

**El Puente School**  
Student/Parent Handbook  
2024-2025



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## **WELCOME TO EL PUENTE SCHOOL**

El Puente is a school that continues to evolve and to meet the changing needs of the students of the Salinas Union High School District. We strive to be a school that offers choice and flexibility so that students can find the educational environment that best matches them.

Here are EPS you will find a compassionate staff that works diligently to make sure that our students feel comfortable and supported. We know that students come to alternative education because traditional school did not work for them in some way. We hope to fill that void and provide students a path forward in their educational journey. Whether you are an in-person or online student, El Puente is a place for everyone.

To make sure that you take advantage of all of our programs, it is important to stay involved and attend regularly. Unlike at traditional schools, attendance at our site is based on how much work you complete. It is not enough to simply come to class, you must also finish the work assigned to you by your teachers. While our flexible model allows students to attend online or complete work at different times of the day, that flexibility means there will be no one standing next to you making sure you get your work done. To be successful, build a schedule for yourself that you can follow each day.

In addition, stay connected to our social media, website, and announcements. We will be offering social events, field trips, and other fun ways to stay connected to your school community. These kind of connecting activities are a great way to meet other students and be part of the EPS community.

Thank you for choosing to attend El Puente!

## **ABOUT OUR SCHOOL**

Our alternative school of choice petition was the result of a collaborative effort among various parents, teachers, and community members in Salinas. The purpose was to create a school that promotes academic success with a mastery of the “basics”.

We have worked hard to create an environment conducive to meaningful intellectual stimulation via independent studies. Our learning program is built on the belief that all children CAN and innately desire to learn—including those students without a history of academic success.

We believe that all children do not learn in the same way and children are gifted in various ways, and those gifts need to be encouraged. Reading assessment and targeted instruction are hallmarks of this school, raising the confidence level and academic output of traditionally labeled “low achievers,” while challenging the gifted learner to further explore areas of interest. We believe that real learning takes place when active participants make personal connections to the skills and knowledge imparted in the classroom.

Having created El Puente School under this model, we know that our program is a vital and integral part of our community. Our goal is to be a model school, offering successful educational opportunities innovations to the students and parents that we serve. We seek to make education a community commitment.

## **SCHOOL HOURS AND LOCATION**

We are open Monday-Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM and are located in the Salinas Education Center at 20 Sherwood Place, Salinas, CA 93906

You can call us at (831) 796-7770 or fax us at (831) 796-7777

## **DIRECTORY**

For an up-to-date phone directory, please consult our website, [eps.salinasuhsd.org](http://eps.salinasuhsd.org)

## **BELL SCHEDULE**

Our bell schedule can also be found on our website at [eps.salinasuhsd.org](http://eps.salinasuhsd.org)

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of El Puente School is to provide a self-paced independent studies program which meet students at their level in order to successfully complete High School requirements and be prepared for life after graduation.

## **VISION**

Our purpose is to offer an additional educational option with the freedom to implement innovative strategies to achieve individual student academic success. Our learning program is built on the belief that all children can learn, including those students without a history of academic success.

### **Expected Student Learning Results**

EPS students will be:

1. Self-directed learners who
  1. set and achieve personal learning goals based upon a learning plan
  2. produce quality work
  3. choose career paths and educational goals which lead to productive lifestyles
2. Effective communicators who
  1. can demonstrate the use of academic language skills
  2. utilize technology and other media to enhance communication
  3. share information and responsibilities with others in order to attain common goals
  4. are active listeners
3. Organized learners who
  1. manage their time effectively
  2. are accountable for meeting timelines
  3. maintain a system of personal organization
4. Socially responsible citizens who
  1. demonstrate accountability for actions
  2. cultivate cooperative interpersonal relationships, regardless of personal and cultural differences
  3. identify and utilize resources to make rational decisions

## **PARENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

El Puente's Parent Engagement Policy seeks to provide the tools to support the parental role in student learning, both at home and at school. The school strives to design programs which build on the strengths of its population, seek opportunities to invite parent and community participation in school activities, and create partnerships between those involved in fostering student success. These partnerships create relationships that contribute to student achievement and that respond to the unique needs of continuation high school students and their families.

