentionally
- Provide authentic student voice
- Promote service and civic engagement
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility
- Foster inclusive, connected campus culture
- Align programming to the six strands of the CADA Leadership Standards

The CADA Roadmap provides a clear vision for a great school, and a measurable path toward excellence.

**This is not simply about activities.
It is about leadership systems.
It is about culture by design.
It is about Ready. Set. Go.**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES DIRECTORS STATEWIDE

As you evaluate your own program, consider:

1. Who is behind the wheel on your campus? Are administration and activities aligned in vision?
2. What data tells your climate story right now? Do you have a measurable baseline?
3. Are your student leaders trained intentionally, or learning through trial and error?
4. How does student voice shape real decisions on your campus?
5. Where does service show up in your leadership program?
6. How are you teaching digital citizenship through your communication practices?
7. Is diversity celebrated as a value, or only during specific events?
8. Can every student on your campus name one way they are connected?
9. If a CASL committee visited your campus tomorrow, could you demonstrate alignment to all six strands of the CADA Leadership Standards?
10. What is your next intentional step on the Roadmap?

2027 CADA CONVENTION

WELCOME TO THE LEADERSHIP KITCHEN!



KARA JOHNSON
CADA President 2027-2028

Each CADA Convention has its own personality; however, the things that make the convention special never really change. It's the people, the conversations, the ideas we take home, and the feeling of being surrounded by others who understand the work we do.

This February, we'll bring all of that to Palm Springs for the first time since 1969 as we gather for The Leadership Kitchen: CADA's Recipe for Success. A new location gives us the chance to try a few new things, but you can still expect the same meaningful workshops, inspiring speakers, great connections, and CADA fun that have made past conventions so successful.

This year, we're getting started earlier on Wednesday. We'll offer two optional extended learning sessions from 9:00 a.m. to noon. Scott Backovich will lead one session, and Dusty Nevatt will present an ASB Fiscal session. These are great opportunities for anyone who wants to arrive early and spend some extra time digging into a specific topic.

For those not attending an extended learning session, our regular workshop schedule will begin at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday. We hope the earlier start gives you even more opportunities to learn, connect, and make the most of your time at Convention. We're also adding a new workshop called "Navigating the Convention." Although geared toward first-time attendees, we highly recommend that any "newbies" take advantage of the first look at our new Palm Springs location! We want everyone to feel comfortable, know what to expect, and have a plan for getting the most out of the convention from the very beginning.

One of the things I am most excited about is our Recipe Card Wall. We invite all attendees to bring a tried-and-true recipe from home or a "recipe for success" from your activities program. It might be a favorite family dish, a successful rally idea, a campus tradition, your favorite holiday dessert, a fundraiser, a leadership lesson, or an activity your students love.

Throughout the convention, participants will have time to visit the wall, read what others have shared, and take pictures of recipes they would like to try. CADA members have always been generous about sharing ideas, and this gives us one more way to learn from each other.

Of course, no CADA Convention would be complete without great keynote speakers, and I'm thrilled about this year's lineup. We'll hear from my dear friend The "Amazing" Tei Street, newcomer-to-CADA Phil Januszewski, and renowned author Brad Montague. Each of them brings something different, and I know they will make us laugh, help us reflect, and remind us why the work we do with students matters.

Our theme, Prep. Cook. Serve., reflects so much of what activities directors and student leadership advisors do every day. We prepare our students, cook up programs and experiences, and serve our schools and communities. Convention gives us the chance to step away from the daily rush, gather new ideas, and return home recharged and inspired.

We'll finish our time together with the Friday Night Dinner & Dance. There is no required dress code, so please come in whatever makes you feel comfortable. You are welcome to dress casually, dress up for the evening, wear cocktail or formal attire, or choose anything in between.

For those who enjoy getting into the convention theme, we would love to see a culinary-inspired outfit or accessory. You can have a little fun with The Leadership Kitchen, go all out, or skip the theme completely. The most important thing is that you join us for a final evening of good food, music, laughter, and time with friends.

There will be some new ingredients in this year's convention, but the heart of the experience will remain the same. Whether this is your first CADA Convention or one of many, I hope you'll leave Palm Springs with practical ideas, new connections, renewed energy, and a reminder that you are part of an incredible CADA family. I welcome you to Palm Springs this February. I hope you'll join us in The Leadership Kitchen as we create another memorable CADA Convention together. See you in Palm Springs!

Kara Johnson
CADA President-Elect

THE BENEFITS OF TRAINING

STUDENT LEADERS, ACTIVITIES DIRECTORS, AND THE ONGOING NEED TO LEARN

BY PAUL CHYLINSKI - CADA PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

- 1. Why should we train our student leaders?**
- 2. Why should that training be ongoing?**
- 3. Why does this also apply to our Activities Directors?**

Across California, student leadership programs are already beginning to prepare for the next school year long before the first bell rings in August. Many advisors send students to the California Association of Directors of Activities Summer Leadership Camps, bring professional leadership trainers and vendors onto campus, organize district retreats, or create their own workshops and summer leadership academies. Increasingly, schools are realizing that leadership training is not optional; it is essential.

Why should we train our student leaders?

The role of a student leader today is far greater than decorating hallways or planning spirit days. Student leaders help shape school culture, oversee budgets, organize events, communicate with diverse student populations, lead service learning projects, and represent the values of their schools and communities. According to the 2024 FCMAT Associated Student Body Accounting Manual, schools are expected to properly train students not only in leadership skills and event planning, but also in budgeting, financial procedures, accountability, and ethical decision-making.

So why should Activities Directors invest time in training student leaders before and during the school year? Because leadership is not natural. It is learned.

When students receive meaningful training before the year begins, they enter campus with confidence, direction, and purpose. Instead of spending the first semester reacting to problems, they begin the year prepared to lead. Summer workshops and retreats help students understand expectations, develop communication skills, practice teamwork, and build relationships with one another before the stress of the school year arrives. They learn how to run meetings, organize events, solve problems, manage conflict, and think beyond themselves.

More importantly, they begin to understand that leadership is service.

Training also allows Activities Directors to establish systems and standards early. Students can be taught proper financial procedures, fundraising guidelines, event planning structures, risk management, inclusivity, and campus traditions before mistakes occur. Advisors who invest in early training often spend less time “putting out fires” later in the year because expectations have already been established.

The benefits to students are significant.

Students who receive leadership training tend to develop stronger communication skills, increased confidence, better organizational habits, and a greater sense of responsibility. They learn how to collaborate with peers and adults, speak in front of groups, adapt to challenges, and lead with empathy.

These are life skills that extend far beyond high school. Leadership programs often become training grounds for future teachers, business leaders, coaches, community organizers, and public servants.

The school benefits as well.

Well-trained student leaders help create stronger school culture and climate. Events become more purposeful and organized. Communication improves. School spirit becomes more inclusive. Service projects become more impactful. Students often feel more connected to campus when leadership teams are prepared and intentional in their work. A trained leadership group can help transform a school from simply functioning into truly belonging.

