

County Alternative Ed Classes Move One Program, Open Another

OASIS Now at Cabrillo Campus, Ponderosa Offers Green Career Program in SLV

by Linda Fridy

The back-to-school season has been even busier than usual for the County Office of Education's alternative education department. Operating classes for students in court and community schools – often term alternative education – makes the COE one of the largest districts providing classes.

This month, the COE's OASIS independent study high school moved from its long-time home in Capitola to Cabrillo College's Aptos campus and a new school opened in the San Lorenzo Valley.

Senior program director Sandy Mast said the move to Cabrillo will allow the OASIS program to offer more support to both current and former students.

"We have students who are

concurrently enrolled at Cabrillo, and being on campus makes a nice, seamless way to do a little hand-holding," she said. "It has been a dream of mine for many years to have a presence at that school."

OASIS, which stands for Online Academy School Independent Study, supports self-motivated students in individualized programs. It provides seminars in different subjects to give them group instruction time as well, said Mast.

At the new location in the 350 Building on Cabrillo's upper campus, OASIS can provide tutoring to both current students and graduates of the program who could benefit from extra help.

"They have the anchor of a past teacher," she said.

Having OASIS teachers on sight can also help students navigate requirements such as assessment tests that students

need before registering for classes.

The new location supports efforts to not only have students enroll in college, but also to help them successfully complete a college certificate or degree.

The OASIS school serves about 150 students, although there are seldom more than 20 on site at a time, Mast said. It had been located on the second floor of an office building on Bay Avenue, which Mast said was not an optimal location.

"We were never meant to be there as long as we were," she said.

School staff are still moving furniture and setting up the new location, and 25 computers are on order to take advantage of an old computer lab location at the college.

At first, those computers will help support online learning efforts, Mast said, but she

can see potential for future computer-related Regional Occupational Programs (ROP) courses, vocational programs that the county office also oversees.

The Cabrillo Campus is also home to the Delta Charter High School, and Mast said she hopes OASIS will fit in just as well. "It was extremely generous of [Cabrillo President] Brian King to give us this opportunity."

Going Green in SLV

The newest alternative education site is called Ponderosa Community School, located at what was the San Lorenzo Valley's White Oak High School in Ben Lomond.

The White Oak High School is an alternative high school operated directly by the San Lorenzo Valley Unified School district. The new COE program is much like any other COE supervised

class offered on campuses operated by local school districts.

The program is modeled on the green career program offered at the COE's Natural Bridges High School on the Westside, and serves students primarily in grades 10 through 12.

"We saw it as a great opportunity to expand in the San Lorenzo Valley," Mast said.

The small learning community includes classes in green construction techniques, computer applications including computer-aided design and environmental outdoor education.

The courses are both alternative education and ROP. Mast explained that students from San Lorenzo Valley High who have already taken that school's green construction course to get further vocational experience by enrolling in the ROP class. ■