1. Parents as Advocates, Advisors, Decision Makers
  - Parents are recruited to participate in school governance and advocacy committees such as the School Site Council or English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC)
2. School-Home Communication
  - El Puente utilizes parent letters, district phone message system – text messages, flyers, school website and student handbook to disseminate vital information to students and parents.
  - Home visits related to student/family needs are made by school staff.
3. Meetings held throughout the year to assist families with issues related to student attendance and achievement.
  - Parent/family orientations are held in English/Spanish on topics related to parent participation in their children's education at home and school.
  - Annual Open House/Back-to-School Night where parents meet teachers and learn about opportunities to become more involved in their child's education.
  - Parent/teacher conferences are regularly scheduled and occur as needed. During conferences the progress of the student, grade level expectations, and other concerns are discussed and explained.
4. Community Resources
  - Specialized community personnel act as resources to parents, students, principals, and teachers.

## **HOW CAN EL PUENTE SCHOOL HELP YOU GRADUATE?**

- You earn a high school diploma or a high school equivalency when you meet the requirements for our school.
- We help you get caught up on credits so you can return to your home school if you so choose.

- We assist you with dual enrollment at Hartnell Community College or Graduation Plus at the Salinas Education Center, as well as additional classes on our campus if you need to accelerate your credit progress.
- We enroll you in an ROP class of your choice through the ROP counselor on our campus, in order to help you learn a work skill or get career exposure.
- We enroll you in the Retail Co-Op course to earn credits if you have a job.
- We allow you to change schedules as needed to maximize your potential credit earning.
- We offer you infant care if you need it for your child while you continue your education.
- We help you develop a life plan with you for after graduation.

### **OUR FOCUS ON LEARNING AND CURRICULUM**

- El Puente School believes all students deserve a challenging, motivating and relevant education. Curriculum is focused upon essential standards and aligned to the California State Standards.
- El Puente School is focused on providing high quality and current textbooks and curriculum materials that are aligned to the California State and adopted by the Salinas Union High School District.
- Each teacher is expected to establish an environment that encourages and supports instructional consistency. Parents are encouraged to meet with teachers if they have specific questions about curriculum.

### **MASTER AGREEMENT**

Upon enrollment at El Puente School, students and their parents are to attend an orientation, either in-person or virtually. Then they will be directed to the registrar for the proper paperwork. The Master Agreement is the legal document that allows the district to offer you the option to study independently.

Students will be doing work in class, but students will also receive daily homework. At El Puente School any homework will be extended work that reinforces class instruction and allows students to earn more credits.



## **INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN & FUTURE GOAL SETTING**

The counselors work with each student to develop an Individual Learning Plan which will be reviewed with parents. The plan will serve as a guide for students. Students are expected to follow the plan for them to meet their requirements to graduate on their targeted date. The plan is updated during the year. The plan also contains goals and objectives to be attained after graduation.

The College & Career Counselor will provide step-by-step assistance with students who wish to apply for admissions into a 2-year college, 4-year college/university, and trade school. The counselor will also provide support to students who wish to apply for employment during their high school years or after graduation.

## **SCHEDULE CHANGES**

Students are placed in a class after their transcript has been reviewed and the course(s) needed to complete are identified. Students are placed in class according to subject area. The expectation for the student is to earn 1 credit every 3 days. The student is expected to attend no less than 70 minutes each day Monday- Friday and work independently for 5-6 hours daily.

Once a student completes one course, a schedule change will be made. There are other reasons why a student's schedule should be changed. Some changes are made to take an elective class, R.O.P., or other special circumstances.

Class changes will only be made by the counselor. Some changes will require authorization by the Principal.

Students are expected to complete three classes each semester (30 credits). Students that need extra support to learn English or have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may have to take additional support classes.

## **PARENT-STUDENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

One of the best ways that we can partner together is through Parent/Student/Teacher Conferences. These conferences are mandatory for students that are not progressing. Students are expected to complete three classes each semester (30 credits).