Communities benefit too.

When students are trained in civic engagement, service learning, budgeting, communication, and ethical leadership, they become active contributors to their communities. They learn how to organize food drives, support local causes, advocate for others, and engage in meaningful service. Communities gain young leaders who understand collaboration, accountability, and compassion.

Perhaps most importantly, leadership training teaches students that leadership is not about power or popularity. It is about responsibility.

Too often, leadership classes can become focused only on tasks, making posters, building balloon pillars, selling tickets, or decorating for dances. While those skills matter, they are only the surface level of leadership. True leadership training helps students understand why they are doing the work, whom they are serving, and how their decisions impact an entire campus community.

Training should never be viewed as a one-time event. Leadership development must continue throughout the school year through workshops, reflection, evaluation, mentorship, conferences, camps, and ongoing conversations. Great leadership programs are built intentionally over time.

If we expect students to lead our campuses, manage budgets, represent their peers, and shape school culture, then we must be willing to train them to do so successfully.

Because when student leaders are prepared, everyone benefits.



Why should training be ongoing?

One of the greatest misconceptions about student leadership programs is the belief that once students are elected or appointed, they automatically know how to lead. In reality, leadership without training often becomes reactionary, inconsistent, and personality-driven rather than purposeful and student-centered.

For administration and district office personnel, leadership training should not be viewed as an “extra activity” or optional retreat experience. It is professional development for students who are being entrusted to help shape school culture, oversee activities, manage student funds, represent the student body, and support campus climate.

If districts expect student leaders to help create positive schools, then districts must also commit to properly training them.

A one-time workshop at the start of the year is simply not enough.

No district would hire a teacher, administrator, counselor, or classified employee and provide training only once in August with no follow-up support throughout the year. Schools understand that growth, reflection, evaluation, and continued professional development are essential for adults. Student leaders deserve the same investment. Student leadership programs are constantly evolving throughout the year.

Different challenges emerge each season:

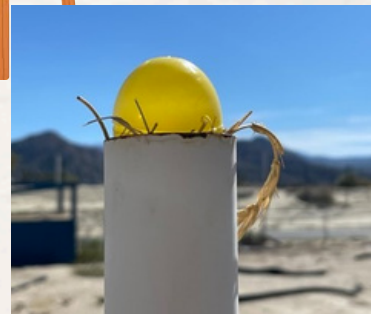
- Beginning of the year: culture building and inclusion
- Fall: Homecoming, large event management, and budgeting
- Winter: service learning and maintaining student engagement
- Spring: elections, transition planning, and legacy building

Students need ongoing opportunities to reflect, adjust, improve, and learn new skills as situations arise. Continuous training allows student leaders to move beyond simply completing tasks and begin understanding leadership philosophy, ethics, communication, and responsibility.

Districts also need to recognize that properly trained student leaders directly impact measurable school outcomes.

Well-trained student leaders often contribute to:

- Improved school climate and connectedness
- Increased student participation
- Better communication between students and administration
- More inclusive campus cultures
- Stronger service learning initiatives
- Reduced discipline issues during activities and events
- Better management of Associated Student Body funds
- Increased accountability and transparency
- Greater student ownership of campus culture



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This aligns directly with many district goals surrounding attendance, engagement, belonging, school safety, and student voice.

The 2024 FCMAT ASB Manual reinforces the importance of training students not only in event planning but also in financial literacy, budgeting, fiduciary responsibility, and proper ASB governance procedures. Schools would never allow untrained adults to oversee financial processes without guidance and oversight. Student leaders managing ASB funds should be no different.

Ongoing training also creates continuity and sustainability within leadership programs. Without intentional development, programs often become dependent on a few highly motivated students or advisors. Strong training systems create leadership pipelines where experienced students mentor younger leaders, preserving traditions, systems, and positive culture year after year.

Most importantly, leadership training teaches students skills they will carry into adulthood:

- Collaboration
- Ethical decision-making
- Public speaking
- Financial responsibility
- Event management
- Civic engagement
- Empathy
- Adaptability
- Professional communication

These are not just "ASB skills." These are workforce skills, community leadership skills, and life skills.

When districts invest in student leadership training, they are not simply funding camps, retreats, or workshops. They are investing in the development of future leaders who will impact schools, communities, and workplaces long after graduation.

Schools spend tremendous time responding to negative student behavior. Leadership training is one of the few proactive systems schools have that intentionally teaches students how to lead positively, solve problems collaboratively, and build community before issues arise.

Student leadership development should not be viewed as an expense. It should be viewed as a campus culture investment.



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Why does this apply to the Activities Director as well?

The argument for annual training and professional development for an Activities Director is actually very simple:

Schools would never expect a teacher, counselor, athletic coach, business manager, or administrator to operate successfully for years without updated training, legal guidance, or professional growth. Activities Directors should be viewed no differently. In fact, Activities Directors oversee some of the most visible, complex, and liability-connected programs on a campus.

Today's Activities Director is expected to manage:

- Student Body finances and fundraising compliance
- Large-scale student events and crowd management
- School culture and climate initiatives
- Student leadership development
- Elections and governance structures
- Risk management and supervision
- Vendor contracts and facility coordination
- Social media and digital communication
- Inclusion and student voice initiatives
- Crisis response during school events
- Community relations and public perception

At the same time, laws, regulations, technology, student behavior trends, and fiscal expectations continue to change every year. Annual professional development is not a luxury for Activities Directors.

It is risk management for schools and districts. The 2024 FCMAT ASB Manual emphasizes accountability, financial oversight, internal controls, and proper ASB procedures. Districts routinely remind Activities Directors that they are responsible for following these expectations. However, responsibility without updated training creates unnecessary risk for both the advisor and the district.

If districts expect Activities Directors to properly oversee Associated Student Body funds, train students, supervise events, and maintain compliance, then districts must also invest in keeping those directors properly trained.

Professional development provides Activities Directors with:

- Updated legal and fiscal guidance
- Training on new FCMAT recommendations and audit expectations
- Best practices from successful schools statewide
- Risk management strategies
- Leadership curriculum and culture-building ideas
- Networking and collaboration opportunities
- Mental health and student engagement strategies
- Technology and communication updates
- Crisis management preparation
- Professional consistency across district sites

Perhaps most importantly, professional development reduces costly mistakes. Many ASB violations or event management problems do not occur because advisors are careless. They occur because advisors were never properly trained or because expectations changed over time without updated support. Annual training creates clarity, consistency, and accountability.

There is also a larger philosophical argument districts should consider:

If Activities Directors are responsible for developing student leaders, then the directors themselves must also continue developing as leaders.

Leadership development cannot stop with students. An untrained or unsupported Activities Director often operates in survival mode, reacting to problems rather than intentionally building systems and culture. A trained Activities Director is better equipped to create inclusive campuses, mentor students effectively, oversee finances responsibly, and represent the district professionally.

