



## DEFENSE OF LEARNING: A Community of Practice Model to Advance Equity, Access, and Social Justice in SCUSD

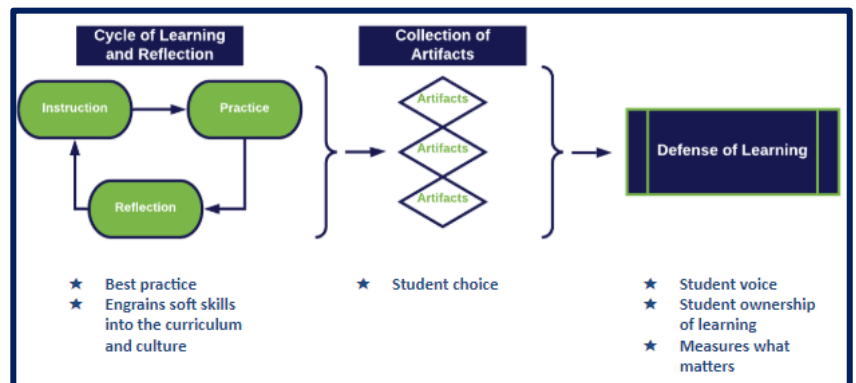
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### ISSUE

Sacramento City Unified School District's (SCUSD) college and career readiness initiatives, as cited in the *2016-2021 Strategic Plan*, only equip students with half of the skills and requirements necessary for graduates to succeed in their post-secondary options (Conley, 2012). Namely, SCUSD fails to assess critical soft skills, such as perseverance, growth mindsets, goal-setting, collaboration, etc., that have shown to play a critical role in successfully completing college, finding, and keeping a job. Thus, in order to better prepare SCUSD graduates for post-secondary success it is recommended that the district work with individual school sites and Envision Learning Partners to create a Defense of Learning (DOL) Community of Practice that would facilitate the creation of DOL models for each school site and establish best practices that would reinforce and assess critical academic and social enterprise skills that are necessary for graduates to thrive in the post-secondary options of their choice.

### METHODS

- Interviews (15 Total; CTE teachers, school-site administrators, SCTA, and ELP)
- Observations (Monthly CCR sector meetings, ELP)
- Literature Review
- Survey of CTE teachers (n =8, consistent themes)



### FINDINGS

SCUSD first attempted to expand DOL 6 years ago when they contracted with ELP to assist 5 district high schools to develop their own DOL model. This first attempt at expanding DOL resulted in 5 district high schools that still implement some model of DOL, it embedded staff into school-sites to champion the importance of DOL for student success, and resulted in one DOL model for a comprehensive high school. However, the initiative lacked sustaining district support, and in some cases, school-site administrative support. The most commonly cited challenge amongst current practitioners was difficulty in continuously training new teachers and administrators which resulted in varied levels of support and implementation of DOL. Lack of resources and support from the district in past initiatives has resulted in reticence and skepticism from teachers and administrators toward future district initiatives.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Community of Practice

It is critical to acknowledge that the expansion and improvement of DOL is best achieved with a community of practice (CoP) model that includes the active participation of school-site teachers and administrators, district leaders, and Envision Learning Partners. The DOL community of practice will foster policy creation that is responsive to stakeholder needs, combine resources toward a common goal, and improve accountability.

### District-wide Information Campaign

It would benefit SCUSD to create a district-wide information campaign to ensure parents, teachers, and administrators understand the importance of teaching and assessing soft skills and begin to gain buy-in from these critical stakeholders. The campaign should include endorsements and case-studies from schools currently implementing DOL.

### Best Practices

Tension has arisen from past district initiatives due to unclear expectations and resources. The CoP should work together to create a document of best practices that explicitly states core expectations and outcomes for students, teachers, and administrators, as well as promised resources and permissions to allow schools to develop a model that meets the needs of their school-site.

### Impact Framework

It is recommended that the CoP work together to create an impact framework that will guide data collection and enable the district to compile school-site data to measure the effect of DOL.

### Envision Learning Partners DOL Cohorts & Self-Assessments

It is recommended that SCUSD partner with ELP for two years to guide two groups of schools (8 total) to create a DOL model for their school-site. These will require participation from both a school-site teacher and administrator in order to ensure there is a team of support at each school-site. Furthermore, ELP will provide self-assessments and surveys of enacted curriculum that can be used by schools and the district to gather data on the quality of implementation and drive professional development.

### Training and Collaboration

It is recommended that the district provide twice annual DOL training for new hires to ensure that everyone working in the district understands the importance of DOL and the role they play in implementation. It is also recommended that the district reinstate regular DOL collaboration meetings in order to provide intentional time and space to continuously improve and support the implementation of DOL.

