

## SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

# Cajon Valley Exemplifies the Power of Family Engagement, Data, and Personalized Learning

Cajon Valley  
Union School  
District



In Cajon Valley Union School District (CVUSD) in the San Diego County of California, family-teacher meetings begin with guardians and educators gathering in a circle to answer one question: “What are your hopes and dreams for your children?”

Before the night is over, Cajon Valley teachers will have shared and explained what data from students’ most recent formative assessment reveals about their learning, collaborated with families to set student learning goals, and taught parents and caretakers skills to work on with their students.

Back-to-school nights are just one example of how Cajon Valley educators engage families in their students’ education. In order to meet the needs of a vibrant student body with a diverse English Learner population, Cajon Valley education leaders have developed a number of popular and effective family engagement and community-building resources.

STUDENTS  
16,732

GRADES  
K-8

ENGLISH  
LEARNERS  
34%

Cajon Valley’s ambitious community engagement programs have garnered national attention. In January 2020, when the Center for Universal Education, a subdivision of the Brookings Institute, launched its Family Engagement in Education project to study the effects of family participation on student learning, Cajon Valley was one of three North American districts asked to participate.

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# What They Did

An abundance of research shows that family engagement is vital to students' learning success.

**Cajon Valley has ensured they have successful engagement through the following:**



## The Family and Community Engagement Office

Established in 2016, Cajon Valley's Family and Community Engagement Office is dedicated to fostering strong relationships among families, Cajon Valley educators, and the district as a whole.



## Bilingual Community Liaisons

CVUSD employs community members to help nonnative English speakers, newcomers, refugees, and immigrants build relationships with school staff. By acting as ambassadors, community liaisons promote engagement, facilitate events, and ensure all families can participate in their students' education.



## Family Learning Opportunities

Through its Parent University, World of Work workshops, and in-person and online events, Cajon Valley offers families opportunities to build skills that help them be involved in their students' learning.



## Student Ownership of Their Learning

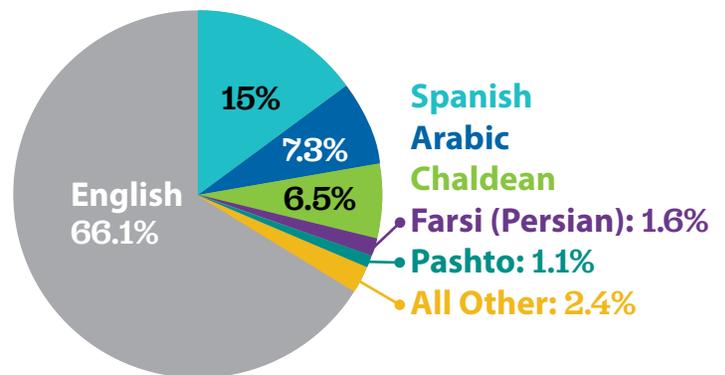
In 2020, Cajon Valley began using *i-Ready Assessment*, an assessment suite that provides actionable data for mathematics and reading instruction. By sharing students' data with them, Cajon Valley educators have helped students understand where they are in their learning journeys and where they need to be. Data from *i-Ready* has also been a valuable tool for helping families see students' progress.



## Personalized Learning through *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*

Cajon Valley adopted *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, which provides standards-based, online instruction. The district's fidelity to implementing best practices meant they were able to support student learning in school buildings and—when the COVID-19 pandemic caused California school buildings to close—at home.

Languages Spoken at  
Cajon Valley Union School District



## What They Accomplished

Today, Cajon Valley serves as an example of how family engagement can drive student learning. Now, the district disseminates its best practices, expertise, and thought leadership through its YouTube® channel, studies, and more. Indeed, the words “Cajon Valley” are synonymous in many educators’ minds with “how family engagement is done.”

Cajon Valley’s close community was crucial to the district’s success in navigating the sudden transition to at-home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their fastidious implementation of *i-Ready* and strong engagement also ensures that refugee families who are settled in El Cajon are quickly made to feel part of the school community and that each student feels recognized and seen. “We don’t want to label kids because kids are so much more than a label,” said Bethany Schwappach, Cajon Valley’s coordinator of educational services.

*“Throughout my experience with assessment in education, I have seen students labeled and put into buckets, such as ‘below standard.’ We needed to find a new way to measure our students, because they are so much more than the labels that are placed upon them.”*

—**Bethany Schwappach**,  
Coordinator of  
Educational Services



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