

SANTA BARBARA

Oxnard College Youth Leadership Program (OCYLP)

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“We have an epidemic of violence. [But] our program is addressing gang issues and is a sanctuary, resolving violence through communication.”

– *Armando Vazquez, Program Coordinator*

Mission: For the past seven years, the OCYLP has worked with high school and out-of-high-school youth both in and out of the juvenile justice system to prepare them for entering academia and/or the workforce.

Overview: OCYLP runs two programs, the KEYS Academy and Café on A. KEYS is a 15-week college preparatory module that meets after school three days a week. Youth in the program also operate a small business, a café called “Café on A” where young people learn job skills and how to run a business. Through these two programs, OCYLP provides:

- Instruction to prepare for GED and community college admission requirements;
- Career development and soft-skills training;
- Adult mentoring support;
- Ongoing testing and assessment; and
- Bi-weekly stipends for students.

Results: Since 2001 the Oxnard College Youth Leadership Program has enrolled 116 youth who were in the juvenile justice system. Of this number:

- Seventy-nine percent are enrolled in college.
- One-third have part or full-time jobs.
- One-third have completed Vocational Training or GED program.
- Eighty-two percent have demonstrated increased grade levels in basic skills (pre/post test attainment)

Target Population: OCYLP works primarily with Hispanic youth ages 14 to 21 who are on probation or otherwise at risk of entering the juvenile justice system,. At any given time, the program serves 25 to 30 young people from the Oxnard Plains area.

Evaluation: Workforce Investment Board, 2002, Oxnard College Evaluation

Hector Torres, 19, was active in gang life. After involvement in the juvenile justice system, Hector enrolled in the KEYS Academy in 2003 and quickly became a class leader. Now, Hector has two jobs, has purchased his own automobile and is helping his single mother with the household’s financial and familial responsibilities. He also has graduated from high school, and will be attending Oxnard College. His goal is to attend Brooks Institute, where he will pursue a career in photography and graphic design. Hector’s brother, Omar Torres, 16, is a student at Hueneme High School. He has also completed the OCYLP program and is one of the best high school golfers in the state.