Professional organizations such as the California Association of Directors of Activities exist because leadership development and student activities work is a specialized field. Just as principals attend administrator conferences and counselors attend counseling conferences, Activities Directors need spaces dedicated to the unique challenges of student leadership, school culture, and ASB operations.

The strongest argument to administration may ultimately be this:

Districts already invest heavily in intervention programs when school culture declines, student engagement drops, or fiscal mistakes occur. Professional development for Activities Directors is one of the most proactive investments a district can make to strengthen campus climate, student leadership, and organizational accountability before problems arise. Professional development is not simply about sending someone to a conference. It is about protecting the district, improving school culture, increasing student engagement, ensuring fiscal accountability, and developing the adults who are entrusted with leading student leadership programs.



HUMANS OF CADA



INVOLVEMENT TOGETHER: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

BY PAUL CHYLINSKI - CADA PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR



ALDEN & LINDA ESPING

Alden Esping, Involvement Together, The Key to Success

As I retired this May, I found myself growing nostalgic about the journey education has taken me on. I thought back to the first online newsletter article I ever wrote, a story about the man who helped launch my CADA journey: Alden Esping.

At the time, many may not have seen that original piece, and the years have added even more to his remarkable story. Since then, Alden and his wife, Linda, have continued to be recognized for a lifetime of service, most notably being named Citizens of the Year for the City of Anaheim. It felt like the right time to revisit the story of a mentor whose impact reaches far beyond one school or one generation.

A Lifelong Connection

I have known Alden and Linda Esping for most of my life. As a child growing up in Anaheim, attending Anaheim YMCA camps was almost a rite of passage. My own journey began when I was eight years old, and from that point forward, our stories became intertwined. Alden and Linda were already legendary figures in those circles, leading camps, mentoring young people, and creating experiences that shaped thousands of students. What began for me as a camper relationship eventually evolved into something much deeper: a mentor, colleague, and lifelong friend.

A Career Built on Service

Alden's teaching career began in 1959 at Madrona Elementary School in Seattle, Washington, where he taught sixth grade. In 1963, he and his friend Gerry Aust loaded into a Volkswagen bus and headed south to Anaheim, California, beginning the next chapter of a life devoted to students.

He joined Ball Junior High School, where he quickly became one of those rare educators who seemed able to do everything. Over the years he served as:

- Chair of Special Education
- Student Activities Director
- Speech Advisor
- Newspaper Advisor
- Yearbook Advisor
- Student Store Supervisor

But titles never fully captured what Alden did. He built culture, relationships, and belonging.

The YMCA Years

Even with all he did at Ball Junior High, Alden still poured tremendous energy into the YMCA. He directed boys' camps in the San Geronio Mountains and co-ed camps on Catalina Island alongside Linda. Those programs became formative experiences for countless young people, including me.

In the 1970s, when I attended Ball Junior High, I joined Alden's YMCA club, the Y Kane's. Our fundraising efforts eventually led to a trip to San Francisco in 1979, which sparked my lifelong love for that city. Alden understood something many educators miss. Experiences matter. Memories matter. Students remember how you made them feel and where you helped them go.



The Return at Loara

In 1990, Alden moved to Loara High School as head of the Health Department and Lead Activities Director. That move changed my life.

Alden made it clear that if he was taking the Activities Director role, I would be working alongside him. He ran the class during the day, and I learned the world of after-school events, dances, rallies, assemblies, and the countless moving parts of student activities.

That partnership became the true beginning of my Activities Director career. Many people have jobs. A fortunate few get mentors. I was one of the lucky ones.

A Giant in CADA

Alden's impact stretched statewide through his service with CADA from 1977 to 1985.

He helped expand the organization's influence from a state model to one with national reach. As a CADA ambassador and leader, he was among the innovators who helped shape traditions many now take for granted.

He helped popularize themed conventions, supported the growth of CADA Leadership Camps, and during his presidency from 1982 to 1983, hosted a convention in Sacramento that included student leaders as speakers, an idea that reflected his belief that students should not just attend leadership events, but help lead them.

That was Alden. Always a step ahead. Always seeing what was possible.

Honors That Reflect a Lifetime

Alden Esping's career has been recognized with numerous honors, including:

- Warren E. Shull Awards at the state, regional, and national levels
- CADA Hall of Fame
- Jack Moore Award
- Area F Outstanding Activities Program
- 1980 Orange County Teacher of the Year



And in recent years, he and Linda received one of Anaheim's highest community honors, being named Citizens of the Year.

Awards matter because they recognize service. But anyone who knows Alden understands the real reward has always been people.

A Community Icon

Alden's service in Anaheim extends far beyond school walls. He has worked with the Anaheim YMCA, the City of Anaheim, the Anaheim Chamber of Commerce, and the Leadership Association of Student Councils. He has supported students, families, civic programs, and charitable efforts throughout the city.

Even now, if you want to find Alden and Linda, there are two Anaheim institutions where you may get lucky. One is Mama Cozza's, the beloved family restaurant with deep Loara and Ball roots.

The other is The Anaheim White House, where community service and hospitality meet under the leadership of Bruno Serato and his work feeding children through Caterina's Club.

If Alden sees you there, there is a decent chance he may buy you a drink.

The Message That Still Remains

When Alden retired from Loara High School in 1996, he left behind a phrase that still echoes today: Involvement Together, The Key to Success. Those words were painted large on our wall and became a reminder to generations of students about what leadership truly requires.

**Not ego.
Not titles.
Not standing alone.
But involvement, together.**

That phrase still feels timeless because it describes the life Alden and Linda Esping have lived.

As I close my own chapter in education, I can say with gratitude that the people who shape us most are often the ones who quietly believed in us first.

For me, Alden & Linda Esping are those people.

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Balloon Decor Sessions Bring Creativity and Hands-On Learning to the CADA Convention

BY SHAWNA SOUSA - CADA AREA C COORDINATOR

At the CADA Convention "Camp CADA", some sessions fill notebooks with ideas. Others fill the room with energy and creativity. Kerry Sherer of Atascadero High School managed to do both during her back-to-back workshops focused on balloon décor and event design.

Sherer led two consecutive sessions that were intentionally designed to work together: "Balloon Decor – Basics for Beginners" followed by "Elevate Your Designs." The concept was simple but brilliant. The first session introduced the foundational skills needed to build balloon displays, while the second session showed how those same techniques could be used to create elaborate decorations for school events.

Participants who attended both sessions quickly realized how effective the structure was. As Sherer began introducing more advanced balloon designs in the second workshop, she regularly paused to quiz the audience on techniques taught during the beginner session, reinforcing the basics while building confidence among attendees.

The crowd was fully engaged, calling out answers and sharing ideas as the session progressed.



And then came the best part.

Sherer ended both sessions by handing out balloons and guiding participants through hands-on practice, allowing Activities Directors to actually build the designs they had just learned.

By the end of the workshop, the room was filled with colorful balloon creations—and a group of advisors who realized just how achievable professional-looking decorations can be.

