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SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS REVEALS FIRST ALUMNI REPORT OF ITS KIND, REDEFINING STUDENT SUCCESS

Summit alumni graduate college at nearly double the national average and rank strong relationships as the highest level of fulfillment with financial independence as the lowest

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. -- Summit Public Schools released a first-of-its-kind report measuring life fulfillment amongst its alumni, in which 71.7% of alumni reported high levels of overall well-being. The report, "[Pathways to Success: Exploring the Long-term Outcomes of Alumni from Summit Public Schools](#)," examines alumni well-being according to five dimensions: strong relationships, purpose, health, community, and financial independence. Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents are fulfilled in at least four out of five dimensions of well-being.

"As educators, we need to play the long game. Defining student success needs to be about more than just college admission — students need to be prepared to build and live a life that will fulfill them," said Diane Tavenner, founder and CEO of Summit Public Schools, a system of 14 high-performing public charter schools in California and Washington. "This is our first attempt to directly measure our ultimate intended outcomes of well-being and fulfillment of our alumni. We hope this report will spark deeper discussion about what we want for all students, how we can measure it, and what we can do to achieve it."

Every element of the Summit school design builds on another to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and habits they need to live a fulfilled life. Summit focuses on four key student outcomes through every part of the school design: Cognitive Skills, Content Knowledge, Habits of Success, and Concrete Next Step. These four key student outcomes are the basis of Summit's approach to teaching and learning and are the pillars for achieving Summit's vision that every student is equipped to grow up and lead a fulfilled life.

"Summit has shaped how I think about happiness and life by teaching me to be open to learning and open minded generally. I was in a closed mindset when I started at Summit but learning happens in so many different ways. And, Summit helped me build relationships by being a small, diverse school," said Bianey Saravia, Summit Prep graduate from 2017. "As a Marine, building relationships and community is really important. I meet people from all over and I can connect with anyone. I value being in a community which is enriched by diversity."

Summit measures student progress towards career and college readiness through a method developed in partnership with [Stanford](#). The approach measures a student's mastery of academics as well as cognitive skills like community, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. For Summit alumni, fulfillment and postsecondary education attainment are positively correlated. Alumni with a bachelor's degree or higher have significantly higher than average well-being scores compared to alumni with a high school diploma or some college, no degree. About 55% of alumni completed a bachelor's degree to date, a rate almost double the national average.

At Summit schools, students are empowered to become self-directed learners — they set goals for their learning, reflect on their progress, and build habits and mindsets to help them succeed in college, career, and life. Opportunities to develop these habits are embedded in all subjects, and across all grades. Students discover their passions and interests through real-world projects and experiences. Every student has a mentor and is part of a mentor group of their peers. Through mentoring, Summit schools cultivate an environment where every student feels a sense of belonging and can develop a strong sense of purpose.

“At Summit, we have a history of reflecting as a community and continually improving. It was through our alumni that we learned we were preparing students to cross the wrong finish line. High school graduation isn’t the goal; it’s an important milestone along the way,” said Diego Arambula, partner at Transcend and Summit Public Schools board member. “Our real measure of success is how our alumni do in life, after graduation. With this report, we take a first look at if we prepared students for success in the real world.”

Over 77% of respondents are fulfilled in at least four out of five dimensions of well-being, with the highest level of fulfillment in the area of “Strong Relationships” (94%) and lowest in “Financial Independence” (68%).

Additional key findings of “Pathways to Success” include:

- 71.7% of alumni report positive levels of satisfaction with life.
- 92.2% of respondents are currently working or in school. Of alumni from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds who are working full-time, 46.5% now make more than \$60,000 a year.
- More than 80% of alumni are fulfilled in the dimensions of “Purpose” (84.7%), “Health” (84.0%), and “Community” (82.3%).
- At 76.8%, Hispanic alumni have the highest percentage of respondents reporting positive levels of life satisfaction, scoring significantly higher compared to white and Black peers.

A significant proportion of Summit alumni have achieved success in life after high school, however, over 70% of alumni report facing at least one barrier in life after high school. Financial issues (40%) were the most common barrier reported by Summit alumni, followed by mental health issues (37%).

Summit is leveraging the report findings to reinforce the aspects of the unique school model that works, as well as continuously improve to address gaps and meet evolving needs. “Pathways to Success” provides an evidence base for improvements that is inherently student-informed and student-centered.

The research effort was conducted by The Alumni Pathways Project, Summit Public Schools’ ambitious research effort aimed at discovering alumni outcomes in college, career, and life. In total, 632 of 1,459 alumni who graduated from high schools in the Summit Public Schools system between 2007 and 2016 completed surveys between March 15 and June 30, 2020. Despite conducting the survey during the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey completion rate was high. Summit secured an overall response rate of 43.3%, considered high compared to standards for alumni research in higher education. Of the alumni who responded to the survey, 43 also participated in an optional one-on-one interview with a member of the research team.

About Summit Public Schools

Summit Public Schools is a leading public school system that equips all students to lead the life they want to live. It operates 14 public college-prep schools that serve diverse communities throughout California and Washington. Summit schools are consistently ranked among the best in the nation. All Summit students graduate prepared for college and its graduates complete college at double the national average. To learn more, please visit www.summitps.org.