## **DESIGN OF THE INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSE WORK**

Independent study is not for all students at the middle school and high school level; independent study requires a high level of commitment, motivation, organizational skills, and self-direction not unlike the level required by college students. We view all our programs as Personalized Learning

Students are enrolled in one subject at a time and are to attend five days per week. All assigned work by each credentialed teacher is to be completed by the student in order for the work to be considered for credit. The credentialed teacher reviews all completed assigned work from the student and grades the assignments. From the completed work, samples are pulled to showcase student mastery of academics. An independent auditor may review these work samples annually. The credentialed teacher assigns a time value to the completed work, which is translated into average daily attendance (ADA) for the school.

All students are required to attend daily, either virtually or in-person, until they complete the subject assigned. Once the class is completed, the teacher gives final grades and credits and sends student to counselor to get their next class.

## **COURSES OF STUDY**

The Salinas Union High School District requires 220 credits for graduation from El Puente School. We offer a full course of study to complete requirements. The following are the requirements for graduation:

1. A minimum of 220 total credits is required.
2. Forty (40) units of English are required.
3. Thirty (30) units of history/social studies are required.
4. Each student is required to complete ten (10) units in World History/Geography, ten (10) units in American History, five (5) units in American Government, and five (5) units in Economics.
5. Twenty (20) units of laboratory/applied science are required
  - a. Each student is required to complete ten (10) units in physical science and ten (10) units in biological science.
6. Twenty (20) units of Physical Education are required
7. Ten (10) units of health education are required. Beginning with the Class of 2024, five (5) units of health are required.
8. Beginning with the Class of 2024, five (5) units of Ethnic Studies are required.
9. Twenty (20) units of the same foreign language are required.

10. 20 units of either VAPA or Vocational Education are required or 10 units of VAPA and 10 units of VE
11. Thirty (30) units of elective classes.
12. Completion of the District's Community Service requirement.

We encourage El Puente School students to enroll in ROP courses to learn valuable job skills and to earn additional credits toward graduation. You may take training in a number of profession. Advanced Culinary Arts, Auto Service, Dental Careers, Engine Maintenance & Repair, Health Occupations/Physical Therapy, Industrial Welding, Foundations of Nursing, Medical Assisting, EMR/EMT, Fire Technology, and Careers in Education. Transportation to and from Mission Trails ROP is provided. Make an appointment with the ROP counselor for details.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

All Salinas Union High School District students must complete 40 hours of community service upon high school graduation. Community service activities may not be paid or given class credit. All activities must be pre-approved by the Work-Experience Coordinator.

Students must earn at least ten hours in at least two of the following categories:

- Non-Profit
- Education Entity
- Career Development

Not more than 20 hours of credit may be earned in school-related service at El Puente School. Not more than 10 hours of credit may be earned in Career Development.

All Community Service Hours must be submitted by the last day of school during the academic year in which they were completed. Hours completed during summer school should be submitted upon returning to school in August.

## **COURSES AVAILABLE**

(this list is not exhaustive)

### ENGLISH

MS English 7  
MS English 8  
English 1-2  
English 3-4  
English 5-6  
English 7-8  
English Language Dev.

### MATH

Pre-Algebra  
Algebra Readiness  
Algebra Standards 1 & 2  
Algebra 1-2  
Geometry Connections  
Geometry  
Advanced Algebra  
Consumer Math  
Business Math

### SOCIAL STUDIES

MS Social Studies 7  
MS Social Studies 8  
World History & Geography  
Ethnic Studies  
U. S. History  
American Government  
Economics

### SCIENCE

NGSS Biology  
NGSS Chemistry  
Health  
Physics

### FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Spanish 1  
Spanish 2  
Spanish 3

### FINE ARTS

MS Art  
Art 1-2  
Art 3-4  
Dimensional Art 1-2

### MUSIC

Music Appreciation 1-2  
Guitar 1-2

### OTHER ELECTIVES \*

Child Development 1-2  
Physical Education  
On-Line Learning

### SPECIAL PROGRAM CLASSES

C.T.E.  
R.O.P.  
Special Education  
Work Experience

\*Also see ROP class

## **ASSESSMENT**

All students enrolled at El Puente School participate in all testing and assessments administered and/or created by El Puente School. If parents do not have their student participated in state testing, parents jeopardize the ability of El Puente School to operate as a public school of choice. We value testing opportunities for students and encourage each and every parent to have their student participate annually in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP).