From Simple Balloons to Show-Stopping Displays

One of the biggest takeaways from Sherer's presentation was that impressive décor does not have to come with a large price tag.

Many schools rely on expensive vendors or outside decorators for events like Prom, Homecoming, or rallies. Sherer showed attendees how simple techniques, combined with creativity and teamwork, can produce décor that looks elaborate but is surprisingly easy to create.

She demonstrated ways student leadership classes can design:

- Balloon arches and columns
- Photo backdrops for dances
- Entrance displays for rallies or assemblies
- Decorative accents that transform a gym or quad into an event space

The message resonated with Activities Directors who are constantly looking for ways to maximize school spirit while staying within budget.

The Power of Student Creativity

Sherer emphasized that balloon décor can also become a student leadership activity, not just an advisor task.

Instead of outsourcing event decorations, leadership classes can learn the techniques and take ownership of designing the event environment themselves. This not only saves money but also gives students a creative outlet and an opportunity to collaborate on event planning.

In many ways, the balloon workshop reflected the core philosophy behind student activities programs:

When students are empowered to create, they take greater pride in the events they produce.

A Passion for Activities and School Culture

Sherer's enthusiasm for student leadership programs is rooted in decades of experience in education. After spending 24 years as an elementary school teacher, she transitioned to the role of Activities Director at Atascadero High School in 2020. The move allowed her to combine her passion for teaching with her love of creating meaningful experiences for students. Her work has helped strengthen campus culture at Atascadero High School, where she collaborates closely with student leaders to build engaging programs and traditions. Sherer has also been recognized by the California Association of Directors of Activities with the Bob Burton Spirit Award, honoring advisors who demonstrate exceptional enthusiasm and dedication to student leadership. That same energy was evident throughout her Convention sessions.

Why Sessions Like This Matter

One of the strengths of the CADA Convention is the sharing of practical ideas that advisors can immediately bring back to their campuses. Sherer's balloon décor sessions were a perfect example of that spirit. Attendees didn't just leave with inspiration; they left with new skills, new ideas, and the confidence to try something creative with their leadership students. And perhaps most importantly, they were reminded that some of the best school experiences are built not by expensive decorations, but by the creativity and enthusiasm of student leaders working together.

Sometimes, all it takes is a few balloons and a great advisor willing to teach others how to use them.



TOP 5 BALLOON DECOR TIPS FROM KERRY SHERER

Balloon décor might look complicated, but Kerry Sherer reminded attendees at the CADA Convention that impressive designs often come from mastering a few simple techniques. Here are five practical tips she shared for Activities Directors and student leaders looking to elevate their event decorations.

Start with the Basics: Before attempting elaborate designs, learn the foundational balloon techniques. Simple balloon clusters, arches, and columns can be combined to create impressive displays once the fundamentals are mastered.

Use Consistent Color Themes: Matching balloon colors to your school's spirit colors or event theme instantly creates a polished look. Even simple designs look professional when color choices are intentional.

Build in Sections: Large balloon displays are easier to construct when built in smaller sections. Students can create clusters or segments first, then combine them into larger arches, backdrops, or decorations.

Involve Your Leadership Students: Balloon décor is a perfect hands-on leadership activity. Student leaders can collaborate on design ideas, assemble decorations together, and take pride in transforming the event space.

Practice Makes Perfect: Sherer encouraged advisors to give students time to practice balloon techniques before a big event. A short workshop in leadership class can quickly build confidence and skill.

With a little creativity, a few supplies, and student teamwork, balloon décor can turn an ordinary gym or quad into a memorable event space—without breaking the ASB budget.

CADA Balloon Slides



SHOULD SCHOOLS USE HELIUM FOR BALLOON ARCHES?

A CLEAR LOOK AT COST, PURPOSE, AND BETTER OPTIONS
BY PAUL CHYLINSKI - CADA PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

Walk onto many school campuses during Homecoming, Prom, graduation, rallies, or welcome events, and you will likely see balloon arches, floating bouquets, and festive displays helping create energy and excitement. Helium has long been part of the celebration toolkit because it adds color, height, movement, and a sense of occasion. But as costs continue to rise and schools work to be more thoughtful with budgets and resources, it may be time to take a closer look at how and why we use it. This article is not about criticizing schools that use helium. It is about understanding what helium really is, why it has become expensive, where else it is needed, and whether there may be smarter, more sustainable options for school events moving forward.

What Makes Helium So Expensive?

Helium is not something manufactured in a factory like many other products. It is a natural gas that forms underground over millions of years through radioactive decay in rocks. It becomes trapped in natural gas fields and must be separated, purified, compressed, and transported in specialized tanks.

That process creates several reasons for the high price:

Limited Supply

Helium is rare. Once released into the atmosphere, it escapes into space and cannot be recovered.

Complex Extraction

Only certain natural gas fields contain enough helium to make recovery worthwhile.

Transportation Costs

Helium must be stored under pressure and moved in special cylinders, adding delivery and handling costs.

Global Demand

Many industries rely on helium, creating competition for supply.

Because of these factors, schools often feel the impact through rising rental costs for tanks and higher refill prices.



What Is Helium Actually Used For?

Many people only associate helium with balloons, but its most important uses are far more serious.

• Medical Uses

Helium helps cool MRI machines, which hospitals use daily for medical imaging.

• Science and Technology

It is used in research laboratories, semiconductor manufacturing, fiber optics, and space exploration.

• Safety and Industry

Helium is used for leak detection, welding environments, and breathing mixtures for deep-sea diving.

• Aerospace

Organizations like NASA use helium in testing and specialized systems.

When we understand these uses, it becomes clear that helium is more than a party supply. It is a valuable scientific resource.

Should Schools Use Helium for Balloon Arches?

That depends on priorities.

Using helium for a single dance entrance or spirit event may seem harmless, but multiplied across thousands of schools, weddings, parties, and events, it represents a significant use of a limited resource for temporary decoration. Schools often teach students about sustainability, stewardship, and wise decision-making. This creates an opportunity to model those values.

Are we using a nonrenewable resource for something that lasts six hours?

That can lead to thoughtful conversations about leadership, budgeting, and responsibility.

Better Alternatives for Schools

The good news is that most balloon arches do not need helium at all.

Air Filled Balloon Arches

Many modern arches use frames, PVC pipe, fishing line, or balloon strip tape. They look full and professional without helium.

Reusable Decor

Fabric backdrops, wood signage, lighting, and reusable spirit props can be used year after year.

Student Creativity

Art classes, leadership classes, and clubs can build sustainable event decor together.

Budget Benefits

Air-filled arches are often cheaper, last longer, and avoid tank rental fees.

A LEADERSHIP LESSON FOR STUDENTS

This topic is bigger than balloons. It is about teaching students to think critically about choices.

Instead of asking only, “What looks fun?” schools can also ask:

- What does it cost?
- Is it necessary?
- Is there a smarter option?
- Does this reflect our values?

Those are real leadership questions.

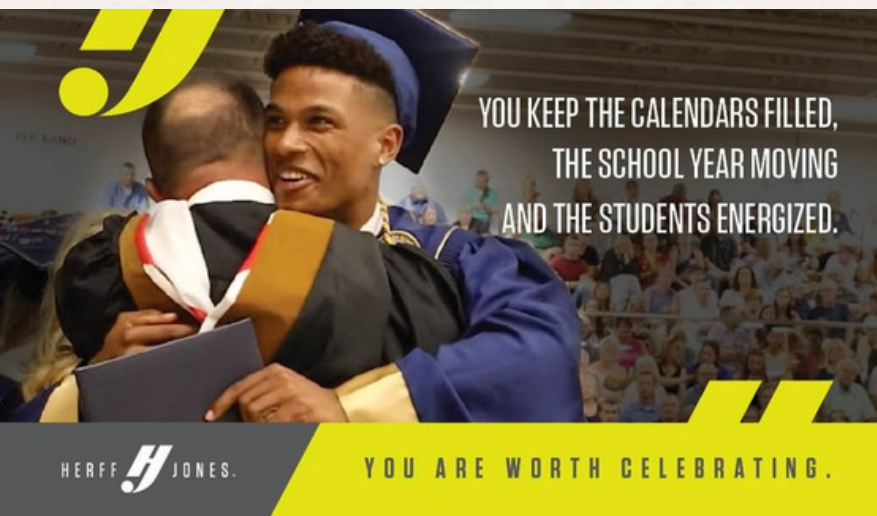
FINAL THOUGHT

Every school budget reflects its values. When we choose to spend money on helium for decorations that last a few hours, we are also choosing not to spend that money on something else, ASB supplies, student recognition, club support, scholarships, campus improvements, leadership development, or experiences that create lasting impact.

At the same time, helium is not an unlimited party product. It is a finite natural resource with critical uses in medicine, science, technology, and industry. Once released, it is gone. That reality should cause schools to pause and ask whether floating balloons for one evening is the best use of limited funds and a limited resource.

Schools are places where we teach responsibility, stewardship, and thoughtful decision making. This is an opportunity to model those lessons in real time. We can still create exciting events, memorable celebrations, and beautiful spaces, but we can do it with smarter choices, reusable materials, and creative alternatives.

Sometimes leadership is not about spending more. It is about thinking deeper, choosing wiser, and leaving resources available for needs that matter far beyond a dance or rally.



CULTIVATING GRATITUDE



A SIMPLE PRACTICE THAT STRENGTHENS SCHOOL COMMUNITIES BY PAUL CHYLINSKI - PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR

One of my personal missions at this year's CADA Convention was not only to attend as many sessions as possible, but also to share the great ideas coming out of those sessions with Activities Directors across the state. With so many valuable presentations happening simultaneously, none of us can see everything, so sharing the highlights helps us all learn together.

One session that truly stood out to me was "Cultivating Gratitude" presented by Sara Freauf and Heather Ransom from Work2BeWell

I've known Sara for several years, going back to the early days of [Work2BeWell](#), when a group of us, including Dr. Robin Henderson, Matt Soeth, Kim Karr (Creators of [#ICANHELP](#)), and others, were collaborating on ideas and curriculum focused on student mental health. In fact, some of the work Melissa Collette (Camp Staff Member) and I created for CADA Leadership Camp, such as the "[Emotional First Aid Kit](#)," has been shared and used by Work2BeWell in schools across the country, and they even developed a secondary "[Wellness Backpack](#)". So when I saw Sara presenting at CADA, my interest was immediately piqued.

Their session centered on a powerful but simple concept: gratitude.

Sara and Heather guided participants through the idea that intentionally practicing gratitude can shift our mindset, strengthen relationships, and create a more positive school culture. In our work as Activities Directors, where we often juggle countless responsibilities and fast-moving school calendars, it's easy to focus on what still needs to be done. Practicing gratitude reminds us to pause and recognize what's going well and the people who make it possible.

During the session, participants explored practical and creative ways to build gratitude into campus culture. Some of the ideas shared included:

- **Surprise recognition events celebrating unsung heroes on campus**
- **Themed Gratitude Weeks where students intentionally thank staff, peers, and community members**
- **Simple daily practices that encourage students to notice the good and appreciate others**

One of the highlights of the session was learning about Work2BeWell's "31-Day Gratitude Challenge," a simple program designed to help students build gratitude into their daily lives through small, intentional actions.

But what impressed me even more was the depth of the free curriculum available through the Work2BeWell website.

As you may know, CADA has been working to build and strengthen its own curriculum library for Activities Directors across California. One of Lindsey Charron's missions as she stepped into the Vice President role, and then as the 2025-2026 CADA President, has been to help organize, expand, and elevate the resources available to our members. As we've been cleaning up and building out that library, I've been discovering great lessons from friends throughout the CADA universe.



Work2BeWell is certainly one of those friends.

Not only do they offer a plethora of resources for free, but their lessons are already packaged with slideshows, worksheets, facilitator notes, and discussion prompts, making them incredibly easy for Activities Directors to implement immediately in a leadership classroom. When you explore the Work2BeWell website, you'll find their Gratitude curriculum broken into four thoughtful lessons.



The first lesson is simply titled "What is Gratitude?" and it begins with a thought-provoking quote:

"It is not happy people who are grateful; it is grateful people who are happy."

Participants are then asked to reflect on that statement. The facilitator poses the question: **"Take a minute to think about this idea. Do you agree with it? Why or why not?"**

Students then turn to someone next to them to discuss their thoughts before sharing responses with the group. Right from the start, the lesson sets the groundwork for meaningful and philosophical conversations about mindset, perspective, and personal responsibility for happiness.

The remaining lessons, each designed to fill a class period or more depending on how deep you'd like to go, explore additional themes:

- How to Be More Grateful
- Cultivating Gratitude in Your Life
- Gratitude, Appreciation, and Thankfulness: What's the Difference?



Each lesson includes presentation slides, facilitator notes, discussion prompts, and activities designed to help students move beyond simply talking about gratitude to actively practicing it in their daily lives. I was truly impressed not only with the philosophy behind Work2BeWell, but also with how thoughtfully these lessons are packaged and shared freely with educators.

For me personally, this session was a wonderful way to kick off the conference. It grounded me in something we often forget in the middle of busy conventions, packed schedules, and the constant motion of our profession.

Gratitude.

Gratitude for the people around us.

Gratitude for the work we get to do.

Gratitude for the communities we serve.

Over the course of my career, I have been fortunate to meet many people who inspire me. I'm thankful for my CADA family, my AUHSD family, the incredible network of friendships built through this profession, and of course my own family.

And moments like this session reminded me just how lucky we are, not only to have organizations like CADA supporting our work, but also to have each other.

A Leadership Takeaway

Gratitude is more than a nice gesture; it's a leadership skill. When student leaders intentionally recognize others, celebrate contributions, and focus on the positive impact people make, they help shape a culture where everyone feels valued. And sometimes, the most powerful leadership move is simply saying: **"Thank you."**

The Power of Gratitude

Objective:

Students will explore the concept of gratitude and understand how recognizing the contributions of others can strengthen school culture and leadership.