Each year, students participate in examinations in the area of English Language Arts, Math, and Science, depending on the grade in which they enrolled. It is important to note that the state is not interested in your student's individual test scores, rather the school-wide aggregated student test data. The CAASPP testing program is only one of several tools used to evaluate your child's growth and development. The employees of El Puente School never evaluate your student based on one test alone. Practice tests and study materials are available to help your family feel comfortable with the process. Please discuss any questions or concerns that you may have with your student's mentor or counselor.

## **GRADUATION**

El Puente School is a high school within the Salinas Union High School District. This means we issue diplomas the same as any of our other high schools. We have a full graduation ceremony that takes place on the last day of school. All students who complete graduation requirements before the school year ends withdraw early from El Puente School as graduates, but return for the graduation ceremony.

## **FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS**

California law requires all graduating high school students to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) to support funding their education at a 2-year college, 4-year university, or trade school. Students and parents/guardians who do not wish to submit an application must fill out an opt-out form. Scholarships are also available to high school students who plan to continue their education. Staff will assist students to identify scholarships and complete applications for scholarships and financial aid. Questions about college scholarships and financial aid should be directed to our College & Career Counselor.

## **GENERAL RULES & GUIDELINES**

In addition to their effort and attendance, good behavior and character are key for students to be successful. El Puente School expects our students to demonstrate good character. We expect El Puente School students to treat each other, and all adults, with consideration and thoughtfulness. The following are El Puente's rules, in addition to those you will find in your copy of the Salinas Union School District Student Behavior Manual. The El Puente School reserves the right to add additional

rules or restrictions at anytime to ensure a safe learning environment for its students and staff.

- Students must comply with the directions of all staff members.
- Students must meet academic goals. Every student must come to school prepared with the required materials for learning.
- The parking lot is part of the campus and all school rules apply there. Vehicles may be searched. Students are not allowed to gather in the parking lot, or to sit in the cars, before school, during school or after school. The parking lot is provided by the District as a convenience. The District or school is not responsible for thefts, accidents, etc., which may occur in the parking lot.
- Students are to adhere to the dress code described in this handbook.
- Students are not allowed to use cell phones during class time. They may use them outside of class before school, during lunch or after school.
- Students may only use the vending machines during break period, lunch, and before and after school. Students are not to stop at machines during class time.
- During class time, students are to have a pass or staff permission to be outside the classroom.
- To enter another class during class time, students are to ask the permission of their teacher.

## **GRADING**

Teachers will award credits based on student achievement of an “A”, “B”, or “C” or “D” letter grade according to the grading board policy. Students have an opportunity to earn as many credits as they can every week.

Grades will be given once the student completes a course. Teachers will base their grades on quality and quantity of work according to the following scale:

A	90-100%	Excellent work is complete and accurate
B	80-89%	Above Average work is complete and mostly accurate
C	70-79%	Average work is mostly complete and somewhat accurate
D	60-69%	Below Average somewhat complete and somewhat accurate

## **ATTENDANCE**

We are very strict about our attendance policy because many of our students did not attend class regularly at their previous school. To be successful in school, daily attendance is a must. Be responsible and follow the procedures we require.

1. Parents must call the Attendance Clerk 831-796-7770 extension 1358 whenever a student will be out.
2. A note explaining an absence must be brought to the Attendance Clerk so the absence is NOT recorded as unexcused absence (truant). A planned absence, such as a court appearance, doctor, or WIC appointment, will require a note

and a copy of your appointment slip from your doctor, the court, probation officer or agency representative.

3. If the student is absent due to illness or child care issues, please bring a note signed by your parent. If the absence is due to a medical or other type of appointment for your child, you are to bring verification of the appointment.
4. We generally make a phone call to the home on any day a student is not in his or her assigned classes if we have not heard from the parent.
5. A doctor's note is required for long-term absences.
6. Students may be required to make up absences by attending additional 70 minute blocks with the teacher's authorization.

### **BEING ON TIME**

Students are expected to be on time to school and to each class.