Time: 10 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Small slips of paper or index cards
- Pens or pencils

Step 1: The Quote (2 minutes)

Begin by writing or projecting the quote:

"It is not happy people who are grateful; it is grateful people who are happy."

Ask students to quietly think about the quote for a moment.

Then ask the group:

- Do you agree with this statement?
- Why or why not?

Have students turn to a partner and discuss their thoughts for about one minute.

Ask two or three volunteers to briefly share their responses with the group.

Facilitator Tip:

This quick discussion helps students realize that happiness is often connected to perspective rather than circumstances.

Step 2: Gratitude in Action (4 minutes)

Pass out a small slip of paper or index card to each student. Ask students to write down one person on campus they are grateful for who often goes unnoticed. Encourage them to think beyond their immediate friend group. Some examples might include:

- A campus supervisor
- A custodian
- A cafeteria worker
- A teacher who supports them
- A teammate or club member
- Another student leader

Once they have chosen someone, ask them to write one specific reason they appreciate that person.

Example prompts:

- "I appreciate you because..."
- "You make our campus better by..."
- "Thank you for always..."

Encourage students to be specific and sincere.

Step 3: Spread the Gratitude (3 minutes)

Now challenge students to deliver the message.

They can:

- Hand the note directly to the person
- Leave it on their desk or workspace
- Send a message or email later in the day

Explain that leadership is not always about organizing events or running meetings. Sometimes leadership is simply about recognizing the good in others and making them feel valued.

A small moment of appreciation can have a lasting impact on someone's day.

Step 4: Reflection (1 minute)

Close with one quick reflection question:

Ask the group:

- How do you think the person receiving your note will feel?

Then ask a follow-up:

- How did it feel to take a moment to recognize someone else?

Remind students that gratitude is contagious—when one person feels appreciated, it often inspires them to appreciate others.

Leadership Connection

Strong leaders create cultures where people feel seen, valued, and appreciated. Practicing gratitude helps leaders shift the focus away from problems and toward the people who make success possible. Gratitude also builds stronger relationships, increases empathy, and improves the overall climate of a school community. Sometimes the most powerful leadership action is simply saying: **"Thank you."**

CADA Standards Alignment

This activity aligns with several CADA Leadership Development Standards:

Communication

Students practice expressing appreciation clearly and authentically.

Personal & Social Development

Students develop empathy and awareness of the contributions of others.

Civic & Service Learning

Students recognize the value of serving and supporting their school community.

GRATITUDE CIRCLE



BY PAUL C DOLS - CLIMATE & CULTURE COORDINATOR, MONROVIA HIGH SCHOOL

The most successful teams understand that it is not always about what you do or how you do it. Many times, it is about whom you do it with.

ASB and Leadership classes are no exception. That is why we spend so much time on team-building activities and creating the strong foundational relationships that help programs grow and thrive.

At Monrovia High School, we continually try to bring our focus back to the relationships we are building, not only with our staff and students, but within our ASB and Renaissance programs as well. We hold retreats to strengthen connections. We incorporate activities whenever time allows to ensure that we are taking care of ourselves as well as our campus community. Most importantly, we make a deliberate effort to practice gratitude whenever we can.

That intentional focus led us to one of the most meaningful traditions in our program: the Gratitude Circle.

Every Friday, we use the final 20 minutes of class to literally gather in a circle. One by one, students express gratitude to someone else in the circle for something that happened during the week. It might be a thank-you for helping with an event, offering support during a stressful moment, stepping up when needed, or simply being a positive presence.

When the Gratitude Circle is first introduced at the beginning of the year, it can feel a bit awkward for new members. Sadly, saying "thank you" to someone, especially directly to their face, is a skill that many people, young and old alike, do not practice often enough.

Yet the value of the activity lies not only with the person receiving the gratitude, but also with the person expressing it. Taking time to recognize the efforts and impact of others helps students develop empathy, appreciation, and stronger interpersonal relationships.

Senior Christien Tibay describes it this way:

"Gratitude Circle is so important for leadership and as students. It commemorates that we have individual lives yet expresses the relationships and hardships each of us go through together. Introducing our warm embrace for students' lives, in the class and all together, celebrates the feeling that we're not just a class, but also a family."

As the weeks pass, the awkwardness quickly fades, and the Gratitude Circle becomes a staple of our busy schedule. Students begin looking forward to it. In fact, one of my favorite moments as an Activities Director is when a student approaches me during the chaos of a Friday and reminds me, "It's time for the Circle."



In a program filled with deadlines, events, meetings, and responsibilities, those twenty minutes serve as a powerful reminder of what matters most. The Gratitude Circle helps us slow down, recognize one another, and celebrate the people who make our work worthwhile.

For me, it is a weekly reminder to be grateful for the privilege of serving students and helping shape a positive school culture. My hope is that this simple practice becomes more than just a Friday tradition. I hope it becomes a habit that our students carry with them long after they leave high school.

After all, leadership is not just about getting things done. It is about appreciating the people who help make those things possible.

ONLINE NEWS

**GET THE SOURCE APP AND READ CADA NEWS ON YOUR PHONE / TABLET
BY PAUL CHYLINSKI - PRINT MEDIA COORDINATOR**

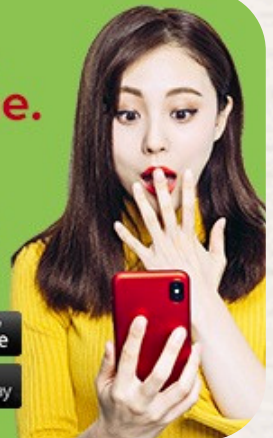
Stay Connected with CADA News

CADA News is an open source resource available to everyone, regardless of membership. Through CADA News, educators, student leaders, and leadership programs across California can access stories, ideas, leadership resources, convention coverage, and best practices happening throughout our state.

More detailed curriculum resources, exclusive CADA Snapshots, leadership lessons, and weekly member updates are shared directly with CADA members, along with reduced registration costs for attendees at the CADA Convention, CASL Conference, and many additional professional development opportunities.

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When you subscribe to the CADA News Source, you become part of the ever growing network of online scholastic journalism programs accessible through the Source App. Think of it as the Apple News or Google News experience for CADA media and student leadership programs.

The Source App is completely free and available for download in both the iOS App Store and the Google Play Store. Once downloaded, you can access stories, videos, galleries, post comments, and receive automated push notifications whenever new content is released.

Getting Started

Download the app by searching “Student News Source” or “College News Source” in your app store.

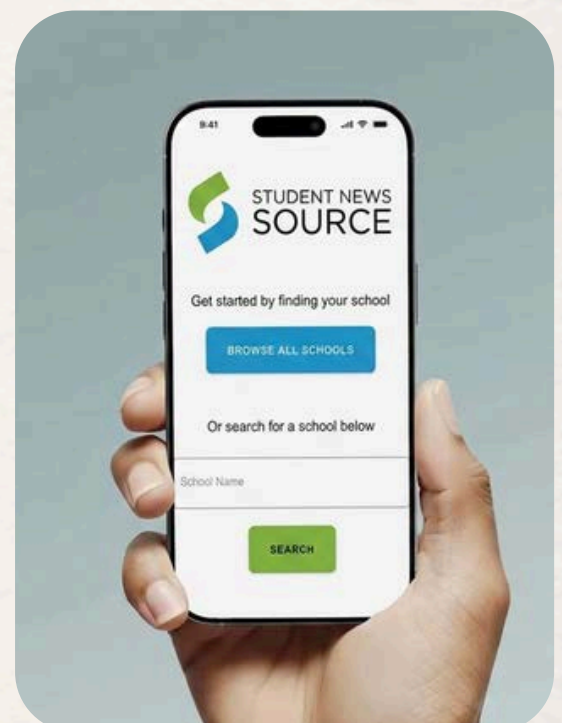
Open the app and search for “California Association of Directors of Activities.”

Select the CADA News Source and allow push notifications when prompted.

Visit the Settings tab to customize which categories you would like to receive notifications from.

Create a username and email address if you would like the ability to comment on stories and engage with the community.

Join the growing network of Activities Directors, student leaders, and educators across California who are staying connected through CADA News.



ELECTION INFORMATION



Interested in Running for CADA Vice President?

Each year, CADA members have the opportunity to begin the four year leadership journey through the CADA President Chairs by running for the position of Vice President. The Vice President position is the first step in the leadership progression that moves from Vice President, to President Elect, to President, and finally Immediate Past President.

Serving in one of the President Chairs is an opportunity to help guide the future of CADA, support members throughout the state, and continue the mission of developing student leaders and Activities Directors across California.

Who is Eligible to Run?

To run for Vice President, candidates must:

- Be a current regular or regular life member of CADA
- Have served at least one full year on the CADA State Board, either as an elected or appointed board member
- Former board members remain eligible to run for up to five years after leaving the Board

The Immediate Past President maintains the eligibility list and contacts eligible candidates annually.

Timeline for Running

• By October 1

Eligible candidates receive a Vice Presidential Eligibility Letter from the Immediate Past President.

• By November 1

Candidates must submit their Letter of Intent to officially declare candidacy.

• Following the Deadline

Candidates participate in a conference call reviewing election procedures and expectations.

• State Convention

The election for Vice President takes place during the Annual Convention.

Candidates should also be aware that they are expected to remain through the post-convention Board meeting if elected.

A Leadership Journey

The President Chairs represent more than titles; they represent service, commitment, collaboration, and leadership for the entire CADA organization. Members who are passionate about student activities, leadership development, and the future of CADA are encouraged to consider taking the next step in serving the organization.

For additional information regarding eligibility or the election process, members may contact the Immediate Past President.

Duties of the Vice President

The Vice President serves as an active member of the CADA Board and leadership team. Responsibilities include:

- **Attending all Board meetings**
- **Serving as a voting member of the Board**
- **Serving on Executive and Budget Committees**
- **Assisting with planning future conventions**
- **Providing reports at Board meetings**
- **Supporting projects and duties assigned by the President**
- **Maintaining electronic records and transition materials for the position**

ELECTION INFORMATION



Interested in Serving as an Area Coordinator?

One of the most important leadership roles within CADA is serving as an Area Coordinator. Area Coordinators help connect members throughout their regions, organize professional development opportunities, support Area Councils, and serve as a voice between local members and the State Board.

For members who are passionate about leadership, networking, and growing CADA within their area, serving as an Area Coordinator is an incredible opportunity to make a difference.

Who is Eligible to Run?

To run for Area Coordinator, candidates must:

- Be a regular or regular life member of CADA
- Have served at least one full year on an Area Council, either as an elected or appointed council member
- Former Area Council members remain eligible to run for up to five years after leaving the council
- The election process is coordinated by the Immediate Past President or a designee appointed by the President.

Election Cycle

Area Coordinator elections occur on a staggered cycle:

- Odd-numbered Years
 - Areas A, C, E, and G
- Even-numbered Years
 - Areas B, D, and F
- Area Coordinators serve a two-year term.

Timeline for Running

By December 1

- Eligible candidates receive an Intent to Run form from the Immediate Past President.

By January 1

- Completed Intent to Run forms must be submitted to officially declare candidacy.

State Convention

- Area elections are held during the Annual Convention.
- Candidates should also be aware they are expected to remain at the convention site through the post-convention Board meeting if elected. The final night expenses for candidates are covered by CADA.

Duties of an Area Coordinator

Area Coordinators serve as leaders for their regions while also representing their areas on the State Board. Responsibilities include:

- Serving as a voting member of the CADA Board
- Attending all Board meetings and the Annual Convention
- Serving on Board Committees
- Working closely with Area Council members
- Organizing and facilitating Area Council meetings throughout the year
- Coordinating Area Conferences and professional development opportunities
- Overseeing Area Awards and area elections
- Maintaining communication between the Board and area membership
- Developing area goals and supporting area activities
- Organizing the area table and activities at the State Convention
- Developing and submitting an annual area budget
- Maintaining area electronic records and documents

Area Coordinators are also expected to become familiar with the Area Coordinator Manual, CADA Bylaws, Board Policies, and Best Practices.

Leadership Through Service

Area Coordinators play a vital role in helping CADA stay connected across the state. Through communication, collaboration, and leadership, they help strengthen relationships within their regions while supporting the mission and future of CADA.

Members interested in serving their area and helping shape the future of the organization are encouraged to consider running for Area Coordinator.

For additional information regarding eligibility or the election process, members may contact the Immediate Past President.



CADA CAMPS WRAP-UP

**TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER:
LEADING EARTH'S NEXT GENERATION 2026
BY JEFF CULVER - CADA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
& CAMP COORDINATOR**

Launch, Orbit, and Re-entry were the curriculum focus areas for this summer's CADA Summer Leadership Camps, "Take Me to Your Leader: Leading Earth's Next Generation," at UC Santa Barbara. Space travel, extraterrestrials, and astronauts shaped the camp experience, connecting the ideas of space exploration to student leadership and activities back on our campuses.

During Launch, campers explored their personal leadership skills and how they fit into a larger team vision. Orbit built on those ideas with a deeper look at shared vision, culminating in a team challenge to repair a damaged oxygen system aboard the International Space Station. During Re-entry, campers examined how participation, responsibility, and leadership shape school culture before identifying a meaningful way they can positively impact their school community in the coming year.

This summer's four camps trained more than 1,600 student leaders, accompanied by 230 advisors from 165 schools across California, along with friends from Hawaii and Kansas. We were thrilled to continue our longtime educational partnership with UC Santa Barbara, once again providing an incredible setting right next to the Pacific Ocean.