### **STUDENT DEPARTURE**

Students will leave campus following their last appointment or workshop. Exceptions will be made for students attending a campus activity or with permission of staff. Students should not be wandering on campus at any given time.<sup>3</sup>

### **STUDENT IDS**

Students will be given a picture ID once enrolled at the school. The ID card must be carried at all times while on school grounds. ID is required to check out textbooks and to ride the school bus.

### **EARLY PICK-UP**

If a student is to be picked up early for any reason, the parent must sign out the student in the school office. Students who drive or walk must have a parent contact the front office prior to early dismissal. The student must sign out in the front office.

### **CLOSED CAMPUS**

Once students arrive at school, students are not to leave the school, unless they are signed out by a parent in the office. Once a student leaves campus, he/she may not return until the next school day except with prior permission from El Puente School staff.

### **VISITORS**

If a student wished to have a guest during the school day, written permission from the administrator must be given 24 hours in advance and a visitor's name badge

must be in possession of the guest at all times. It is required that any person wanting permission to come on to the E-Wing must check in at the office. They may sign in and put on a visitor's name badge. This is a precaution for the safety of our campus.

## **EL PUENTE SCHOOL DRESS CODE**

To provide an environment that is safe, non-disruptive and promotes learning, El Puente School students are to abide by the following dress code, based on the District policy.

1. Clothing, jewelry, and personal items shall be free of writing, pictures, or any other insignia which is vulgar, lewd, obscene, profane, or sexually suggestive or which promotes the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or other illegal activity.
2. Appropriate shoes must be worn at all times.
3. Clothes shall be sufficient to conceal undergarments. See-through tops and bare abdomens are prohibited.

## **STUDENT INVOLVEMENT**

Student involvement in extracurricular activities promotes school success. Students are encouraged to participate in many of the activities that occur on campus, such as: helping with "Back to School Night", open house and graduation.

## **ATHLETICS**

Students who are competing at a regional, state or national level, El Puente School is working on a policy that will allow athletes to participate with their home school team if in compliance with CIF rules of participation. See the school counselor for guidance if you were or are participating with your prior school's team and would like to continue participating with the team.

## **BREAKFAST & LUNCH**

All students will be served breakfast and lunch at no charge at El Puente School.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips provide students with an alternative learning experience, an extension to learning in the classroom, and an incentive to achieve.

1. Students will complete all necessary forms prior to departure and must meet eligibility requirements.
2. During the trip, students will follow directions and cooperate with staff and other students.
3. All school and district rules will be in effect.
4. Vehicle safety rules must be observed.
5. All students will travel and return by the transportation provided by the school.



## **LOST BOOKS & DEBTS**

Books are expensive and valuable. If you lose it, you must pay for it. If you have any books from your previous school, you are to return them to that school or turn them in at El Puente. If you owe any debts at any school you must clear your debts. You can pay your debts at El Puente. Students who have not cleared debts or returned books may not participate in the graduation ceremony.

## **LANGUAGE**

(racist, biased, sexist, gender slurs, and other unacceptable slurs)

The SUHSD is committed to recognizing, addressing, and eradicating all forms of racism, gender discrimination, and ethnic oppression.

We condemn racism, discrimination, and bigotry in all forms. All members of the SUHSD community—students, staff, faculty, administration, trustees, alumni, and families—will use non-discriminatory language. Those not in compliance with our language norms will be addressed and instructed on our language norms. Students using unacceptable language will be disciplined according to our school board policies, and California Education Code, and will result in loss of privileges.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

El Puente's Drug Resource Specialist is here to help students develop the skills needed to keep them from letting drugs or alcohol interfere in their lives. Students are encouraged to participate in group sessions voluntarily. Students, who break school rules, regarding drugs or alcohol, may be assigned to participate in a counseling program.

## **RESTROOMS**

El Puente School provides restrooms that are clean and intended for student use. Students going to the restroom during class time must have a pass from their teacher.

## **STUDENT CLUBS**

Throughout the school year, students will have the opportunity to join various clubs that may meet on campus. All clubs are organized and supervised by school faculty/staff or parent volunteers. See front office staff for a current schedule of meetings.