Thanks to the 2026 CADA Camp Curriculum Team, led by Douglas Middle School's Melissa Edsall, with Laura Beers (Crescenta Valley High School), Ron Ippolito (Rio Norte Jr. High School), MJ Smith (Options For Youth Public Charter School), and Shawna Sousa (Central East High School). The team met virtually throughout the year to develop lessons around our space theme and refine the council projects that give campers hands-on opportunities to put their leadership skills into practice.

The curriculum was brought to life by nearly 90 credentialed CADA members who served as council leaders throughout the four sessions. Working side-by-side with campers, they guided, encouraged, and challenged students while helping create a memorable, educational, and fun camp experience. Many return year after year because they believe so strongly in the impact of the CADA Camps program.

Keeping everything moving behind the scenes was our team of directors: Paul Chylinski (logistics), Todd Arrowsmith (operations), Ron Ippolito (media/technology), and Monica Anderson (adults). Our Camp Directors/Large Group Leaders steering students and staff through the #CADACamps experience were Bryan Speed (Camps 1-3), Kim Karr (Camp 1), Karlee Garcia (Camp 2), Jessi Lindell (Camp 3), Cameron Chitwood (Camp 4), and Melissa Edsall (Camp 4).



Supporting our theme and mission to inspire student leaders, our keynote speakers shared stories, encouragement, and thoughtful words for the leadership journey ahead. Big thanks to Mike Smith Live (www.mikesmithlive.com) as well as three of our friends at CoolSpeak (www.coolspeak.com): Zach Gowen, Lilyan Prado-Carrillo (Camp 1), and Dr. Laura Rizo (Camps 2-4).

The Area C Dream Team also brought the CADA Camp Throwdown back for its fifth summer. This high-energy presentation showcased large-group rally games and involved plenty of audience participation, with many schools taking ideas home to use at orientations and welcome-back rallies just weeks later. Thanks to our Throwdown hosts and support team: Ben Cummings, Isaac Lopez, Natalie Driggers, Erin Tobias, Angie Guerra, and Nestor Cerda.

Students also attended Rotations focused on fundamental skills to help them successfully navigate the school year. This summer's topics included confident communication, leading with curiosity, and large-group outdoor activities. CADA Leadership Camps are an intensive four-day experience where students are divided into councils, meet peers from across the state, share ideas, network, and collaborate on a camp project. Campers return home with new connections, practical leadership skills, and a stronger foundation for making an impact on their school's culture and activities program.

Catch up on highlights from the summer by searching #CADACamps on Instagram and Facebook. Follow @CADACamps on social media and visit the @CADACamps YouTube channel to view this year's camp videos.

Special thanks to the CADA Medallion Sponsors whose products and services helped make this summer possible: All Action Awards, All-Star Events, Audio Dynamix, Band, One Stone Apparel, Pegleg Entertainment, SOS Entertainment, and Spirit Sox USA.

Watch for the Dates

Join us in summer 2027 for one of our four-day camps at UC Santa Barbara! Dates will be posted at cada1.org/leadershipcamps once finalized, with registration opening in January. You can reserve your school's spots without student names; those aren't needed until mid-May, after elections and class selections are complete.



— CADA/CASL presents —

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VOICE



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HIGH SCHOOL
APRIL 10-12, 2027



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CADA/CASL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

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A chance to win a scholarship to CASL
state Conference and/or CADA
Leadership Camp.

OPPORTUNITIES

CASL Deadline:
Applications Due December 15th

CAMP Deadline:
Applications Due February 15th



SCAN ME

LIMIT 1 PER SCHOOL



DID YOU KNOW? THERE ARE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CAMPS & CASL!

CADA members can apply for a CADA/CASL Memorial Scholarship to help offset registration costs for the CASL State Conference or CADA Leadership Camps! These scholarships are designed to make these incredible experiences more accessible for schools and students across California. Applications are simple and open to all current CADA member schools. The CASL deadline is December 15th, and the Camp deadline is February 15th. Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity—visit www.cada1.org for details and apply today. Only one scholarship per school, so get yours in early!



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Check our vendor directory for a list of all our vendors.

CADA gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our corporate Medallion Sponsors. Their generosity is essential in helping the CADA organization provide useful, high-quality services to CADA members and all the students of California. Please show your support by using their products and services.

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2026-2027

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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FOR MORE ON CADA PROGRAMS:

ADVISOR TRAININGS, STUDENT CONFERENCES,
LEADERSHIP CAMPS, CASL CONFERENCE RESOURCES,
CURRICULUM, STATE CONVENTION & MORE VISIT:



www.cada1.org



831.464.4891



info@cada1.org



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF ACTIVITIES

7960 SOQUEL DRIVE, SUITE B 112
APTOS, CA 95003

2026

Aug. 22, 2026	Los Angeles Region Advisor Conference - Hosted by Area E
Aug. 26, 2026	South San Diego Region Advisor Conference - Hosted By Area G
Aug. 27, 2026	North San Diego Region Advisor Conference - Hosted By Area G
Aug. 30-31, 2026	Central Coast Advisor Retreat- Hosted by Area D
Sep. 02, 2026	NewB Advisor Conference - East Bay - Hosted by Area B
Sep. 09, 2026	Inland Empire/Orange County Advisor Conference - Hosted by Area F
Sep. 10, 2026	NewB Advisor Conference - South Bay - Hosted by Area B
Sep. 21, 2026	South San Diego Region Student Conference - Hosted by Area G
Oct. 05, 2026	Central Valley Student Conference - Hosted by Area C
Oct. 06, 2026	Sacramento Area High School Student Conference - Hosted by Area A
Oct. 07, 2026	Sacramento Area Middle School Student Conference - Hosted by Area A
Oct. 12, 2026	Bay Area Student Conference - Hosted by Area B
Oct. 20, 2026	Los Angeles Region Student Conference - Hosted by Area E
Nov. 05, 2026	South Area D Student Conference - Hosted by Area D
Nov. 06, 2026	Northern California Advisor Conference - Hosted By Area A
Nov. 09, 2026	North San Diego Region Student Conference - Hosted by Area G
Nov. 09, 2026	Disneyland MIDDLE School Student Conference - Hosted by Area F
Nov. 10, 2026	Disneyland HIGH School Student Conference - Hosted by Area F
Nov. 10, 2026	North Central Coast Student Conference - Hosted by Area D
Dec. 01, 2026	Central Valley Advisor Conference - Hosted by Area C

2027

Feb. 09, 2027	S.T.A.R.S. Student Conference - Hosted by Area E
Feb. 24-26, 2027	CADA State Convention - CADA Kitchen, Palm Springs
Apr. 08-10, 2027	CASL Middle School State Conference, Santa Clara
Apr. 10-12, 2027	CASL High School State Conference, Santa Clara
Apr. 27, 2027	Modesto Area Spring Student Conference - Hosted by Area A
Summer 2027	CADA Summer Leadership Camps @ UC Santa Barbara
Summer 2027	New Activities Director Institute @ UC Santa Barbara