## **WORK EXPERIENCE & WORK PERMITS**

California law requires that all persons under 18 years of age who are employed must have a work permit. See the Work-Experience Coordinator for more information. Work permit applications are available on our website or in the main office. Students

must have good attendance and be progressing toward graduation to obtain a work permit. A permit will be revoked if a student is not meeting these requirements. If you have a job and valid work permit, you may sign up for the Retail Co-Op Course and earn up to 10 credits per year.

## **EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS**

The Salinas Union High School District has other educational options for students offered through the Salinas Education Center. The Salinas Education Center is comprised of the Salinas Adult School, El Puente School, and Out of School Youth, Parent Education, Pupil Personnel Services and the SPED transitions program. Graduation Plus is an online after school program available to you.

### **MOUNT TORO HIGH SCHOOL (CONTINUATION SCHOOL)**

Mount Toro High School is a high school diploma program. Your students attend for five hours daily. Students earn a regular high school diploma and graduate from Mount Toro High School. Upon earning the required credits to be on track for graduation students may petition to return to their original school. To graduate from their original school they must enroll at the start of the second semester and have the minimum number of credits required at the comprehensive high school to be considered on track.

### **HiSET PREPARATION (BEL or BSL/ROP)**

Some students choose to obtain a High School Equivalency or HiSET, also known as an affordable alternative to the GED a General Education Diploma. The HiSET exam demonstrates that a test taker has attained the academic knowledge and proficiency equivalent to those of a high school graduate. Information from the exam helps identify the areas where test takers are career and college ready, as well as areas where they may need additional preparation. Test takers are tested in five core areas: Language Arts – Reading, Language Arts – Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Test content is aligned with current practice in all states and jurisdiction. Test takers can use existing prep courses and materials to prepare for the HiSET exam. Test takers are given scores in all core areas, as well as a total score. Passing the tests confirms that you have high school level academic skills and are able to pass the tests that are given to high school diploma graduates in California. If you pass all tests with the required scores, you will be issued a certificate, the High School Equivalency Test certificate, by the State of California.

To enroll in any El Puente HiSET program students must be 17 years and 6 months old to enroll. To enroll in Salinas Adult School HiSET program, students must be at least 18 years old. You must have an official government identification card with your picture on it: California Driver's License, California I.D., military I.D. or Matricula Consular. Testing is done at the Salinas Education Center.

It is expected that students will attend daily and study diligently. Students should take no more than twenty days to take and pass each test. Students, who pass all

HiSET tests before the school year is over, can withdraw from school early. They are dropped and return at the end of the year to participate in the graduation ceremony.

## **MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAM**

The Mission Trails Regional Occupational Program (ROP) is a vocational training program for Monterey County. It operates under the Salinas Union High School District. Courses are held year round, both part-time and full-time courses during the day or in the evenings. Courses are free of charge and are open to high school students and out-of-school youth over 16 year of age and to adults. First priority will be given to high school students. High school students under 16 years of age may be admitted with the approval of the Principal.

ROP training develops marketable skills, abilities, attitudes and work habits so students may secure jobs, work part-time, prepare for advanced training, or upgrade and enhance vocational skills. Credits applicable toward high school graduation will be awarded by the ROP each semester. Normally 10 credits per semester are awarded for each two-hour daily class. ROP courses meet the Salinas Union High School District graduation requirement for vocational education.

We encourage El Puente School students to enroll in ROP courses to learn valuable job skills and to earn additional credits toward graduation. You may take training in a number of professions: Advanced Culinary Arts, Auto Service, Dental Careers, Engine Maintenance & Repair, Health Occupations/Physical Therapy, Industrial Welding, Foundations of Nursing, Medical Assisting, EMR/EMT, Fire Technology, and Careers in Education. Transportation to and from Mission Trails ROP is provided. Make an appointment with the ROP counselor for details.

## **TEEN PARENT CENTER**

We offer child care free of cost to any teen parent enrolled at El Puente on a space-available 33basis.

## **DISTRICT CALENDAR**

Please consult the school district's website to view the most up to date academic calendar – [www.salinasuhsd.org](http://www.salinasuhsd.org)